FROM METROPOLIS TO NECROPOLIS: CUBAN ARCHITECTURE AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE IN THE CRISTÓBAL COLÓN CEMETERY, 1868-1898

by

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Abstract

This thesis presents a cultural history of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón, focusing on the material and visual culture of the site. Designed and constructed during a thirty year period of nationalist insurgency in Cuba, the site presents a remarkable source of data on the adoption of a national identity in Havana, the political and economic center of the island. As a public graveyard, this site was used by the entire social strata of Havana. The negotiated use of space is revelatory of shifting ideologies, brought about by the Cuban independence movement. I contextualize the architecture and geography of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón within the fluctuating landscape of power in Havana during the years 1868-1898, revealing the tensions and fractures that persisted in the structure of Cuban nationalism.

This thesis is broken into four sections. First, I look at the cemetery within the context of the nineteenth century urban cemetery reform movement. The evolving visual language of the cemetery created a powerful tool for cities to articulate new identities. I problematize the absence of Latin American and Caribbean reform cemeteries from the literature, and position the Havana design as a locale of distinct cultural creation. Second, I look at three levels at which the cemetery intersected with the nationalist movement: on the international stage, on the social level, and within the individual. Drawing on primary sources from the Cuban Heritage Collection (Miami), the Cuban National Archives (Havana), and the Colón Cemetery Archives (Havana), I present how the cemetery documented the complexity of the nationalist movement in Cuba.

Ultimately, the cemetery acts as a valuable source document, revealing the conflicted attitudes towards nationalism and change that existed in Havana during the nineteenth century. The infrastructure and monuments, along with the regulation of movement and use, act to perpetuate colonial social forms in an era of political and cultural change. The conflict between conservative and progressive segments of society, the persistence of racial discord, and the increasingly fragile social position of the working poor reflect an evolving construct of nation within the walls of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

From Conception to Carrara Marble: Mapping the Metaphysical and Physical Impact of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón

On October 10th 1868, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, from the steps of his sugar mill, delivered a speech that launched Cuba into civil war. The culmination of an increasingly contentious political environment, this marked the first wide-scale uprising of Cubans against the Spanish colonial government.¹ Thirteen months later, in November of 1869, a jury selected architect Calixto de Loira’s design for a new general cemetery in Havana.² These two events, at first, appear unrelated: a political and economic power struggle between Cuban and Spanish elites seems to have little to do with the public design decisions in one Cuban city. It is precisely the remarkable synchronicity of the timing between the growth of nationalist sentiment and the design and construction of the cemetery that link these two events. This thesis explores how the emergence of a major public works project in Cuba’s largest city during this period was connected to the propagation of a nascent Cuban nationalism. The design, regulation, and promotion of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón was part of a process that publicly articulated both what it meant for Cuba to be a nation, and what it meant to be an individual within Cuban society. The title of architect Calixto de Loira’s design submission, “Wan Death Arrives Without Distinction at Hovels and at the Palaces of Kings,” speaks to the complexity of the transformation of the island. While it opens the door for equality, in that death arrives without distinction, it simultaneously perpetuates the naturalized economic stratum that defined the colonial period. At the core of Cuban nationalism lies an unresolved tension and the cemetery captures this disjuncture in its material form.

The Evolution of Nationalism

There was no shortage of wars of independence in the geographic plane surrounding Cuba. The revolutions in the United States (1775-1783), Haiti (1791-1804), and Spanish America (1810-1824) were

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potent examples of colonial holdings rising up and forming independent nations. Despite these examples, Cuba was slow to embark on its own path to sovereignty, remaining Spain’s last Caribbean colony until 1898. The island earned the epithet *la isla siempre leal* (ever-loyal island), although their fidelity to the Spanish crown owed as much to pragmatism as it did to loyalty. The colonial compact held because the Creole elite, the political and economic powers on the island, saw their interests best served by Spain. The painful and extended struggle for independence began when one segment of this group, the elites of the island’s Eastern plantations, broke ties with Spain. Once this break took place, the independence movement rapidly encompassed all levels of Cuban society, culminating in the War of Independence in 1895.

There are two phases of nationalist thought that are critical to this work. First is the period between the start of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of war in 1868. It was in this period that the idea of a Cuban nation first emerged. Limited to the conceptual realm, various visions for the future of Cuba were presented and contested, largely by the Creole elite and Cuba’s intellectuals. The debates over the path forward were ideologically laden, and the idea of a sovereign nation was one among many possible outcomes. What became increasingly apparent was that the existing relationship between Spain and the island needed to be renegotiated. It was during this period that the proposal for the new cemetery, was first put forth by the Creole elite of Havana, and brought to the Spanish Cortes by the Marques de la Pezuela. The design process was shadowed by these debates, and the jury that selected the final proposal, comprised mostly of upper class Creole doctors and engineers, was aware of the shifting tides of power and influence on the island. The two projects advanced in tandem, and the contested ideology of the nation became embedded in a design for the space of the dead.

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6 Enrique Martínez y Martínez, *Sucinta descripción de los cementerios de la antigüedad, primitivos de la Habana y el de Cristóbal Colón*, (Habana: Ucar García, 1928), Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, 30.
If the period from the start of the century until the Ten Years’ War represented conceptual birth of the nation as well as the cemetery, the advent of the first war of independence marked the transition into the realm of the real. This second critical period began at the start of the Ten Years’ War in 1868, encompasses the second war of independence, the Guerra Chiquita (the Little War), in 1879, and runs into the War of Independence of 1895. During the thirty years of insurgency, Cuban nationalism is transformed, shifting from a contested idea of Cuban intellectuals to a populist movement on the brink of being realized. The outbreak of civil war in 1868 was the tipping point at which the Eastern elite broke from the colonial compact with Spain. Distant from the center of Spanish control on the island, and receiving fewer benefits than their Western counterparts, they declared Cuba free of Spanish control. While the initiators of the Ten Years’ War were of the elite class, once it began the insurgency quickly gained popularity with all classes of Cubans. The elite increasingly courted the participation of the masses in the bloody war against Spain, facilitating a shift of agency to previously marginalized groups that mandated the reformulation of social forms in Cuba.

Havana society, located in the rich Western section of the island, watched the development of the war closely. Although divided along lines of loyalist and separatist, the city of Havana did not directly participate in this uprising. Havana’s inhabitants considered the city to be the intellectual, economic, and political center of the island, and change was slower to take root. As the heart of peninsulares presence on the island, the city had much more to lose if they broke ties with Spain. The failure of the first and second wars of independence is largely attributed to the failure of the West to rise along with the rest of the island. Slowly, over the course of the thirty years of civil discord on the island, change infiltrated the western provinces, and the city of Havana. During the final War of Independence, launched in 1895, the

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7 A note on nomenclature, the nationalist insurgency in Cuba spanned thirty years, from 1868-1898. There were three separate rebellions during this period, collectively referred to as the Cuban wars of independence. They consist of the Ten Years’ War (1868-78), the Guerra Chiquita, or the Little War (1879-80), and the final War of Independence (1895-1898). This period culminated with the intervention of the United States in 1898, heralding the Spanish-American War.
8 For an analysis of the dynamic changes wrought on society by the wars of independence, see Ada Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation and Revolution, 1868-1898, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).
Western provinces joined the East in rising against Spain. By 1898, the reality of a Cuban nation was imminent.

Over this thirty year period, in which the Cuban nation moved from an idea to a reality, the cemetery in Havana began to take on its material form. The construction of the infrastructure of the space, the extensive roadways, the principle buildings, and the remarkable walls and gate, spanned twenty years. Starting in the later part of the 1870s, families, alongside social organizations began to design and build the monuments within its walls. The construction of monuments, fuelled by individuals and families rather than the civil and religious authorities of the cemetery, rapidly expanded until the end of the century. The two phases of construction paralleled the evolution of nationalism in Cuba, and captured the contested ideologies of the emergent nation. This work reads the cemetery’s form to better understand the complexity of the process by which a Cuban national identity was spatially negotiated and formed.

**Reading Material and Conceptual Spaces**

An urban cemetery presents a unique object of analysis, as its role in the city encompasses a multiplicity of functions, and represents divergent meanings for different users. It is both a work of art, and an institution. It is a shared public space, as well as a location for private reflection. It is a place of spirituality and religion, while being essentially materialistic. The challenge of studying a graveyard is that it is both an object, weighted in its physical and tactile nature, and an idea, constructed in a complex network of symbols. This work capitalizes on this duality, asking how the emergence of a major public works project in Cuba’s largest city was linked to the propagation of a developing Cuban nationalism. In order to viably read the cemetery for meaning, this work is grounded in a particular cluster of theoretical writing that articulates how the metaphysical existence of objects relates to their material life, as well as how this dual nature of objects impacts the people that interact with them. The three main theoretical nodes informing this investigation are: works exploring how certain material objects become weighted with conceptual meanings unrelated to their physical form or function; works which articulate how a society’s material culture expresses its cultural values; and finally, works that illustrate how interaction
with these ideologically-infused material objects shapes individual identity, as well as reproducing and naturalizing certain social forms.

The Material and Conceptual Life of Objects

Successfully interrogating how the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón represented a particular version of what it meant to be Cuban in 19th century Havana meant embracing a conception of material objects as possessing a dual nature, consisting of both a physical and a conceptual reality. Just as semiotics split the sign into the signifier and the signified, so too has the object been split into its material and conceptual components. Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, introduces these different modes as the “real” and “virtual” components of objects. He posits that objects inhabit simultaneously both “real” and “virtual” planes, and that these dual natures “would not exist without the other, yet they do not resemble one another.”

This duality of the object is a critical component of this thesis’s conception of material, and its ability to carry and transmit meaning. The urban cemetery occupies the real as both a physical space and a metaphysical one; it simultaneously embodies multiple meanings for the inhabitants of Havana.

The idea of objects owning both material and conceptual meanings has evolved and been refined by scholars in many fields. Lorraine Daston’s *Things That Talk* proposes that it is this very duality that imbues certain objects with cultural influence. Daston identifies a tension in the academic community between the approaches to the study of objects, or things, as she calls them. On one side, she sees those who study the “brute intransigence of matter, everywhere and always the same.” In opposition are those who look at “the plasticity of meaning, bound to specific times and places.” She is critical of this polarity, asserting instead that things exist on the metaphysical divide between matter and meaning. As

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13 Ibid., 21.

14 Ibid., 16.
such, “things are simultaneously material and meaningful.” Her basic conception of the dual nature of things is the same as Deleuze’s: things/objects exist simultaneously as material/real and meaningful/virtual entities. Where Daston moves beyond Deleuze is how she, and the authors she has selected, explores the mechanisms through which things become infused with meaning. Ultimately, she concludes that the meaning of anything is culturally constructed and malleable over time and space.

This is the critical theoretical takeaway that this thesis applies in its approach to the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón. The cemetery, as a material object, exists both on a physical and a conceptual plane. While the physical nature of the cemetery is fixed in marble and steel, the conceptual nature is spatially and temporally defined by the society that interacts with it. This leads to the question of what worldview was being created, or reproduced, on a conceptual level by the creators of the object in the physical realm.

Cultural Values and Material Culture

Having a theoretical model that elucidates the dual nature of material objects is insufficient in and of itself to act as the framework in which to ask questions about the cemetery’s influence on 19th century Havana’s cultural values. Daston alludes to this when she references how meanings are established in specific times and places, and change over time as they encounter new influences. Her premise is that things in a “supersaturated cultural solution” demonstrate a property similar to that of crystal formation in supersaturated liquids. The things act like the seeds around which a “crystal can suddenly congeal,” acting culturally to “crystallize ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.” She refers to these conglomerations as “thickenings of significance,” and they are an important model for explaining how meanings become attached to matter. It is important to note that she is not prescriptive in defining what composes the “cultural solution,” as for every time and place this will be different. The repetition of patterns within social discourse, the association of objects with particular social groups, the reference to classical forms, and the use of objects in a particular manner are all used to demonstrate how the conceptual existence of

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15 Ibid., 17.
16 Ibid., 15.
17 Ibid., 15-17.
18 Ibid., 20.
objects is built. The combination of contributing social actions varies with each object, but what remains consistent is a slow and sustained accrual of values that eventually coalesces into a new and unique meaning attached to the physical form. This dynamic process creates the dual nature of objects, embedding the ideological values of a society into the objects it produces and uses.

The mechanisms through which meaning is created, as expressed in Daston’s work, are instrumental in providing a tangible, process-based system that demonstrates how objects come to embody both physical and conceptual realms simultaneously. The examples explored are predicated on the notion that the cultural values exist already, and simply come together in the object. When society changes, the meaning attached slowly alters to reflect this new reality. In her model, ideology precedes meaning. The Cementerio Cristóbal Colón, designed and built while Cuba engaged in a process of ideological transformation, holds a remarkable record of the contested values of the period. Other theorists have reversed this process, exploring how objects have been deliberately manipulated in order to spread a particular ideology. They provide us with a model in which meaning making precedes ideology.

Jacques Rancière ruminated on the relationship between objects, ideology and social control in many of his works. His book, The Future of the Image presents a cogent argument regarding how ordinary objects can be embedded with chosen ideological values and used to create social structures. One of his key postulates is that through design, “communal space” is limited to “certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought.” These configurations are at once symbolic and material, returning us again to the dual nature of the object. This idea is best laid out in his essay “The Surface of Design.” In it, he lays out the process of individual designers and creators who actively and deliberately shaped their creations to embody a particular set of values, ones which they wished to transmit to the general populace who used and encountered them. His discussion of the work of Peter Behrens has the

19 While the methodological and theoretical approach of Things that Talk contributed to this thesis’ approach to material objects, Antoine Picon’s essay “Freestanding Column in Eighteenth-century Religious Architecture” and M. Norton Wise and Elaine M. Wise’s essay “Staging an Empire” act as models for approaching architectural forms and space.

most directly applicable parallels, as Behrens was an architect, engineer, and designer who worked for the German electrical company Allgemeine Elektricitäts Gesellschaft (AEG), and designed and produced numerous goods for public consumption.\textsuperscript{21} Rancière stipulates that alongside material consumption, i.e. the purchase and use of material goods, there occurs an “aesthetic consumption,” whereby the consumer absorbs a message encoded in the compositional nature of the object.\textsuperscript{22} This is carried out through the repeated and standardized use of formal design characteristics; ones selected to either conform or contrast with naturalized classical norms of composition. These classical forms already exist in society as objects, thus they are already infused with a conceptual reality for the society in question. When an object either adopts or rejects the commonly used forms of its cultural surroundings, it is either reinforcing or countering the ideological basis of the community. \textsuperscript{23}

Rancière referred to formal design components as “types.” Behrens, by using a series of “types” in his design that countered the overly ornate gothic forms commonly used in late 19\textsuperscript{th} century Germany, sought to “define a new texture of communal existence.”\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, he sought to redirect German society into an efficient, streamlined and utilitarian model, and he did this by incorporating efficiency, simplicity and utility into all of his designs. The items he designed for AEG, a behemoth in the German market, became staple products in German households, and thus the values he selected came to be regarded as German values.\textsuperscript{25} Behrens was not designing in isolation; indeed, there was a group of like-minded designers, architects and artists who were similarly embedding their objects with a counter-ideology that eventually became the mainstream value system. What Rancière underscores is that the deliberate repetition of these forms, or types, constituted an “abbreviated language of design.”\textsuperscript{26} This language, one not constituted of spoken or written words, but rather made of objects, can be understood fluently by the inhabitants of the culture that constructed it. The design selection for the 

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\textit{Cementerio Cristóbal Colón}
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\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 95.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 94.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 92-101.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 103.
utilized a language of design specific to spaces of death, and the design “types” used show the values those who controlled the process were attempting to instil.

What emerges from these two theoretical models are different, yet related, versions of how cultural values are embedded within the material culture they produce. In Daston’s model, the process is passive. Rancière’s model, on the other hand, involves the active intervention of the creators. Where they coalesce is in the assertion that material objects come to carry the ideological values of the culture that produced them, and that the people of that particular culture are able to read and understand the encoded messaging within physical objects. This has interesting implications when applied to the design and construction of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón. What social values were being inscribed in the space? Was this embedding passive or active on the part of the design committee? And did the cemetery simply reproduce and repurpose an old value system, or was there an attempt to bring new and revolutionary ideas into their city?

Material Culture and Identity

In the determination of the cultural and historical significance of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón, there still remains the question of how objects act to influence and shape identity. In order to address this final theoretical question, this study turns to the work done on social and institutional spaces, and the manner in which interaction with these spaces are programmed to elicit a specific response in the user. Henri Lefebvre is his work The Construction of Space, presents a model of space related to understandings of objects as existing in both physical and mental spheres. Where he differs from previous theorists is that he introduces a third realm of existence: a social sphere. This social level is a site of interaction and performance, and its introduction allows for an examination of how the two previous realities of objects act on individuals. He explicitly calls out the existence of languages or codes embedded into spaces that are understood by the inhabitants of that space. Early on he refers to a “code at once architectural, urbanistic and political” that existed in the sixteenth to the nineteenth century Renaissance city and “constitut(ed) a language common to country people and townspeople, to the

authorities and to artists.” Conceptually, this code reflects how space is understood, but it is also how the individual understands himself or herself within the space. When an individual moves through a space, an ideologically laden interaction takes place that defines what can occur within that space.

Lefebvre posits that the totality of space is built of numerous smaller webs or networks. As such, it is monuments that act as “strong points, nexuses or anchors” of these networks. Due to their position at points of intersection, he further posits that monuments do not have a single signifier, which can be read, but rather a “horizon of meaning.” This stems from the fact that they perform social and political roles; they are defined by numerous codes and sub-codes, and in the performance of different actions, they take on different meanings. The monumental space stands apart from the rest of the networks, connected to many and yet part of none. It is a space of action, of ritual and performance, and as such acts in the social realm on individuals moving through it. The body is transformed into a symbol in this space, becoming part of a ritual defined by a politico-religious whole. The ritual has hierarchies, levels that define how an individual can move through and utilize the monumental space. These levels are not simply divided along lines of power and knowledge, but along lines of active or passive participation. The essence of monumental space is that, through prescribed movement and action, it permits or withholds subjectivity to the individual. Within the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón, the identity of citizens is defined by how and where they act within the space.

Lefebvre is not the only theorist to ruminate on the bestowal or denial of subjectivity in communal spaces. In The Birth of the Museum, Tony Bennett looks at how institutional spaces act in much the same way to categorize and differentiate who in society is an active, subjective individual and who is a passive member of the collective. Museums acted to control movement and behaviour in such a way as to differentiate between the elite and the populace, as well as to “form and shape the moral, mental

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28 Ibid., 7.
29 Ibid., 222.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 224.
and behavioural characteristics” of the masses. His discussion of the Great Exhibition of 1851 displays some of the factors that “transformed the many-headed mob into an ordered crowd.” It delineated social difference by providing different days for different ticket prices. It controlled the masses by making them part of the spectacle; the crowd became an object to be watched in and of itself. Finally, it solidified an emerging pedagogical relationship between the institution and the public. The institution held the power to disseminate knowledge; the public’s role was to absorb what was presented to them in an appropriate manner. Appropriate, in this case, was defined by the institution. Ways of dressing, ways of moving through space, and ways of looking were at first taught, then regulated, then internalized by the users of the institutional form.

The Cemetery holds an important place in the social world of a city. As a communal site in the city, it allows for the creation, performance and negotiation of identity within a structured social whole. The Cementerio Cristóbal Colón in Havana has multiple modes of existence; it is a social space, a monumental space and an institutional space. Its physical form bears the indelible mark of the contested ideologies of the society that created it. Exploring the material and conceptual markers of the space reveals the complex and evolving identity politics occurring in Havana.

Reading the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón

The cemetery is a nuanced space, simultaneously contained within its walls and interlinked with the city, and global network, around it. In order to mobilize the cemetery as a readable historic source, I utilize a set of methodological approaches that draw on three bodies of sources: written, visual, and spatial. The written sources used in this work reveal how the cemetery was imagined and presented to the public by advertisement and notices in Havana publications. I use primary source documents such as periodicals, letters, official communications, advertisements, and cemetery regulations to assess how the space was planned and how that plan was communicated to the public. This mediated communication captures the negotiated nature of the site. By interrogating how design and policy changed to

33 Ibid., 72.
34 Ibid., 73-74.
accommodate new forms and expressions of burial, I uncover the expectations and reception of Havana’s public to the cemetery. Reading and analyzing the institutional discourse of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón, I explore how social status was created for certain groups within this process, and how that affected the articulation of identity within the design selection.

The visual sources I use are drawn from both archival documents and photographs of the site. I examine the records of the design and layout to understand how the space changed over the years to encompass a changed cultural reality. Alongside the changing maps of the site, the technology of nineteenth century photography allowed for the capture of images of the cemetery as it was being constructed. Official images reveal the growth of the material space, as it progressed through the long construction period. Unofficial photographs, most of which were taken by tourists, are a valuable record of how the site was received. Working comparatively with these images, I extract a gradual progression that can be read in the context of the secondary source material on the changes in the wider social realm.

My principal methodological intervention has been to consider the space of the cemetery itself as a primary source document, one that is written in a visual and material language unique to the graveyard. In this work, I reconceptualise how graveyards are perceived, positioning them as primary documents which can be analyzed within a specific historic moment to deepen our understanding of the social and cultural practices of the people who created and used them. This involved interacting with the material site and engaging with the experience of the graveyard itself. First was a consideration of the control and manipulation of space within the design structure. The shape of the space, as both a guide and a limitation to movement, was revelatory of the mechanisms that control value and status in the space. Using the impact of the shape and layout of the site on physical movement, this work seeks to question how certain values were inscribed in its material form. Studying the physical manner in which Havana’s social groups were divided within the space of the graveyard reveals one way in which individual subjectivity and place was naturalized within the emergent Cuban national identity.
The project of nationalism in Cuba responded on three levels, to three different components of Cuban society. The success of nationalism hinged on the articulation of identity on an international level, on a social scale, and within the individual. Different aspects of the design and use of the cemetery addressed these different layers. The chapters of this work present each of these components as discrete activities occurring within a broader social realignment.

Chapter Two examines the larger Atlantic World cemetery reform movement of the nineteenth century. It seeks to problematize the standard Euro-centric model by flagging previously neglected sites that do not conform to this narrative. I question the construct of Cuba as a passive receiver of culture, instead positioning the Cuban cemetery as a design that articulates a unique, considered, and purposeful form, created in dialogue with international models. The subsequent chapters develop out of this position, seeking to emphasize how Cubans utilized the design to negotiate and define an identity unique to the island.

Chapter Three addresses nationalism on a macro scale. Acknowledging and drawing on the existence of regional cemetery design schools, this chapter looks at how the Cuban design existed in dialogue with those of the United States and Spain. The manner in which the regional design schools used space reflects the ideology of the cities that created them. Understanding that the Cuban designers had knowledge of the cemetery’s spatial arrangement of both of these regions, their own use of space is used to read how Cuba was imagining itself in relation to the two dominant cultural forces influencing it. By looking at how the cemetery claims and rejects specific aspects of the competing international models, this chapter emphasizes the difference that Cuba was communicating through the language of design. While complex and contested, Cuba was demonstrating its own path to independence.

Chapter Four builds on the contested nature of Cuban society, looking at how ideas of status and position changed over time. The project of nationalism had a profound effect on the internal social structures of the city, and the negotiation of place within the cemetery demonstrates how this played out, particularly around race and socio-economic station. The rhetoric of equality that gripped the insurgent
ranks is demonstrated to have had mixed results in terms of tangible social change. The cemetery instead highlights the birth of a nation deeply divided along lines of wealth, race, and social position.

Chapter Five turns to the internal transformation of self that accompanied the emergence of a national identity. In order for independence to succeed, the citizenry of Cuba had to engage with and identify with the symbolic form of the nation. The cemetery demonstrates multiple routes to belonging within the new nation. The first route was the creation of a Cuban history that provided a narrative of the past intended to foster both pride and a willingness to sacrifice for the nation. The monuments to great men and to Cuban martyrs were crafted to foster and advance the recognition of, and loyalty towards, the nation of Cuba. The second route was the creation of family sites of memory that tied the individual’s identity to the land. The affective ties of memory were forged through their integration with the spaces of death. The individual recognized themselves as Cuban because they were born of the land, and, in death, the land of Cuba reclaimed them. Cubans legitimized their claim to sovereignty due to their blood and emotional ties to the land. Finally, the cemetery offered belonging to individuals that did not have claims through other means. As a society marked by immigration, racial and ethnic divides, and a vast inequality of social experience, Cuba needed to reach beyond the ties of status or family in order successfully create a national identity. The cemetery evolved to embrace a wider definition of community within the larger social frame. The individual was ushered into Cuban society through their belonging to smaller communities that made up Havana. The community and professional monuments altered the conception of citizen, introducing a new understanding of position that embraced a broad population previously unclaimed.

This work studies the ties between the design, construction and early use of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón and the emergence of a national identity in Cuba. The intention is not to provide a definitive interpretation of what this national identity entailed. Rather, it seeks to explore the contradictions and tensions that existed in this period and project. In this thesis, I contextualize the architecture and geography of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón within the fluctuating landscape of power in Havana during the years 1868-1898. It does not look for a universal mode of utility, rather the opposite.
By examining the differences in how various social groups used and interacted with the cemetery, this work demonstrates the shifting power structures within Havana. What the cemetery reveals is remarkable, telling of social transformations, and exposes a society at odds with itself, precariously balanced between tradition and revolution.
Chapter 2

From Churchyard to Cemetery: the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón and the Narrative of Nineteenth Century Cemetery Reform.

The wall surrounding the Cristóbal Colón cemetery runs along 222 city blocks.¹ (Figure 2-1 and 2-2) The distinctive façade cuts a swath through Havana’s busy streets, the white crosses on a brilliant yellow background standing out from their urban environment. Cars whip past at breakneck speed, horns blowing at the tour busses that slow to catch a glimpse of the iconic city landmark. The tour guides on those busses will tell you the blocky white crosses were copied from the Swiss flag, and were chosen to symbolize the neutrality of the space. It is an example of the oral history of the cemetery, the origins of which are lost in a century and a half of retellings. Like so many of the popular stories about the cemetery, the veracity of this story is hard to ascertain; the records do not speak to the intention of this particular symbolism. What is of note is the common acceptance of the European origin story. This eurocentrism infuses the literature on nineteenth century cemetery reform.² The cemetery design innovations of Latin America and the Caribbean have never been integrated into the literature as contributing elements in the design revolution. Instead, they have been relegated to the sidelines, marginalized as receivers of cultural symbols, rather than creators of their own. It is this very marginalization that points to a rich site of unexplored potential, as inclusion of the neglected cultural contribution of Latin American urban cemeteries opens up pathways to previously uncharted territory.

Like so many urban centers around the Atlantic World, the city of the dead that Havana created mirrored the living city it served. The tumultuous metamorphosis of the foundations of Atlantic World power had deep repercussions on both sides of the Atlantic. Between 1775 and 1824, revolutions in the

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Atlantic World led to the realignment of regional, political, and economic powers as the first system of global empire collapsed into the new.\(^3\) The American Revolution provided a regional template for colonial insurrection.\(^4\) The revolution in Hispaniola exacerbated racial fears, while the collapse of its sugar industry fundamentally changed the global pattern of trade and exchange.\(^5\) The subsequent uprisings in Spanish America marked the rapid decline of Spanish control of its colonial holdings.\(^6\) Alongside the political and economic upheavals came rapid social and cultural transformations. New ideas took root, and an irreversible change began, not simply of the ideological basis of identity and place, but a very real transformation of space. Amidst the many spaces that were radically transformed during this period of urban reform were the urban spaces of death. The manner in which cities designed and constructed new cemeteries solidified their position in the new ideological world stage.

In this chapter I challenge the dominant narrative on the origin and evolution of the nineteenth century cemetery reform movement. By first examining the social pressures that drove the reform movement, and the standard presentation of the critical players, I problematize the euro-centric origin story of urban reform cemeteries by introducing contradictory or neglected micro-movements. In order to demonstrate the feasibility of a multidirectional flow of ideas, and the potential for an intra-Caribbean cultural network, this chapter traces the evolution of the cemetery reforms. While not seeking to discredit the traditional model, I instead emphasize that the potential for a more nuanced exploration exists, and that a more comprehensive approach better reflects the system of cultural exchange in the nineteenth century Atlantic World.

Urbanization, Disease Theory, and Churchyard burial

The principle and driving force behind the creation of new urban cemeteries in the nineteenth century was simple: demographic changes had increased urban populations to the point that the existing system for the disposal of the deceased was overwhelmed. The technological changes brought about by the industrial revolution meant that population distribution shifted from rural to urban. People began living together in higher concentrations than ever seen before, and newly booming cities lacked the infrastructure to handle the influx of people. The detritus of life, alongside the biological waste of overpopulation, created a rich medium for the propagation of disease. Epidemics swept through cities with regular frequency, and the inability to control or prevent these diseases stemmed not only from a lack of infrastructure, but also from a lack of understanding of the biological nature of disease transmission. Fuelled by the doctrines of scientific rationality, civil institutions and intellectuals began to look for the source of such disease. The emerging medical field attributed the cause and spread of epidemics to ‘miasmas’, or bad air. Once this perceived source of illness became accepted by the authorities and the general population, a linked narrative on the dangers of urban graveyards quickly followed.

In the eighteenth century, the graveyard came to be intimately linked with this understanding of disease and epidemics. This connection emerged from the style and pattern of use of these older burial grounds. These precursors to the cemetery reform movement represented a tradition of burial that continued, with little alteration, since the middle ages. Referred to as churchyard burial grounds, they were exactly that: the land immediately surrounding the church was used to inhume the bodies of the

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10 Burial, until this point, was controlled by ecclesiastical authorities. The churchyard form was common across Christian denominations, encompassing both Protestant and Catholic regions in both continental Europe and the colonial spaces. Ariès, *Western Attitudes*, 20.
faithful. To say that these graveyards were designed is a misnomer, for their growth was more organic in nature. Graves were not laid out in a formal, structured manner. Although there was a rigid stratification space, the actual layout of the graves was haphazard. Individuals of the highest status, including clergy, nobility, and individuals of renown, were buried within the church itself, either in the earth under its floors or in underground vaults.\textsuperscript{11} Outside the walls of the church proper, the distribution of burial sites followed a descending order of social importance. Higher status individuals were buried against the walls of the church, as burial close to the relic of the saint was deemed important.\textsuperscript{12} The lower the status of the individual, the further away from the church they were buried. The poor, having no status, were buried in large communal pits.\textsuperscript{13} Burials were not of a permanent nature, rather the bodies were interred until the graveyard reached capacity, and then disinterred and the bones moved to the ossuary or charnel house. This practice allowed for the perpetual use of the space, as the location of new burials was rotated over many years, allowing for the safe decomposition of remains prior to their exhumation.\textsuperscript{14} This slow cycle was integral to the sustained use of the sites, as the churchyard was not used exclusively for burials, but was commonly a gathering place within the city.\textsuperscript{15} This model, of rotating burial sites sharing space with active city life, proved sufficient for the needs of the cities as long as the influx of new cadavers remained relatively steady. Facing pressure from the demographic changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the exponential growth of the populations of urban centers, this manner of burial quickly revealed itself to be an untenable model.

The longstanding model of churchyard burials proved inadequate to handle the increased numbers of bodies produced by the rapidly growing populations of urban centers. The sharp rise in death rates can be attributed to two factors. First increasing population meant that each church was responsible for a larger congregation. Within this concentrated population, poor living conditions drove the death rate up,

\textsuperscript{12} James Stevens Curl, \textit{Death and Architecture}, 69.
\textsuperscript{13} Philippe Ariès, \textit{Western Attitudes}, 22.
\textsuperscript{14} Colvin, \textit{Architecture and the Afterlife}, 366.
\textsuperscript{15} Ragon, \textit{The Space of Death}, 144-146.
meaning that there was an exponential increase in the numbers of deaths within the urban population. The second factor was the increasing frequency of epidemics that caused unpredictable spikes in mortality rates. When these corpses entered what had been a relatively stable system, the sites proved unable to accommodate the increased load. For centuries, the churchyard’s capacity allowed for a slow rotation of the land, with internments in the ground for years before they were exhumed and reused. This meant that only the skeletal remains were left upon exhumation. Faced with the influx of bodies, the cycle was increased rapidly, and the burial of new bodies often disturbed previous internments in incomplete states of decay. A practice called overburial became common, where bodies were buried on top of previous internments, and each subsequent cadaver was closer to the surface. This was exacerbated in regions influenced by Protestant thought, which disdained the reclamation of graves. Instead, the process of overburial was standard, and the ground level of cemeteries rose over the years as subsequent burials raised the height of the earth to above that of the surrounding streets. In times of epidemics, communal pit burial was used to dispose of the bodies. In extreme cases, both in Europe and the colonial environment, the number of bodies was simply too great and additional land was acquired for “plague pits.”

The challenges facing churchyard burial grounds were not caused only by lack of space or concerns for aesthetics, but extended into the region of the biological as well. Bacteria carry out the natural process of decomposition. When too many corpses are buried in a graveyard, the earth itself becomes toxic, and the bacteria in the soil dies. Once this happens, natural decomposition does not occur, and the burial ground becomes an “embalming matrix, a foul-smelling, slimy mass of putrefaction.” By the late eighteenth century, the state of churchyard burial grounds was deplorable, and the cause of much public concern.

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18 Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 19
21 Mytum, “Public Health” 286
The increasingly deteriorated condition of churchyard graveyards caused them to become a focus for public dissent. Incidents around the overpopulation of these burial grounds underscored the problem to a public that lived in close proximity to its dead. In Paris, overcrowding in the Cimetière des Innocents caused a cellar wall to collapse and partially decomposed corpses to spill into the basements of neighbouring homes. In the United States, which inherited the British aversion to ossuaries and the reclamation of burial space, churchyard burials rapidly exceeded their intended capacity. By 1859, St. Philip’s churchyard, in Charleston, North Carolina, had ten thousand burials in a space intended for two thousand graves. Havana experienced the same overcrowded conditions as the European and North American burial grounds, and it was not uncommon to find notices in the Gaceta announcing the removal of corpses from the Espada general cemetery, the first general cemetery of the city of Havana. Local incidents like these kept the issue in the public realm, drawing the attention of the medical and scientific communities to the state of churchyard burial grounds.

The medical field at the turn of the century thought that diseases such as cholera were air borne. This thought was prevalent both in Europe and in the Americas, and it quickly grew to encompass the poor conditions of urban burial grounds. As early as 1781, authorities attributed an epidemic in Beaune-en-Gâtinais to emanations from its overcrowded cemetery. Indeed, churches and churchyard burial grounds had come to carry the scent of death. In France, one observer noted the “the sepulchral exhalations” that filled the church and acted to “poison the faithful.” Voltaire, when describing the Cimetière des Innocents, noted how “the poor who die very often of contagious diseases are buried there pell-mell; sometimes dogs come and gnaw at their bones, and thick, cadaverous, infected vapour rises from them.” This critique about the danger inherent in the state of the churchyard burial grounds, and

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22 Curl, Death and Architecture, 154.
24 La gaceta de La Habana, December 3rd, 1870, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami.
28 Ibid., 199.
the emanations they produced, was also found on the other side of the Atlantic. J. Jay Smith, an American cemetery reformer, wrote that “the health of the living is chiefly affected by a certain gas generated by the decomposition of the muscular part of the human body;” continuing that “a southerly breeze blowing over a too densely packed graveyard towards a city must be not only offensive but unhealthy.”

Francis Allen, an American scientist, stated in a cemetery reform pamphlet that “the most putrid exhalations arising from grave-yards, will not only feed and strengthen fever when once introduced, but will generate disease equally malignant as yellow fever.”

In this manner, the medicalized language on disease was grafted onto criticism of the overcrowded and collapsing infrastructure of churchyard burial grounds. It was the eighteenth century conceptual mapping of the scientific discourse onto the abominable material reality of graveyards that created the environment in which cemetery reform was deemed not only desirable, but also necessary. The wide scale cemetery reform movement began in the opening decade of the nineteenth century, and gained momentum over the next century.

The narrative of cemetery design evolution that has been reproduced in the literature on this subject follows a clear progression: France initiated, Britain refined, and the United States combined the two forms. There is no doubt that these countries contributed a great deal to the movement. While these countries did wield a great deal of cultural capital during this time period, this linear narrative does not account for a number of antecedents to their developments from outside the dominant influences. Numerous examples live in the margins of the literature that complicate, if not outright contradict, this evolutionary path. First is the emergence of new cemeteries in the Dutch and British colonies in India, which bore a striking resemblance to the garden cemeteries that developed later in France. Second, design elements from cemeteries in New Orleans represent an example of a regional solution that surfaced in Mediterranean cemetery styles. Both of these encompass design elements which originated in colonial spaces and which predate the wider design reforms, but which have been largely sidelined in this account of European origin.

30 Sloane, The Last Great Necessity, 37.
Cemetery Reform: Colonial Influences

Some of the first new design models emerged in India, as early as the late seventeenth century. Facing the same pressures as the continental Europeans, but with the additional complication of tropical diseases, the Dutch at Surat were the first to plan and build large and “hygienic” burial grounds. Founded in the 1650s, these burial grounds were heavily influenced by Islamic funerary art, which provided examples of monumental and architectural designs that prized formal geometry, and a symmetrical aesthetic that incorporated a balance of buildings and gardens. These burial grounds not only broke from the traditional churchyard burial grounds in their focus on hygiene and beauty, but they were located away from the population center and the church. The most influential cemetery from this area was the South Park Street Cemetery in Calcutta, founded by the British in 1767. Both the Dutch and the British cemeteries in this region were admired by visiting Europeans, and both anticipated the garden style cemetery which is more commonly associated with Paris’s Père Lachaise burial ground, founded in 1804.

A second example of a colonial innovation in burial design comes from the United States. Louisiana faced certain geographic peculiarities that exacerbated the burial problems produced by high mortality rates. The low-lying terrain was subject to frequent flooding, and the swamplike soil made in-ground burial extremely problematic. Saturated soil would fill newly dug graves with water, and frequent heavy rains would wash coffins to the surface. Abandoning in-ground burial, New Orleans turned to aboveground vaults. In 1788, the St Louis cemetery was opened, and it was here that the first oven-tombs were located. Often referred to as loculi, the New Orleans-style burial features recesses into which the

33 Curl, Death and Architecture, 137.
34 Curl, “European Funerary Architecture in India,” 287.
36 Culbertson, Permanent Parisians, 5.
coffins are inserted end on. Built in long structures two to six levels high, the oven-tombs were sealed with brick, and a plaque was placed as a marker. Blocks of oven-tombs, each able to accommodate hundreds of bodies, were built in rows to maximize space. The heat of the region would literally bake the corpses, and once decay was complete, the coffins were removed and burnt, and the remains would be pushed back into a charnel cist at the rear of the structure. The origins of this design are unclear, some postulating that they drew inspiration from Roman columbaria; others still drawing connections to early Christian catacombs. Underground vaults, such as seen in European churches, may also have been an inspiration. While the inspiration is unclear, the peculiar method of burial was an innovative solution to a regional burial challenge that not only preceded the reform movement in Europe, but was later adopted into one of the European schools. Loculi of the style seen in Louisiana became a staple of the nineteenth century Mediterranean cemetery, such as those seen in Italy and Spain. The oven tombs of New Orleans not only predated the European school, but represent a colonial innovation that flowed into Europe.

The influence of colonial innovation has not been integrated into the literature on cemetery reform. What these two examples demonstrate is that the exchange of influence seen in the evolution of cemetery design was multidirectional and complex. The fact that colonial innovations in design predated the reform movement in Europe is understudied, yet it challenges the idea that it was an exclusively European driven movement. The existence of colonial reforms does not detract from the power of the European design schools; rather they provide counterpoints that add nuance and context to the movement, highlighting the fact that regional advances in design were occurring in dialogue.

Cemetery Reform: French School

While pockets of reform occurred prior to the nineteenth century, it is clear that the first decade of the nineteenth century marked the advent of the large-scale cemetery reform movement. The deteriorating infrastructure of traditional churchyard burial synchronized with the medicalized construct

38 Curl, *Death and Architecture*, 146.
40 Mytum, “Public Health,” 287.
41 Mytum, “European Cemetery.”
of disease to create a public and institutional environment that demanded change. It is in this environment that the cemetery reform movement began across Europe and the colonial world. Post-revolutionary France, the center of enlightenment thought, engaged in a process of urban reform that included its urban burial spaces. The influence of the French burial grounds was significant. While the narrative of a French origin for cemetery reform is largely a construct of later writing, Paris was a site of considerable cultural capital, and Père Lachaise was the first cemetery to capture the popular interest of designers across the Atlantic world. Held up as a model for others to follow, it represented the first fully realized vision of an ornamental garden cemetery.  

France was at the forefront of the articulation of the medicalized critique that linked burial practices and public health. Beginning in 1740, the government of France began studying the conditions of urban churchyard burial. In 1765, the Parliament of Paris stopped all urban internment within the city, and by 1776 had issued a decree banning urban burial across the country. The last decades of the eighteenth century were a period of disorder, as old burial grounds were deconsecrated and cleared, and new ones were opened with no unified agenda or plan. Over six million Parisian dead were transferred to the catacombs between 1785 and 1871, coming from old burial grounds throughout the city. The transfer of internments from Saint Innocents, the largest graveyard in Paris, took fourteen months and accounted for two million dead. While France was rapidly emptying its old burial grounds, it was not until 1804, with the foundation of Père Lachaise, that a new and consolidated form emerged.  

The design of Père Lachaise, which came to be known as an ornamental garden cemetery, was remarkable in its departure from the churchyard form. (Figure 2-3) Deeply influenced by English aesthetic theory, its design was informed by the picturesque. Trees were carefully placed, and the

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42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
45 For a discussion of how Parisian’s dealt with the dead between 1780 and the foundation of Père Lachaise, see Erin Marie Legacey, Living With the Dead in Postrevolutionary Paris, 1795-1820s, Proquest Dissertation and Thesis, 2011.
landscape was extensively planted to create rolling vistas that inspired contemplation and reflection.\textsuperscript{46} The layout was a natural extension of the land. It modified the undulating flow of the terrain to incorporate monuments and memorials into the landscape in such a way as to encourage remembrance and celebration of the life of the deceased.\textsuperscript{47} Within the formal layout of the grounds, there were no restrictions on the style or size of the individual monuments. The sections abutting the two central avenues were initially purchased by the elite of Parisian society, and large and ostentatious family vaults were constructed in this area. Due to the popularity of the burial grounds, the initial picturesque layout was overwhelmed by the demand for new plots, and by the late nineteenth century the cemetery more closely resembled the dense, monument-filled style of a necropolis.\textsuperscript{48} Despite this, the model of the ornamental garden cemetery spread throughout Europe and the Americas, and had a profound impact on the emergent cemetery design schools.

The French cemetery was not just a design philosophy, but also a physical manifestation of enlightenment ideals. Its spacious boulevards, carefully cultivated landscapes, and strikingly beautiful vistas were a stark contrast to the bleak and cluttered churchyard cemeteries. The cemetery, built on the principles of rational design, seemingly embodied the social progress of enlightenment thought.\textsuperscript{49} It encapsulated the ideals of equality, as access to the remembrance and emotion of memorial gardens was now available to the middle classes. While the majority of the plots were of a temporary nature, they were available as renewable leaseholds for periods of six to one hundred years. These encouraged lower status families to erect family monuments as their circumstances improved. Middle class families could now erect family vaults, and these monuments became statements of the new social order.\textsuperscript{50} Access to prominent burial position was no longer linked to blood and nobility; it now was linked to economics.

\textsuperscript{46} Sloane, \textit{The Last Great Necessity}, 49.
\textsuperscript{50} Mytum, “European Cemetery.”
While the middle class could now enjoy the privileges previously limited to noble birth, the poor continued to be buried in common ground.

**Cemetery Reform: British School**

British cemetery reform, despite having its own early model in India, chose instead to follow the French style seen at Père Lachaise. Tourists who travelled to France brought back a popular appreciation of the site, but it was the architects and designers engaged in an intellectual exchange across Europe and the Americas who were largely responsible for the popularity of the French innovations.\(^{51}\) While the continental European cemeteries moved towards a necropolis model, densely packed monuments completely filling the burial grounds, the British model maintained a more open, park like setting. The difference originates from a divergent conception of the relationship between the living and the dead that necessitated a change in burial practice.

The main difference between the British and French schools stems from use rather than design. There was little that differentiated early nineteenth century Catholic and Protestant cemetery design. This does not preclude a difference in the practice of burial. The Protestant faith largely disdained the practice of secondary burial, so common on the continent.\(^{52}\) The British churchyard sites, for the most part, lacked ossuaries and charnel houses. Instead, the overburial of the plots was common, with multiple burials occurring one on top of the other.\(^{53}\) The plots of the new nineteenth century cemeteries were sold as permanent allotments, thus restricting the tightly packed build-up of monuments seen in the French cemeteries. The garden-like aspect of the layout was thus maintained.

The preservation of a peaceful, contemplative aspect to the burial grounds was also necessary due to a new understanding of death. Britain was the locus of a new movement, which Ariès has described as a “romantic cult of the dead.”\(^{54}\) This movement was epitomized by melancholy remembrance, in which the emotive response of the living was heightened and refined by reflection on the lives of the deceased.


\(^{53}\) Mytum, “European Cemetery.”

\(^{54}\) Ariès, *Western Attitudes*, 79.
In order to facilitate the contemplative nature of the interaction, simplicity was emphasized in memorials. The bucolic setting of the garden landscape, coupled with simpler, less figurative monuments came to typify the British garden cemetery. This romantic view of death, focused on the beauty and sorrow of grief, extended far beyond the cemetery walls. The romantic cult of the dead led to an entire artistic movement, with Thomas Gray’s “Elegy in a Country Churchyard” the first in a series of artistic works seeking to capture the spirit of melancholy these cemeteries celebrated. The romantic style’s focus on simpler commemorative monuments located on permanent plots associated it with the idea of the individual, both in the experience of the dead and that of the living. Stemming from positivist conceptions of the self, the graveyard both created space for the burial of the individual and facilitated the personal grief of the mourner.

Cemetery Reform: American School

Nineteenth century cemetery reform in the United States incorporated ideas from both France and England, and transformed it into a new form, the rural cemetery. J Jay Smith, one of the founders of the Laurel Hill Rural Cemetery, wrote that the cemetery served two purposes, the first being the disposal of the dead in such as way as to not prove “injurious to the living, wither (sic) by affecting their health, or shocking their feelings, opinions, or prejudices.” The second objective of the cemetery should be “the improvement of the moral sentiments and general taste of all classes, and more especially the great masses of society.” The philosophy of the rural cemetery that emerged in the early nineteenth century was simple: provide a peaceful repose for the dead and a foster a reconnection with a moral code being eroded by urbanization.

In order to accomplish this, the cemeteries followed the picturesque model of Père Lachaise. Americans considered agriculture, and its urban equivalent horticulture, to be a virtuous practice, one associated with vitality, hard work, and domestic tranquility. The founders of the first rural cemetery, Boston’s Mount Auburn, partnered with The Massachusetts Horticultural Society in the design and

55 Ibid., 78.
56 Smith, Designs for Monuments, 6.
execution of the cemetery in order to improve the taste of the public.\textsuperscript{57} (Figure 2-4) Built on seventy-two acres, the cemetery was laid out to inspire awe and provide a contrast to the filth and chaos of Boston’s urban life. Where it differs from Père Lachaise is in the distribution of plots. Where Père Lachaise followed the European practice of renewable leases on plots, with the exception being the permanent plots sold to the very wealthy, Mount Auburn’s were all permanent allotments. Sold as family lots of three hundred square feet, they were intended for use over generations. The layout of the land, with meandering roads that wound through the property severely curtailed any possibility of a hierarchy of place. The cemetery also had an open policy in regards to whom could purchase plots, and many working class families were able to purchase land alongside the wealthy.\textsuperscript{58}

Another differentiating factor of the rural cemetery movement was the nature of its management. While the new cemeteries in Europe were controlled by either the church or the state, the American cemeteries were created and run by non-profit community groups.\textsuperscript{59} Plot owners held a voting share in the corporation, and the management reflected a democratic system of decision-making. While the board was responsible for the cultivation and maintenance of the larger landscape components, individual plot owners were solely responsible for their property within the cemetery.\textsuperscript{60} Despite its move towards democratic practice, the poorest in U.S. society could not afford a family plot, and the cemeteries sold individual lots in a common section. Only these lots had restrictions on the size and placement of memorial plaques, and the owners did not hold a voting share in the cemetery.\textsuperscript{61} Despite this, the rural cemetery movement came to be associated with a uniquely American viewpoint, the morally edifying virtues of the rural environment, a levelling of social hierarchies, and a democratic process of community building. The design schools of France, Britain and the United States offer three cemetery forms that mobilized the visual language of cemeteries to communicate diverse ideological positions. While these

\textsuperscript{57} Sloane, \textit{The Last Great Necessity}, 46.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 53-54.
\textsuperscript{59} MacLean, “The American Cemetery.”
\textsuperscript{60} Sloane, \textit{The Last Great Necessity}, 54.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 54-56.
represented the highest profile design reforms, and have become central in the literature, they emerged concurrent with numerous other styles.

Cemetery Reform: Mediterranean School

It is not just colonial contributions that are sidelined by this narrative; certain regions within Europe itself are minimized. While the French, British, and American schools reside at the center of the literature on cemetery reform, representing as they do the embodiment of the enlightenment ideologies of rational thought and the individual, they were not the only styles that emerged in nineteenth century Europe. Offering a counterpoint to the picturesque naturalized settings of the French and English layouts, the nineteenth century cemeteries in the Mediterranean offered a more structured, formal approach. While this area was traditionally a strongly Catholic region, the variation in style is more closely correlated to the regional levels of urban reform of social hierarchies. Areas that maintained more traditional family and social structures tended towards cemetery layouts with more rigid delineation of social status. The Italian and Spanish cemeteries in the nineteenth century were similar in style, and both incorporated linear divisions of space.

The last decades of the eighteenth century saw the Spanish government engage in a process of urbanization and modernization, not only on the continent but also in its colonies. Influenced by the eighteenth century French legal reform of urban burial, the government of Charles III decreed the end of churchyard burials in 1787. The changes mandated the creation of suburban cemeteries, and led to the 1804 creation of the General Cemetery of the North in Madrid. In 1811, construction began on a new Catholic cemetery in Madrid, San Isidro. The design of both these cemeteries follows a style far removed from the picturesque elements of the French and British models, but one that was common in the

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62 Jay Kinsbruner, in *The Colonial Spanish-American City: Urban Life in the Age of Atlantic Capitalism*, discusses how the family unit remained central to the practice of urban life. By elucidating the ideal, which continued to be the patriarchal nuclear family, as well as the departures from this form, he underscores how the family remained central to social functions.


Mediterranean. These were walled cemeteries, typified by a formal layout of linear streets and a series of cloistered squares. Blocks of above ground loculi, of the style seen in Louisiana, were built along the walls. The majority of plots were sold as limited tenure plots, with only the very wealthy purchasing permanent spaces. The hierarchy of burial position was rigidly enforced, with the highest status families being buried in the cloister garths of the central courtyards, and a descending order of precedence extending out towards the walls. Over time, more families opted to purchase permanent plots as a means of showing advancing social status. The practice was for above ground memorial plots, where the family member would be interred. After a period of time sufficient to ensure that decomposition was complete, the bones would be removed to a family ossuary. The Spanish style maintained rigid social order, and the predominance of the family within society. Enlightenment ideals of social reform were not emphasized in the use of space, rather traditional values were reinforced. The material forms of the Spanish cemeteries, as well as the ideologies they represent, have been sidelined in the literature on the nineteenth century reform movement.

Latin American Cemetery Reform

What is apparent is that some groups are privileged in the analysis of nineteenth century cemetery reform, while others are minimized, used as interesting sidebars to the discussion of the center. Of equal concern is the absence of Latin American cemetery reform as a culturally relevant contributor from the literature on nineteenth century cemetery design. Latin America and the Caribbean were experiencing patterns of urban growth equal to or greater than those seen in Europe and the United States, and the process of urban reform was advancing apace. The realities of tropical disease, immigration, and war increased the pressure on these growing cities. Facing additional demographic burdens than their European counterparts, urban centers in Latin America were building new cemeteries that rivalled those in Europe. Argentina, Mexico, Columbia, Brazil; they, among others, designed and constructed new

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66 The term cloister refers to a covered arcade around a courtyard, while the garth is the central square or quadrangle. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "cloister," [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/122033/cloister](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/122033/cloister).
67 Mytum, “European Cemetery.”
urban cemeteries. La Recoleta, in Buenos Aires is considered by many to be among the greatest necropolises in the world, and draws thousands of tourists every year.\(^6^9\) However, despite the beauty and artistry of the Latin American sites, their presence is notably absent from the study of the cemetery reform movement.

This is not to say that there is no writing on the cemeteries of Latin America. There have been works published on Latin American cemeteries, often, but not exclusively, in Spanish, but these works conceptualize the cemeteries as standalone units, contained within the realm of their nation, or city.\(^7^0\) What is lacking, and which is so readily apparent in both American and European studies, is an attempt to trace a regional cultural network of influence. With regards to cemetery design, Latin American cities are positioned as receivers, rather than creators, of culture. In many ways, they are doubly marginalized in the literature. First, as colonial spaces, their potential contributions to this evolving form are, like other colonial cemetery innovations, discounted as cultural influences. Second, their Iberian heritage attaches them to the Mediterranean design school, which is seen as superfluous to the central evolution of the reforms. Without integrating the experience of urban cemetery reform in Latin America and the Caribbean into the larger narrative, the ability of scholars to assess two critical aspects is limited. The feasibility of an intra-Caribbean network of cultural exchange, and their counter-influence on design forms cannot be fully realized until they have been brought into dialogue with the origins and evolution of the cemetery design movement.

Latin American Cultural Exchange

The potential of an intra-Caribbean cultural network does not function to negate European influence, instead it holds the potential to expand and complicate this model, offering a more complete understanding of the interrelated social forms at work in the Atlantic World. The movement of people within the Caribbean is well established; material culture and cultural practice flowed with these migrations. Within the studies on Latin American cemeteries there already exists a pattern of exchange. The work that remains to be done is to bring this pattern to the foreground.

In Pamela Voekel’s article “Piety and Public Space: The Cemetery Campaign in Veracruz, 1789-1810,” she discusses the social, political, and religious battles over the design and construction of a new urban cemetery in Veracruz, Mexico. While acknowledging the origins of Bourbon Spain’s civil laws that mandated the reform, she highlights the importance of the “local climate” in determining the shape of the change. She articulates the positions of both sides of the debate, emphasizing the language of the ecclesiastical authority’s support for cemetery reform. What is of note about the construction of this new cemetery, one which met all the criteria of the reform movement cemeteries including a distancing from the city center, a removal from the church property, and a focus on hygiene and health, was that the construction took place in 1790, almost fifteen years before Père Lachaise.

While Voekel’s article focuses on the politics of cemetery reform in Veracruz in 1790, Paul Barrett Niell’s, “Classical Architecture and the Cultural Politics of Cemetery Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Havana, Cuba” looks at the politics of reform in Havana fifteen years later. When Bishop Espada, alongside the enlightened reformers in Cuban society, attempted to garner public support for the construction of a general cemetery for the city, they mobilized language similar to that used in Veracruz. Niell further notes how similar rhetoric was used by a number of proponents for new cemeteries across Latin America. Concurrent with the construction of the ‘first’ reform cemetery in France, Bishop Espada was drawing on an already established Latin American precedent to push his agenda. While this

71 Voekel, “Piety and Public Space,” 3.
72 Ibid., 5.
does not conclusively demonstrate the existence of a Latin American or intra-Caribbean school of cemetery design, it indicates that the cultural influences are much more complicated than those expressed in the European model. The Cementerio Cristóbal Colón, designed and built half a century later, would have been responding to not only the European and American design schools, but also the fully realized models of urban cemeteries in Latin America.

**Multi-directional Movement of Cultural**

The designers of the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón had a diversity of influences to draw on in making their choices for their own city of the dead. Both the designers and the general public knew the popular European and American cemetery forms. The Latin American models would also have impacted the design, although the mechanisms and extent of this influence has yet to be fully explored. In Havana, there was also an internal reference, the popular Espada cemetery, used until the last decades of the nineteenth century. Cuba, however, was not only a receiver of material culture. The Cementerio Cristóbal Colón represents a distinctive cemetery model that was unique to the Cuban experience. The extent to which the Cuban design moved outward has not been considered, and it is necessary to factor this counter influence into a complete model of cultural exchange. While it is difficult to measure the impact of the Cuban form on the evolution of cemetery design, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that the necropolis was entering the public consciousness off of the island. This section will focus on the evidence that demonstrates the transference of ideas to Cuba’s neighbour, the United States. Through various media, the cemetery model was spreading out from the shores of the island, and entering the American popular consciousness.

One of the principal media through which knowledge of the cemetery spread was print media. This media is the one most commonly attributed with spreading the influence of the European cemetery forms. In the case of American newspapers, there is an abundance of references to the new Havana site.

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74 Ibid., 57-89.
Newspaper articles note the attendance of important dignitaries at funerals held in the cemetery. Some are short notes, while others offer more descriptive content. Other articles tell of the burial of American citizens in the Colón cemetery, further extending the American exposure to the Havana site. Through this written medium, the general population in the United States was being exposed to the name of the cemetery, and its position as an important cultural site in the region. These articles were the first mode of communication that flowed from Cuba into the United States.

While this medium was limited to print descriptions, it created an interest in the cemetery, and established it as a major landmark on the island. In a model reminiscent of the manner in which the major European sites were popularized first through print, the Cuban cemetery captured the imagination of the Americans who visited Havana. The impact of these tourists is the export of visual records of the cemetery. (Figure 2-5). The photo albums of American tourists documenting trips to Cuba feature a number of iconic Havana landmarks, prominent among them the Colón cemetery. Certain features of the site are popular to tourists of the period, such as the Puerta de la Paz. (Figure 2-6). These albums continued to be produced, and by the end of the nineteenth century the interest in images of Havana was so popular in the United States that it expanded into a new medium. Collections of Cuban picture postcards were produced during the final decades of the nineteenth century, driven by the popular American hobby of collecting postcards. One of the Cuban landmarks featured was the Colón cemetery. (Figure 2-7). The production of these postcards, whose English descriptions were intended for an American audience, marked the commercialization of the cemetery, as it was increasingly marketed as a

cultural destination for foreign visitors. By the end of the century, representations of the Colón cemetery were moving from the island to the United States. Carried in the personal photographs of tourists, as well as in mass produced images, these visual tokens demonstrate that the Cuban cemetery design was circulating outwards from Havana. The interest and popularity of the European schools are most often attributed to newspaper coverage and tourism, and the transference of the Cuban form follows a similar model.

Inclusive Model of Cultural Exchange

The commonly accepted model of nineteenth century urban cemetery reform centers on a European design origin that precludes a full understanding of the evolution of this movement over time. Within this study, the contributions of colonial spaces have been understudied, regarded as tangential to the driving force of the movement. This minimization of the impact also applies to the Mediterranean school, where a parallel movement featuring distinct formal arrangements of space is only rudimentarily referenced. The failure to substantively link these models into the wider evolution of design creates a limited scope of analysis. These regions experienced the same urban population change, they were dealing with the same shortcomings in the churchyard burial model, and they were witnessing the same social and political upheaval as the more studied countries. Their urban centers were driven by the same factors to design and build new cemetery forms. In addition, they faced unique conditions, such as tropical disease, extreme fluctuations in climate, booming export economies, and the upheaval of various revolutionary wars, all of which increased the need for new cemeteries. In many cases their reforms paralleled or anticipated the timeline of the general move in France, England and the United States. Despite this, their innovations are not viewed as either cultural innovations, or as cultural resistance. Their absence from the literature creates a one-dimensional presentation of this movement, one that does not fully capture the complexity of the exchange that was taking place.

The Latin American and Caribbean reforms are doubly marginalized, both as colonial spaces and as inheritors of the Iberian model. The literature has reduced them to cultural receivers, and their cemetery forms are absent from common studies of the reform movement. This absence has curtailed
academic inquiry in this area, precluding two critical questions around Latin American and Caribbean contributions. First is the question of whether there is evidence of an intra-Caribbean or Latin American network of exchange in place. Were the urban centers in this region articulating a design form that responded to a shared experience and epistemological foundation outside of the experience of Europe? Second is the question of how the material culture forms they were innovating flowed outwards and whether they acted as contributing elements to the design evolution that was taking place. In order for the model of the nineteenth century cemetery reform movement to fully encapsulate the complexity of the network of exchange that flowed across the Atlantic World, it must encompass the contributions of these previously neglected participants.
Figure 2-1 View of the North Wall of the Christopher Columbus Cemetery in Havana, 1887. (Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami).

Figure 2-2 North Wall of Cemetery, 2013. (photograph, Bethany Wade)
Figure 2-3: Plan of Père Lachaise Cemetery, in Paris. 1839. (Amis et Passionnes du Père Lachaise)

Figure 2-4: Plan of Boston’s Mount Auburn Cemetery, 1893. (Western Massachusetts History and Genealogy)
Figure 2-5: Page from "Album of Photographs," circa 1890. This page features two popular Havana landmarks, the Cathedral and the Cemetery. (Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami).

Figure 2-6: From album entitled "Our Wonderful trip to Cuba" this album documents images of the city of Havana, including this photograph of the North gate; taken in 1887 it was taken prior to the completion its iconic sculpture. (Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami).
Figure 2-7: Early Picture Postcard featuring the Colón Cemetery. This image depicts the Tobias Gallery, which was closed to new burials in 1878. (Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami).
Chapter 3
From Colony to Country: Designing Space, Designing Nation in the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón

At the Puerta de la Paz, you can purchase a tourist map of the Colón Cemetery for five Cuban convertible pesos. Sealed in a complicated series of folds, once opened it is roughly the size of a glove compartment road map; eminently unsuited for a hot and humid afternoon exploring the cemetery grounds. If one is lucky enough, or clever enough, it is possible to manipulate it so that it reveals an annotated map of the site. This map includes small icons, representing the monuments considered to be of cultural or artistic importance. On it are listed war memorials, monuments to important families, artists, musicians, politicians, and if one looks closely enough, a tomb for professional baseball players.1 (Figure 3-1). The baseball monument itself is of little artistic interest; its inclusion is as a cultural site. It is considered a testament to the influence of American culture on the Cuban experience. It raises questions about how cultural influence is measured, and the accepted impact of outside forces on the formation of the Cuban national identity.

The start of the nineteenth century found Cuba at the center of an unsettled Atlantic World. Old imperial powers were dwindling, while their former colonies were embarking on a process of nation building that was redefining international politics. Cuba, despite being surrounded by revolutionary movements from 1775 until 1824, had remained a colony of Spain.2 It was not until the 19th century that the idea of a Cuban nation gripped the island. Terms such as criolla and peninsular, which previously had denoted a Spaniard born on Cuban soil from one born in Spain, came to denote the difference between a Cuban and a Spaniard.3 This remarkable transformation of thought did not happen in isolation, but within a complex network of exchange across the Atlantic World; an exchange not simply of trade goods, but of

1 With regards to terminology used to describe the cemetery, a memorial is a site that does not always hold the physical remains, but is used to build and maintain memory of an individual, family, or event. A grave is a site of internment. The term monument refers to the work that is situated on a grave or memorial site. The multiplicity of use within the cemetery space means that these terms overlap.
people and ideas. Cuba, strategically valuable both to military and mercantile concerns in the region, became the focus of opposing imperial powers, Spain and the United States. These two countries, representing the waxing and waning imperial systems in the 19th century Atlantic World, both had a vested interest in the question of Cuban nationhood. Cuba, poised between these two cultural juggernauts, had to delineate a border between its emergent national identity, and its status as a colonial state. The design choices made for the Colón Cemetery speak to an independent vision, one in which Cuba differentiates itself from the vision of others, and claims a unique national identity.

In this chapter, I analyze the cemetery design choices made in Havana in the context of the larger Atlantic world reform movement. As the choice of layout and spatial division of nineteenth century urban cemeteries spoke to the fundamental beliefs and values of the society which created them, as well as pointing to the social aspirations of its individual members, the new cemeteries embodied an idealized representation of cultural norms. Grounded in an understanding that the varied regional layouts were revelatory of the ideologies and social structures of the culture that built them, I position the specifics of the Cuban design as being in dialogue with to two powerful cultural forces, Spain and the United States. I demonstrate the extent to which the Cuban layout utilized the visual language of the cemetery to articulate a unique vision of a nation, distinct from the cultural practices of either empire.

**Atlantic World Cemetery Reform**

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, an unprecedented cemetery reform movement began. As discussed in detail in chapter two, in cities across Europe, the Americas, and the colonial world, old burial practices were being abandoned, and new forms of urban burial grounds were being built. To describe it as a movement is somewhat misleading, as this implies a level of uniformity and order that was largely absent. This has not stopped academics studying the phenomenon from attempting to find a common thread. Social historians analyse the changes as a reflection of shifting Western epistemologies of death. Burial art and representations of death were positioned as a socially understood relationship

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between the individual, death, and the community.\textsuperscript{5} Others have suggested that the transformation of graveyards was a tool of hegemonic social control.\textsuperscript{6} Still others have removed it entirely from the physical realm, and have debated it as a philosophical question relating to the nature of being.\textsuperscript{7} Taken together, these schools of thought lay out a comprehensive framework of the conceptual nature of death in the nineteenth century. Yet in the search for a universalizing intellectual model that would encompass the entirety of the phenomena, the physical and tangible nature of the reforms was often neglected. Even a superficial survey of the cemeteries built in the nineteenth century shows a vast diversity of layout and style. There is little to demonstrate that cities were compelled to create new cemeteries following a shared design model. Instead, the common pattern that emerges is that cities, across cultural, ideological, and physical distances, shared a drive to design and build new cemeteries. The individual spaces they created differed based on those same cultural, ideological, and physical differences. The material manifestation of these ideas is not a uniformity of style, but an interrelated pattern of influence. Particular design elements emerge in clusters, and these synergistic groupings came to encode social values in a visual language particular to the graveyard.\textsuperscript{8} Nineteenth century urban cemeteries have been described as “socially didactic,” in that their material form contains social symbolism that expresses the underlying structures and aspirations of the group that built it.\textsuperscript{9} The design choices made in Havana’s new general cemetery mobilize this visual language to communicate its position within a shifting social and ideological global network. A nascent understanding of a Cuban national identity, retaining certain elements of its past and rejecting others, is laid down in the physical structures of its new necropolis.

\textsuperscript{5} The foundation of this school of thought can be found in the texts of Aries: Philippe Aries, \textit{The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death Over the Last One Thousand Years}, trans. Helen Weaver (London: Allen Lane, 1981); Philippe Aries, \textit{Western Attitudes Toward Death From the Middle Ages to the Present}, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).


\textsuperscript{9} Kearl, \textit{Endings}, 49.
Havana and Cemetery Reform

The dynamic changes during the first half of the nineteenth century meant that a number of
cemetery design schools, ideologically and materialistically distinct, emerged within the reform
movement. The fluid exchange of people and ideas across the Atlantic world meant that these different
design philosophies were familiar to both architects, through academic institutions, and to the general
population, through the reports of tourists and newspapers. Amidst the growing fascination with these
international models, Havana selected the design for its new general cemetery. (Figure 3-2)

A rapidly expanding city, Havana faced similar infrastructure challenges as those seen in urban
centers in Europe. Between the years 1791 and 1817, the population of the island moved from 272, 300 to
553,033; by 1862 it had reached 1,396,470. At the start of this demographic boom, twenty percent of
Cuba’s population resided in Havana, and by the end that percentage had risen to thirty two percent. In
order to deal with this population growth, Havana engaged in a project of urban reform and renewal. As
part of this project of modernization, it opened its first general cemetery, the Espada general cemetery, in
1806, at the very beginning of the cemetery reform movement. This cemetery quickly proved
insufficient to the needs of a growing population, and less than twenty years after its opening there
emerged a desire to build a new general cemetery, one that would not only serve the needs of the city’s
dead but stand as a testament to Havana’s cultural sophistication. This desire for a new general cemetery
coalesced in 1854, when the Marques de la Pezuela, the governor of Cuba, first officially proposed a

10 James Stevens Curl, Death and Architecture: Funerary and Commemorative Buildings in the Western European
Tradition, with Some Consideration of Their Settings, (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2002), 162-166; James
Stevens Curl, “The Architecture and Planning of the Nineteenth-Century Cemetery,” Garden History 3, no. 3
Colonial Cemeteries of Nineteenth-century New South Wales,” Mortality 8 no. 2 (2003): 130. DOI
10.1080/1357627031000087389.
64.
13 Paul Barrett Niell, “Classical Architecture and the Cultural Politics of Cemetery Reform in Early Nineteenth-
Century Havana, Cuba,” The Latin Americanist, June (2011): 58. The term general cemetery was adopted in the
early nineteenth century to denote a burial ground that serviced the population of a city. Previous to this, cities
contained multiple churchyard burial grounds, each servicing the members of its congregation.
major new burial ground to the Cortes in Spain.\textsuperscript{14} It was not until 1866 that a royal decree gave permission for the Bishop of Havana, working with civil authorities, to begin planning the city’s new cemetery.\textsuperscript{15} In 1869, the ecclesiastical and civil authorities created the \textit{Junta de Cementerio} to manage the complex process of building the new site, composed of civil servants, engineers, and doctors from Havana society.\textsuperscript{16} In August, 1869 the \textit{Gaceta de la Habana} announced a juried competition, inviting architects to submit design proposals for the new general cemetery.\textsuperscript{17} From seven submissions, the jury voted to award the project to Spanish architect Calixto de Loira. In 1870 his winning design was announced to the public.\textsuperscript{18} Between the announcement of his selection, and the beginning of construction in 1871, the \textit{Junta de Cementerios}, the Royal Corps of Military Engineers, and the \textit{Junta Superior de Sanidad} all had input on the design, resulting in changes to de Loira’s original plans.\textsuperscript{19} It was determined that the changes did not significantly modify the general lines of his design, and construction went ahead under de Loira’s supervision.\textsuperscript{20} The process of selecting a design was not a simple one. The burgeoning cemetery reform movement had created a complex array of ideologically laden design styles, and any decision had to be negotiated between civil, ecclesiastical, and military authorities. The contested nature of the selection process meant that the final design was not a haphazard choice; rather it was a carefully considered, purposeful decision.

\textsuperscript{14} Enrique Martínez y Martínez, \textit{Sucinta descripción de los cementerios de la antigüedad, primitivos de la Habana y el de Cristóbal Colón}, (Habana: Ucar García, 1928), Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, 30.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{La gaceta de la Habana}, Obispado de la Habana, August 13, 1869, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami.
\textsuperscript{18}\textit{La gaceta de la Habana}, Obispado de la Habana, September 19, 1870, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami.
\textsuperscript{20} Martínez, \textit{Sucinta descripción}, 33-34.
Havana’s General Cemetery Design

The cemetery is a rectangular 133 acres (54 hectares) in the neighbourhood of Vedado.\textsuperscript{21} At the time, this area was removed from the center of the city. The design features two wide avenues, running north-south and east-west, which form the principal cross through the center of the space. This divides the cemetery into four quadrants. In the large central plaza is the capilla, or chapel. Each quadrant is further divided by two smaller streets, forming the four-second order crosses, each with a small plaza at their crux. There are two large gates, located at the midpoint of the north and south walls. Each gate consists of a triumphal arch, the north being the principal and larger of the two. There are administrative buildings at both the north and south gates. In addition to these buildings, there is the Galería de Tobías, an underground gallery of crypts, and the Osaría general.\textsuperscript{22} Designated space was set aside for non-Catholics and for victims of epidemics.\textsuperscript{23} The design features a pastoral arrangement of trees and flowers, with avenues lined in structured rows of plantings at regular intervals. Overall, there is a heightened attention to symmetry and balance, and the space is divided into regular and predictable patterns.

The regimental division of space allowed for a conceptual segmentation of the cemetery. Based on location, different spaces were designated as being for monuments of the first order, the second order, or the third order, while the remainder was described as being common ground. In all four of the described areas, the land was sold as permanent family plots. Common ground did not describe a shared burial space, rather referred to the type of monument required.\textsuperscript{24} Territory designated for monuments of the first order was the most expensive, and mandated the building of large funerary memorials. Although there were no restrictions on who could purchase this space, the financial requirements to buy and build upon it limited it to national memorials, and the highest status families. In none of these areas was there a

\textsuperscript{22} Aruca, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 38-44.
\textsuperscript{23} Antonio Medina Fernández, Guía de la Necrópolis “Cristóbal Colón” de la Habana, (Habana: Editorial Escudo de Oro, 1998), Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, 16-17; Antonio de Gordon y de Acosta, Datos históricos acerca de los cementerios de la ciudad de la Habana (Habana: Impr. de J. Huguet, 1901), Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami, 32-33; D.A.G. de la Valle, Legislación sobre cementerios con la memoria, reglamento y tarifá del de Colón,(Habana: impr. de José V. Santamarina, 1894), Cementerio Cristóbal Colón Archive, Havana, 15.
\textsuperscript{24} Aruca, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 39.
limit on the type of monument a family could erect; a plot in the common ground could have as large a monument as one in the first order section. Rather, there was a minimum requirement for each section. The first order land was reserved for monuments of national or cultural importance, and well-known architects and artists usually designed these.

Cuban and American Cultural Exchange

Much has been written about the impact of American culture on the Cuban experience. The close proximity of the island to the American landmass meant that there was a fluid exchange of people and ideas between the two societies. The interconnection of the Cuban and American economies began with the British occupation of Havana in 1767, and the opening of Havana’s port under British rule. Through this early network, a rapid exchange of merchandise and technology prospered and evolved; by the middle of the nineteenth century Americans were involved in all levels of the Cuban economy. Over a ten-day period in 1870, seventeen of the ships arriving in the port of Havana, and eight of those departing, were ships moving to and from American ports. This was fifty percent of the total traffic, with only eighteen percent representing European ports of call. This high percentage of ships to and from American ports was not unusual, as both the physical proximity of the U.S., and their booming economy, made them a convenient trade partner for Cuba. The exchange was not limited to trade goods, but included the flow of people between the two countries. By 1862, Havana had 2500 American-born residents, as well as seeing a seasonal migration of tourists and technicians who stayed for shorter durations. The movement of people flowed in both directions. Cubans travelled north for business and pleasure, but more tellingly, Cubans were increasingly being educated in the United States. Thousands of Cuban children were sent to the United States for their early education. The American educational institutions, based on modern economics and technology, also served the schooling for technical and

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27 *La gaceta de la Habana*, “Parte Mercantil, Puerto de la Habana,” September 18-28th, 1870, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami.
professional positions. With the dynamic exchange of goods, people, and ideas, the cultural influence of the United States was beginning to manifest itself in the Cuban culture.

The cemetery reform movement in the United States was a space in which Americans were shaping and defining their own cultural identity. They were leaders in innovation when it came to graveyard reform, and their cemeteries were celebrated across the Americas and Europe. It was an era in which the economic traffic between the United States and Cuba was expanding and the cultural influence of the American way of life was having a profound impact on the day-to-day existence of the island. In the face of the well-documented import of American culture into the Spanish colony, the question emerges of how the Cuban people were imagining themselves in relation to the increasing influence of the United States. And how were they communicating an identity, through the design of their cemetery, which responded and countered the increasing cultural encroachment of their powerful neighbours.

The layout and design of the American cemeteries was familiar to the inhabitants of Havana. The romantic cult of the dead, so influential in the British garden cemetery design and later incorporated into the American rural cemetery style, was an artistic movement that involved poets and painters, alongside designers. The first poet of this movement, Thomas Gray, wrote “Elegy in a Country Churchyard,” and this melancholy poem is credited with popularizing the sentiments of the movement across Europe and North America. Aries comments on the fact that it was translated into French, and served as a model for French poets. This poem was also translated into Spanish, and was printed in three parts in Havana’s El Moro Muza. The inhabitants of Havana, well educated and proud of their city’s cultural sophistication, kept abreast of the artistic movements happening in Europe. It was not just the artistic side of this movement that was familiar to habaneros. On November 13th, 1832 a Royal Decree gave permission to the American citizens living in Havana to build a rural cemetery, called the Cementerio de los Ingleses.

Ibid., 28-37.
Aries, Western Attitudes, 78
This cemetery was used until 1864.\textsuperscript{32} It is evident that in the period during which the design decisions for the new cemetery were being made, the city was familiar with both the artistic influences and the model of the rural cemetery. What runs counter to the narrative of the influence of American culture on Cuba in this period is that the design selected bore no correlations to the rural cemetery style and layout.

**Cuban Design and the American Model**

The most recognizable division of space in the rural cemetery lies in its creation of serpentine roadways that, in effect, limit a hierarchal division of space.\textsuperscript{33} Instead, the winding roads and numerous imposing viewpoints meant that at all sections of the cemetery grounds were equally important. This was an embodiment of the philosophy of equality that was infusing American culture.\textsuperscript{34} In Havana’s new cemetery, the space is rigidly and regularly divided by the principal avenues and the secondary streets. The central chapel draws focus to the middle of the space, imparting the greatest importance to the center, and a descending order of precedence flows from this point. This is a marked departure from the layout of the American rural cemetery.

The second feature that was a hallmark of the spatial layout of the rural cemetery was the focus on the individual. Part of the romanticized interaction with death came from the emotion experienced by the mourner in contemplating the loss of an individual.\textsuperscript{35} The deceased, their life and achievements, was an important part of the ritual of mourning and memorialisation. Within the rural cemetery the individual’s grave was marked and visited, and this space was sacrosanct. The body stayed in the grave in perpetuity, and the bones were not removed for the grave to be reused. While the plots were sold to families, they were large enough that generations of individual graves could be laid out with personalized

\textsuperscript{32} Martínez, *Sucinta descripción*, 22-23.
In Havana, the space was divided into much smaller family plots. They practiced above ground burial, in mausoleums or raised graves. The monuments commemorated the family name, often bearing only the name and dates of the first internments. The individual body was placed in the crypt for two years, and then the bones were moved to the site of secondary internment. In the case of affluent families they were placed in an ossuary on the family plot, a square enclosure six to eight feet deep in which the bones of all the families dead were gathered. For the poorer sections of the cemetery, the bones would be moved to a general ossuary on the cemetery grounds. The symbolic nature of these practices is striking.

In the American case, the individual is all-important. In the case of Havana, the family or the nation subsumes the individual. What we see in the Cuban cemetery design, with its symmetrical arrangement of linear and geometric shapes, is a rejection of the ideologies embedded in the layout and design of the American rural cemetery.

**Cuban Design and the Spanish Influence**

While the power of the Spanish empire was waning, the influence of Spanish culture was still a major contributor to the Cuban social experience in the nineteenth century. By 1824 Cuba was the last Spanish colonial holding in the Americas. As such, it remained subject to Spanish authority and Spanish civil laws. One of the contributing factors in the Ten Years’ War, which became the first war of independence on the island, was the dissatisfaction of the Cuban planter class with the fiscal relationship between the island and the Spanish government. After three centuries of Spanish colonial rule, the national character of Spain and Cuba had grown apart, and yet the traditional ties of a Spanish heritage still held power in Cuban society. The question to be explored here is how the Cubans were imagining

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their nation in relation to Spain? And how did this reflect itself in the layout of the new general cemetery of Havana.

The nineteenth century Spanish cemetery was rooted in the Mediterranean model. It featured the symmetrical division of land through geometric shapes, with linear roadways separating cloistered squares. Inside these cloistered spaces were the nobility’s family vaults, kept separated from the graves of the less affluent. This segregation of upper class families emerged in response to the Spanish elite’s resistance to new suburban cemeteries, the creation of which threatened the symbolic reproduction of social hierarchies through the performance and placement of burial. The physical separation of the remains was a compromise, as it maintained the rigid class divide which was threatened by the enlightened cemetery reforms. The use of loculi was also widely seen, with the walls of the cemetery itself often lined with the oven-like recesses. The cloister garths were another common site for these vaults, and it was not uncommon for entire blocks to be built within the cemetery itself. The distribution of land mirrored the social stratification of Spanish society, with the cloisters closest to the entrance being for the highest status families. The order of precedence diminished as the space was farther from the entrance, with the outermost ring of loculi representing the lowest status burials. Perpetual plots were originally only purchased by the wealthiest families, but as the nineteenth century progressed they became more popular as a status symbol. As these cemeteries were intended to remove burial from the site of worship, the presence of the chapel was de-emphasized. If a chapel was included, its placement was against the north wall of the cemetery.

When we look at the layout of space of the Havana cemetery in relation to the Spanish model, there are a number of correlations. The symmetrical layout is common to both models. Linear roadways,

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41 Myttum, “Public Health”, 290
43 Niell, “Classical Architecture,” 73.
which allow for a clear delineation of place, are a strong component of the Havana space. As the cemetery is a reflection of the social structure of the city, this stratification of space speaks to a similar maintenance of a strict social hierarchy within both Spanish and Cuban society. Despite displaying some overlaps, there are numerous points of departure between the Cuban and the Spanish form. The Cuban space does not cloister or physically segregate the upper echelons of society from the lower classes. Loculi are not commonly used, and the lots were sold as perpetual family sites in all four categories of the cemetery. In fact, the symmetry and linear division of space is the only structural division that the layouts share. The difference in design points to a more complex interaction with the Spanish influence, indicating a conditional acceptance of Spanish culture, rather than a direct reproduction.

This type of division of space, with its emphasis on formal balance, was a common feature of the type of Islamic funerary art that influenced colonial cemeteries in India. A comparison of the spatial orientation of the Cuban cemetery to what is considered the epitome of Islamic memorial art, the Tāj Mahal, shows a remarkable likeness. (Figure 3-3). This monument, built in the seventeenth century, was greatly admired by Europeans and became influential in funerary design circles. While Calixto de Loira, the Spanish architect who studied at the Academia de San Fernando in Madrid, would have been familiar with the Islamic influence, his inspiration for the cemetery’s layout is more commonly attributed to the design popularized by Pope St. Gregory in the sixth century. Based on the grid like layout of a Roman city, it features the principal avenues which met in a cross, creating a central plaza or focal point. The elements of space as presented in Havana’s cemetery link the city’s identity to a classical model, rather than the style seen in nineteenth century Spain. This is a powerful symbolic move on the Cubans’ part, as the design acknowledges a shared heritage, while distancing itself from the Spanish

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46 Curl, A Celebration of Death, 138.
political authority of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{48} The Cubans further asserted their independence from Spanish political systems with the resurgence of overtly Catholic iconography.

\textbf{Cuba, Secular Liberalism, and the Catholic Church}

The creation of new cemeteries in nineteenth century Spain and its colonies was taking place in a period of transition of both political and social structures. In the imperial Spanish tradition, authority had derived from two seats of power: the ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Until the eighteenth century these were represented by the monarchy and the Catholic Church, who existed in a state of mutual self-interest. The slow deterioration of the monarchy and the gradual transition to a constitutional government led to a collapse in this balance of power.\textsuperscript{49} By 1834, the monarchy had fallen to a civil authority, and the Cortes now faced the challenge of consolidating its new civic institutions.\textsuperscript{50} Having unseated the political control of one of the traditional seats of power, the Cortes turned its attention to curtailing the power of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{51} One place this struggle played out was over control of cemeteries.

The early cemetery reform movement in Spain was begun in the 1780s when burial in churches was first prohibited.\textsuperscript{52} Following the example of French legislative reforms, a series of decrees regarding the control of burial were introduced, mandating the creation of suburban cemeteries. Ecclesiastical authorities supported this move, and there are many examples of church authorities using their influence to build public support for the new cemeteries. The bishop of Barcelona, the archbishop of Granada, the bishop of Malaga, as well as the bishop of Havana all used biblical sources and classical church precedent to support the move to burial away from churchyards.\textsuperscript{53} The reason the church supported this early reform movement was twofold. First, the control of burials, a major source of income for the church, would

\begin{itemize}
  \item The principal body making decisions for the cemetery was the \textit{Junta de Cementerios}, composed of civil servants, engineers, and doctors from Havana. Martínez, \textit{Sucinta descripción}, 31.
  \item With the collapse of the Spanish monarchy, Civil authority resided in the Cortes, the national assembly of Spain. This legislature was an elected body, and held power not only in Spain, but throughout the Spanish colonies. Florencia Peyrou, “A Great Family of Sovereign Men: Democratic Discourse in Nineteenth-century Spain, \textit{European History Quarterly} 43 (2013): 237. DOI 10.1177/0265691413466611.
  \item Callahan, \textit{Catholic Church}, 4.
  \item Mytum, “the European Cemetery.”
  \item Niell, “Classical Architecture,” 61-63.
\end{itemize}
remain under control of the parishes. The maintenance of this revenue stream was of great importance to the church.\textsuperscript{54} Second, Church authorities had noted declining public attendance at church services, and this decline was widely attributed to the unsanitary sights and smells created by overtaxed churchyard burial grounds. The disturbance of inhumations with partially decomposed bodies, the open burial pits, as well as the numerous corpses buried under the church itself created a noxious environment. The separation of burial grounds from the church proper promised to alleviate the unsanitary conditions, and create an environment more conducive to pious prayer. The Church’s support of these changes transformed the French reforms, which had been a secular movement rooted in enlightenment thought, into a traditional Catholic framework. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, cemetery reform in Spain and Spanish America was championed not simply under the banners of hygiene and modernity, but as a means of maintaining and advancing religious piety.\textsuperscript{55} By mid century, the synchronized support for cemetery reform from religious and civil authorities had vanished, and the design decisions of the city of Havana were being made during a battle for control of burial grounds.

After the collapse of the monarchy, the politics of liberalism in Spain sought to curtail the church’s power. The aim of the early liberal governments was not to eliminate the Catholic Church in Spain, but to restrict its influence in political and economic realms. The Cortes introduced a series of legislative reforms that decimated the church’s traditional financial base. The forced sale of ecclesiastical property between 1835 and 1860 had the effect of removing the church’s economic base, thus eliminating what had been the biggest economic institution in eighteenth century Spain.\textsuperscript{56} The destruction of its economic base effectively curtailed its ability to influence political decisions. The church fought fiercely to protect its traditional areas of privilege, one of which was the control of cemeteries and burial. Between 1868 and 1873, the civil authorities passed a number of legislations that secularized cemeteries. The Catholic Church maintained that cemeteries fell under ecclesiastical authority, and that parish priests had the right to decide who could be buried in sacred ground. The church, having lost much of its political

\textsuperscript{55} Niell, “Classical Architecture,” 61-62.
\textsuperscript{56} Callahan, Catholic, 5.
power, fought these battles largely in the civil courts. These cases, starting in 1868 and continuing as late as 1897, came to be known as the “wars of the dead,” and their frequency and often-contradictory rulings created a situation in which the status of cemeteries was unclear.\footnote{Ibid., 171-172.} Legally, they were secular institutions, but traditionally and in practice they remained Catholic spaces. While the civil code was convoluted in regards to cemeteries, they had emerged as an important point of contention between the Cortes and the Catholic Church. The Cortes wanted secular cemeteries outside the church control, and the church sought to maintain its traditional control.\footnote{Ibid., 68, 171-172, 268.} The Cubans’ response to this sent a clear message to the Cortes of their position with regards to the civil authority of Spain.

There are numerous design features that speak to the Catholic nature of the cemetery, but two are especially noteworthy when it comes to the regimentation of space. The North Gate, an enormous edifice through which the bodies of Havana’s dead enter their final resting place, is an imposing triumphal arch. The gate in the original plans of Calixto de Loira was altered at the jury’s request, before the plans received final approval. The jury’s changes included the addition of the carved marble figures atop the gate, as well as two high relief carvings in semi circular plaques on the front and back of the main entrance of the gate.\footnote{Aruc, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 37.} These added decorative works feature highly Catholic iconography. The statue, designed and carved by Spanish sculptor José Vilalta Saavedra, figuratively represents the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, while a child looks west towards the setting sun. The two plaques represent the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Lazarus.\footnote{Ibid., 71} The addition of these figurative carvings of traditional Catholic symbols is a departure from the first general cemetery, the Espada Cemetery of Havana, whose imagery focused on secular iconography, seeking to evoke enlightenment ideals.\footnote{Ibid., 71} Throughout the Espada cemetery’s grounds, there was a deliberate move away from traditional Catholic representation, so its prominent resurgence in the new general cemetery design was significant.
The location of the chapel is also an important feature. In this period, the space of the cemetery minimized the presence of the chapel, as the ritual mass was performed at the church and the body was subsequently transported to the space of burial. The chapel was generally placed along one of the walls.62 The Catholic Cementerio de Nuestra Señora de la Almudena, built in Madrid in 1884, lacked a chapel until one was added in 1929.63 The placement of the chapel in the new cemetery of Havana takes on significance when compared to the traditions around it. It occupies the central plaza, lying at the intersection of the two principal avenues of the design. It is the conceptual space occupied by the forum and the marketplace in the Roman cities this design descends from. The Cubans not only included a chapel in their design, but they have prominently placed it at the center of their city of the dead. The jury is symbolically identifying with the Catholic Church. This aligned them with a power publicly fighting the control of the Cortes, and the nineteenth century political power in Spain. And yet this return to Catholic iconography is problematic when looked at in the social context in which the cemetery was designed. Catholic piety, as well as attendance at mass, was falling, and the immense popularity of the Espada cemetery, with its neutral, enlightened facade, indicated that there was no popular sentiment motivating the change. The move only makes sense when viewed as a political, rather than a religious, statement. This is supported by the further use of the Cuban space; uses that ensured the Catholicism of the space was carefully controlled and limited, subservient to the growing Cuban alignment with modernity.64

62 Ibid., 73.
64 Modernity entered Cuba on many levels. Intellectually it arrived with the formation of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País in 1793, Gott, Cuba, 43; The intellectual embrace of modern principals was followed by reforms of the agro-industrial complex. Steam power was being used throughout Cuba, with steam powered sugar mills in place by 1797, and one of the earliest steamships in use outside the United States by 1819, Perez Jr., Cuba and the United States, 19; Transporation and infrastructure also embraced modern ideas, Cuba built the first railroad in Latin America in 1838, concurrent with the rapid installation of railroads was the construction of the Central Highway, Espada, Havana, 82, Diaz-Briquets, “Cuba”, 177; By mid-century, Havana embraced modernismo with the elites embrace of poets and artists associated with the artistic movement, Kapcia, Havana, 52-54.
Cuban Design and Modernity

The resurgence of Catholic iconography is less about Havana’s relationship to the Church than it is about Cuba’s position in relation to political power of Spain. By symbolically aligning itself with a power that steadfastly challenged the power of the Cortes, the cemetery speaks to Cuba’s challenge to Spanish cultural supremacy.\(^{65}\) In this, Cuba was manipulating a complicated web of power relations. The selection of the Church as the symbol of their growing resistance was a safe choice for Cuba, as the civil code of Spain already limited the church’s political power. On the one hand, they symbolically signalled their alignment with the church, on the other, there are less visible aspects of the space that speak to the limitations of the Church’s position in Cuban society.

The cemetery contains a number of unique features that speak to a new relationship between the church and civil society that was evolving in Havana. The first is the creation of a space, located in the southwest quadrant of the cemetery, dedicated to the burial of non-Catholics.\(^{66}\) The regulations for the cemetery indicate that this space will be maintained for the burial of those who died outside of the communion of the Catholic Church.\(^{67}\) This is precisely the type of burial the Catholic Church was fighting through the courts in Spain. The civil code of Spain mandated the secularization of cemeteries throughout the empire, but in peninsular Spain the Church never accepted this practice. It is unclear how the Cuban authorities overcame the church’s objections to the burial of deceased from outside the faith; what is clear is that despite a symbolic affiliation with traditional Catholicism, in regulation and in practice the cemetery was a space that embraced liberal, secular ideas.

The secular nature of the layout is also demonstrated in other aspects of the cemetery. One space in particular demonstrates that the Cubans were aligning themselves with modern epistemologies, rather than with traditional modes of imagining the world. Variously referred to as the sala mortuoria or el

\(^{65}\) One manner in which the nationalist sentiment in Havana was being defined was through a process of construction. The Creole population of Havana engaged in a program of urban renewal in which they were building cultural sites that materially defined Cuban culture as legitimate, distinct, and independent from Spain. These sites included the University of Havana, the Gran Teatro de la Habana, the Cathedral, and the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón.

\(^{66}\) Fernández, Guía de la necrópolis, 16-17; Acosta, Datos históricos, 32-33; Valle, Legislación, 15.

\(^{67}\) Reglamento, art 1, 3.
Necrocomio, this was a space dedicated to scientific interactions with death. When bodies entered the graveyard, they were delivered to the sala mortuoria with the licencias del Registro Civil, a death certificate issued by the appropriate civil authority, alongside documents from the parish of the deceased. Lacking the proper certification, the body could not be interred in the cemetery. If the civil documentation could not be produced in a timely manner, the person who delivered the body would be turned over to the police. This marks a change from the procedures of the Espada cemetery, where the corpse was accompanied solely by the papeletas firmadas (certificate of death) issued by the parish priest. The right to be buried in the Catholic cemetery was no longer controlled exclusively by the church, but was now considered a civil matter.

The sala mortuoria was located in the administrative buildings by the north gate, and was equipped with the tools necessary for performing autopsies. The cemetery was equipped with, and prepared to utilize, all the equipment of the modern, medicalized death. One example of this are the regulations that dictated the steps required if final death was uncertain, a common occurrence in the nineteenth century. These provide an interesting insight into the hierarchy within the cemetery, and the relationship between science and religion. In the case where it was unclear if the body was truly dead, the Medical Examiner would be called in to examine the body. Utilizing “scientific methods”, he would determine if death had occurred. The medical examiner would then communicate his findings to the chaplain of the cemetery, whose job it would be to communicate the Medical Examiner’s findings to the

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68 Reglamento, 3-4; Martínez, Sucinta descripción, 47
69 Reglamento, Art. 5-8, 4-5.
70 Reglamento, Art. 6, 4.
71 Niell, “Classical Architecture,” 78
72 Martínez, Sucinta descripción, 49.
73 Havana in the nineteenth century was an advanced center of medical practice, featuring a medical school and modern hospitals. It is estimated that by 1899 Havana had the highest number of physicians per capita in the world. The majority of doctors were creole, and were instrumental actors in the formation of a progressive nationalist creole identity. The creole doctor was considered a symbol of Cuban nationalism. The progressive practice of medicine in Havana meant that the city was kept abreast of advances in sanitation and treatment. Steven Palmer, “Beginnings of Cuban Bacteriology: Juan Santos Fernández, Medical Research, and the Search for Scientific Sovereignty, 1880 – 1920,” Hispanic American Historical Review 91, no 3 (2011): 447-449. DOI 10.1215/00182168-1300200
family.74 The space of death in the cemetery privileged modern science and medicine over religion, challenging the notion of a strict adherence to Catholic dogma. Instead, the cemetery of Havana reflects an allegiance with modernity at odds with the iconography of religion that is so prominently on display.

A Nation Among Nations

The Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón is a vast space, one that holds one hundred and fifty years of Havana’s dead. It is a true necropolis, its 54,000 plots each bearing some memorial, from the grand to the humble.75 Design trends have changed over the years of its use, creating an array of figurative works that seem to compete with each other. Despite the fluctuations in personal and social taste, the space in which the monuments reside is fixed and unchanging; the bones of the cemetery remain unaltered. Cemeteries, in their material form, capture the values and aspirations of the communities that build them.76 The shape of Havana’s general cemetery, the manner in which the space was divided and controlled, was negotiated and decided in a period where the idea of a Cuban nation was first emerging. The cemetery was designed and constructed during thirty years of brutal civil wars; during this time the tentative imaginings of Cuban nation had coalesced into an identity that challenged the supremacy of the American and Spanish imperial powers. The cemetery itself recorded the Cubans’ understanding of their position on a shifting world stage as the layout, division, and use of space rejected or retained the ideological components of the cultures around them, ultimately articulating a set of values which were unique to the Cuban experience.

The cultural influence of the United States and Spain are often regarded as instrumental in determining the national identity of Cuba. The cemetery design decision challenge the power of their influence, instead demonstrating a Cuban public that was actively creating their own culture, often in opposition to the forces around it. The American rural cemetery model, internationally recognized in the time period as being at the forefront of urban reform, was well known in Havana. Despite this familiarity, the Cubans selected a layout that rejected the spatial features of the rural cemetery, and its associated values of democratic social equality. The layout they did select bears some similarities to the

74 Reglamento, Art 7, 4.
76 Murray, “‘Modern Innovations?’” 130-131.
Mediterranean model used in Spain, but the correlations are superficial. The Havana cemetery retained the hierarchal division of space, but the origin of this is from a shared classical heritage. Havana claimed the history of Spain, while creating distance and separation from the fading imperial power. It furthers this rejection of nineteenth century Spanish authority by visually aligning itself with the Catholic Church, a power that was contesting the power of the Cortes. Walking a fine line, the cemetery design ensured that this alignment is one with symbolic potency, but no real power. The space, with the inclusion of new spaces of death, subordinates the role of religion to that of science, elevating the values of modernity and progress over religious dogma. The space itself speaks of the ideals that were being encoded into Cuban nationalism. Thirty years before the republic emerged, the cemetery reveals an identity that was not Spanish, not American, but distinctly and uniquely Cuban.
Figure 3-1 Monument on the tomb for the Asociación Cristiana de Players, Umpires, y Managers de Base-Ball Profesional. (Photograph Bethany Wade, 2013).
Figure 3-2 This map, of the style utilized during the construction of the cemetery, features an unusual orientation, in that the north gate is positioned at the top. (Cementerio Cristóbal Colón Archive, Havana)

Figure 3-3 Survey of the Gardens of the Tāj Mahal, done by J.G. Hodgson in 1818. (A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture).
Chapter 4

From Colony to Collective: Controlling Place, Controlling Status in the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón

In a ceremony held on October 30th, 1871, a group of illustrious men gathered at the land that would one day hold the Cementerio Colón. A single stone was laid, marking the beginning of construction on the new cemetery.¹ (Figure 4-1) It would be thirty years before the construction was complete. The work of bringing forth the material reality of the cemetery was a laborious task. The process of clearing the land and carving the infrastructure of wide avenues and squares into the earth depended on strength over intellect. The elite classes, whose shining tombs later became the heart of the space, did not involve themselves in this work. The designers, whose minds first imagined the space, were involved in supervisory roles. The labour, the sweat and the muscle that transformed empty farmland into an ordered and beautiful city of the dead, came from the working poor of Havana.²

Unnamed and unremembered, the workers who toiled for years to complete the cemetery fade into the background; the annals of the construction instead celebrate the names of the architect, Calixto de Loira, and the designer, José Vilalta Saavedra. From its very inception, the lives of workers were intermingled with the life of the graveyard. The thirty years of strife and civil war that heralded the dawn of the republic restructured Cuban society from the inside. By the turn of the century the lives of workers, indeed lives at all levels of society, were irreversibly reshaped. In death, the new social matrix of Cuban society was indelibly imprinted in the space of the cemetery.

Nationalism, Social Status, and the Cemetery

The nascent Cuban national identity emerged out of a complicated history of colonialism, slavery, immigration, and a boom and bust sugar market that created vast inequalities of wealth. Faced with this legacy, the project of nationalism had to negotiate the reality of a social hierarchy in which status was

1 Enrique Martínez y Martínez, Sucinta descripción de los cementerios de la antigüedad, primitivos de la Habana y el de Cristóbal Colón, (Habana: Ucar García y Cía., 1928), 34-37; Antonio de Gordon y de Acosta, Datos históricos acerca de los cementerios de la ciudad de la Habana, (Habana: Impr. de J. Huguet, 1901), 28.
2 The working population in Cuba was comprised of the slave population alongside wage workers, both white and free people of colour. In 1846, this demographic represented forty-eight percent of Cuba’s total population. Geoff Simons, Cuba, 116-117.
determined by complex intersectionalities. Social position in Havana society, and its associated privileges and limits, was determined by a complicated array of markers. The status of individuals included socially coded constructs of race, gender, wealth, education, birthplace, and occupation. The nineteenth century saw these status markers drastically revised. The rhetoric of change that coalesced in the Ten Years’ War meant that constructs such as class and race were being challenged and renegotiated. The questions explored in this chapter revolve around the depth of these changes as they manifested themselves in the physical and conceptual space of the general cemetery. What does the cemetery, as a reflection of the aspirations of the community that created it, tell us about Havana’s constructions of class and race and position during this period? And does the design and use of the cemetery reveal a genuine change, a move towards the civil war’s espoused values of racial and economic parity, or does it reveal these to be merely window dressings in a power struggle for political control of the island?

In order to explore these issues, I focus on the social symbols that emerged in nineteenth century Havana’s social hierarchy. Rather than trying to assess the relative weight of these symbolic markers and their overlapping intersections in individuals, I instead focus on the social categories of the social elite, of race, and of the working poor. Each group’s status in the social fabric of Havana is evaluated within the context of the design and use of the cemetery. While I use the layout of the cemetery and the regulations of its use as the principal area of interrogation, I move my analysis beyond the cemetery walls to look at how the space was mediated in the public eye. In this chapter, I map the markers of status in Havana society within the cemetery. By determining the conceptual and physical interactions of the three targeted demographic segments within the necropolis, I uncover the reality of the fluid and contested social hierarchy in Havana and its burial ground.

Nineteenth Century Social Structures

The social makeup of nineteenth century Cuba emerged out of its Iberian colonial background, but the boom of the nineteenth century sugar economy radically altered its basic structures. It is possible to identify a number of categories of social status, all of which interacted in intersecting, and often confrontational, manners. These social divisions consisted of the Spanish, or peninsular elite; the Cuban,
or Creole, elite; the lower class white population; the free people of colour; and the slave population.  

While this represents an oversimplification of the dynamics, it serves to illustrate the major players in the intricate performance that was social status in Havana. Havana was a society fundamentally divided, and the contested points of overlap created tensions within the social landscape.

The peninsular elite were Spaniards who worked in the colonial government to enforce Spanish rule and authority on the island. Natives of Spain, this group came to Cuba in temporary positions, and considered themselves Spanish, and superior to the Cuban-born population. Holding high-ranking government and military roles, they determined the political and economic course of Cuba. These positions often led to the accumulation of great wealth, as Cuba in the 19th century was an island of booming expansion and trade. Despite their positions in Cuba, these individuals were Spanish citizens first, and their actions and policies were to serve Spain’s interests, often at the expense of Cuban interests.

The overlapping demographic group, and the one most often directly affected by the Spanish policies on the island, were the Cuban, or Creole, elite. The Creole elite were white descendants of Europeans who had stayed and prospered in Cuba. They were economically powerful, as they owned and controlled much of the land in Cuba. The Creole-owned plantations were the economic engines of the island, as sugar was the principal export of the island. Resentful of trade and taxation policies that were designed to maximize Spanish coffers, the Creole elite engaged in continuous political manoeuvring in an attempt to gain leverage and influence over commercial policy. Nineteenth century Cuban politics were shaped by the competing powers at the top of the social hierarchy: the Spanish and the Creole elites.

While the two dominant powers struggled at the top, the interests of the rest of society were largely overlooked by the ruling elite of the island. The lower class white population consisted of artisans,

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3 Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 92-93.
small farmers, trades people, and intellectuals. They struggled to survive in a cyclical boom and bust economy. This group was integral to the functioning of Cuban society, yet had little say in the politics of their lives. The income levels of this group varied from wealthy upper middle class to abject poverty. There was a great deal of overlap in the makeup of the socio-economic position of this group and that of the free people of colour, but being light skinned elevated them in the eyes of Cuban society.

Free people of colour made up a large portion of Cuban society. This was driven by progressive manumission policies, as well as the immigration of free people of colour to Cuban shores. This population was similar to the lower status white population, consisting of artisans, tradesmen, farmers, and intellectuals. Educated, employed and socially connected, this group was regarded as a threat by Spanish and Creole elites. Despite attempts to restrict the growth of this demographic group, it survived, and continued to be a statistically relevant force in Cuban society. What limited social status they were allowed was contrasted to the conditions of the slaves, the lowest in the hierarchy of Cuban social classes.

A colonial, plantation society, Cuba relied heavily on slave labour to drive its economic engine. The revolution in Haiti created a fear of slave uprisings in the white population of Cuba, which in Havana was in a minority. Fifty-seven percent of the Cuban population consisted of slaves and free people of colour. By 1846, slaves constituted thirty-six percent of the Cuban population. Principally desired as a labour force for sugar plantations, almost sixty-two percent were male. The intensive use of slaves on
sugar plantations also accounts for eighty-two percent being situated in rural locations. The rich western provinces, where Havana is located, were the principal importers of slave labour. The white population regarded the proximity of the slave population to the free people of colour as a potential site of racial insurrection. This paradox of need and fear was used as a tool in Cuban politics. The Spanish authorities repeatedly used the threat of abolition to control Creole elites, whose plantations relied on slave labour.

Symbolic markers of status determined the position of the individual within this hierarchy, and the performance and reading of these markers was defined by class, by race, and by the type of work performed. Rapid transformations of the political and economic foundations of nineteenth century Cuban power meant that the symbols themselves were being renegotiated. The growth of the sugar industry, revolutions in the Atlantic World, and the collapse of imperial Spanish authority had led to an emerging nationalism in Cuba, and the social structures on the island were altering to accommodate a new epistemological worldview. The new general cemetery in Havana, designed and built during this period of civil upheaval, captured in its form the changing dynamics of the social structure of Havana. Specifically, the manifestations of elite status, the conception of race, and the position of the working poor are mapped into the cemetery’s physical and conceptual form.

Planter Elite and Constructions of Class

Havana society inherited certain symbolic markers of class from Spain. While vitally important to the manner in which Cubans conceptualized position, the construct of class as the basis of Havana’s social hierarchy is problematic. It implies a cohesive unit, one with a uniformity of purpose and a shared sense of identity. The reality of the elite class in Cuba was one of deep divisions. Geographically separated into Eastern and Western landholders, politically divided between loyalists and nationalists, ideologically split between progressive and conservative, and economically divided into old money and new, the Cuban elites were continuously manoeuvring for position. Despite the internal inconsistencies of this label, the terminology has relevance to the social mobilizations that were taking place. As such, it is

14 Simons, Cuba, 117.
15 Reid-Vazquez, The Year of the Lash, 26-27.
16 Perez Jr., Cuba and the United States, 33; Knight, Slave Society, 91-93.
the terminology that will be used in this evaluation of elite status in nineteenth century Havana society. The idea of class explored here is one intimately linked to family, to nobility, and to the social perquisites held by the wealthy, landholding elite. Changing perceptions of class were regulated and given definition through the performance of symbolic markers claimed by the elite.

The existence of an elite class emerged in the first century after the Spanish colony was formed in Cuba. A rigid stratification of the social order evolved, based on kin networks. Families who established their ascendancy in the early political and economic order of the Cuban colony maintained their position through social and economic benefits afforded to their class. By the nineteenth century, the Creole elite consisted of a few hundred families, of which the ten most prominent were estimated to control between one quarter and one third of Western Cuba’s sugar production in 1840. These families represented both the longest established kin groups of Cuba’s high nobility, and the newly wealthy families whose social elevation came from the sugar industry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The financial interests of the elite class defined Cuba’s economy, and belonging to this group had immense material benefits. Newly wealth families had a vested interest in being accepted as part of the elite social structure.

The Cuban elite had long benefited from a system of patronage that granted economic and legal benefits to its members. The best land grants, access to credit, and protection from creditors were only some of the advantages this class enjoyed. Favourable financial structures were extended to wealthy families, including the privilegio de ingenios, a sixteenth century Spanish concession that remained in place. Originally intended to encourage investment in sugar plantations, it stipulated that creditors could not confiscate plantations, no matter how much debt was incurred. While this incentive could extend to non-titled plantations, the nobility guarded certain social perquisites that allowed them to consolidate property within one bloodline. Much of the economic function of the Cuban nobility revolved around the consolidation of wealth and property within a single family. The newly elevated planter families were

18 McGillivray, Blazing Cane, 15-17; Paquette, Sugar, 45.
19 Ibid., 44.
interested in sharing the traditional benefits of the nobility, and to do so it was required that they adopt and perform the markers of that class.

The economic benefits of belonging to the titled class facilitated the concentration of wealth in the upper portion of Cuban society. The social benefit lay in maintaining the property within the family. The legal ability to entail property was one manner of consolidating property in the family line. The entailed land could not be severed from the titleholder.\textsuperscript{20} Intra-class and intra-family marriages were a second manner of controlling wealth. Canon law prohibited affinal and consanguineous marriage up to the fourth degree, but these limitations could be overcome by papal dispensation.\textsuperscript{21} Intra-class marriage was a way for upper class families of equal status to establish political and economic alliances. Affinal marriage, the marriage of a man to his brother’s widow, was a way of maintaining close ties between families.\textsuperscript{22} Marriage to a sibling’s daughter or son was another common form of family endogamy. Inheritance in Cuba was bilateral, meaning both sons and daughters inherited from the estate. Intra-family marriage meant that wealth was kept within the immediate bloodline.\textsuperscript{23} The right of parental dissent was the ability of the family to refuse a suitor, and one of the commonly applied objections was that the suitor displayed an “inequality of lineage.”\textsuperscript{24} If the status of one party was not considered equal to the other, the family had the right to forbid the suit. The sugar boom meant that new families were gaining the level of wealth of the traditional elites, but were still seen as lacking the social prestige so closely guarded by the oldest families. While the newly prosperous planter families had the wealth, they lacked the social markers of status that defined class in Havana.

One manner in which the newly wealthy families symbolically displayed their equality with the older elite families was through the purchase of titles of their own. The earliest symbolic marker of the elite, and the one most tightly connected to the inherited Spanish conception of status, was the cachet that

\textsuperscript{20} Paquette, \textit{Sugar}, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{22} Martínez-Alier, \textit{Marriage}, 87-89; Paquette, \textit{Sugar}, 46.
\textsuperscript{23} Martínez-Alier, \textit{Marriage}, 90-91.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 82.
came with being of the noble class. The Cuban nobility was first established in the sixteenth century, and by 1844 the island boasted 29 marquises and 30 counts. An order of lesser nobility descended from these high titles.\textsuperscript{25} While the tradition of Cuban nobility extended back to the early colonial period, the nineteenth century saw a change in its composition. By mid-century, almost half of the titles held on the island had been purchased by newly wealthy families, whose fortunes were generated by the booming plantation society.\textsuperscript{26} These newer families wanted to be seen as part of the elite classes. The increase of purchased titles in nineteenth century Cuba was one way they adopted symbolic markers of the elite, and the elaborate monuments in the cemetery were another.

**Status and the Graveyard**

Elite status was recognized in Havana society by the performance of a culturally recognized set of symbolic markers. Social status in death was similarly a performative act. The *Cementerio Colón* reinforced class stratification through both the physical division and the conceptual ranking of its space. Because the new general cemetery of Havana was laid out in a linear and symmetrical design, it reflected the hierarchal division of society. (Figure 4-2) The sections holding the most prestige, those restricted for monuments of the first, second, or third order, lined the principal avenues of the cemetery grounds. The land along the avenue extending from the *Puerta de la Paz* to the central plaza was designated for monuments of the first order. The plots which continued from the central plaza to the rear gate began as second order monuments up until the intersection with the streets of the second order crosses, at which point they become third order monuments. The land was divided this way along the east-west avenue, with second order monuments falling until the intersection, then transitioning to third order land. Plots that did not line the major thoroughfares were deemed common ground.\textsuperscript{27} What is telling about the division of land is that it is based on visibility to the public. Second and third order areas often featured large and elaborate tombs, but the fact that they were less trafficked denoted a lower level of social

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Wurdemann, “Notes on Cuba,” 227-228.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Martínez, *Sucinta descripción*, 39; Martin Socarras Matos, *La Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón: investigaciones preliminares* (Habana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1975), 29.
\end{itemize}
importance. The most limited category, that of first order monuments, is positioned so that every funeral procession entering the cemetery passed by it on their way to the chapel. High status was determined by high visibility, and by the ability of the family to publicly display their social position. This section, the most restricted in the space, features the names and titles of some of the most illustrious families. While this space was limited to a small number of families, the symbols of status they displayed, the materials and the forms of their monuments, were mimicked and reproduced in less exalted sections of the burial ground.

The symbols of status incorporated into the first order monuments permeated the rest of the cemetery as an increase in social mobility, brought about by the booming sugar economy, encouraged newly affluent families to usurp the markers of the elite classes. Like the purchased titles, which denoted a move into a higher social class, so, too, did ostentatious displays of wealth in the family monument. Two significant markers of status were the use of high value materials, in the cemetery this was Carrara marble, and the design and construction of elaborate figurative statuary. As the importation of this marble was expensive, and the artisans who worked it highly skilled, the ability to create a monument of this type was a public display of affluence. Only the very wealthy could afford monuments of this style.

The influence of the elite model of monument can be traced outside of the physical space of the cemetery, as it is reflected in the flourishing businesses that established themselves to meet the needs of Havana’s funerary and memorial traditions. (Figure 4-3) Advertisement for businesses catering to funerary services ran on a regular basis in the periodicals of Havana. A number of agencia funeraria (funeral agencies/mortuaries) promised to handle all the details of the burial. Many advertisements focused on the fact that they could handle services ranging from the most basic to the most lavish. Another business type furnished the full service tren funerario (funeral trains). (Figure 4-4) This service met all the mourning needs of the family, up to and including providing a funeral procession to

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29 D.A.G. Del Valle, “Francisco Caballero,” in Legislación sobre cementerios con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón, (Habana: impr. de José V. Santamarina, 1894), 38.
30 “Serapio López,” in Legislación sobre cementerios, 32.
accompany the body on its journey to the cemetery. Drawing on the mourning practices of the peninsular elite classes, a large funeral cortège signified the importance of the deceased.\textsuperscript{31} The advertisements for the \textit{tren funerario} emphasized the fact that they offered the newest innovations, often referencing the influence of Paris, London, or the United States. They offered the latest model luxury coaches, altar ornaments, funeral wreaths, and in some cases, a choice of sarcophagus.\textsuperscript{32} Both of these models of funeral services emphasized their moderate prices, meticulous attention to detail and their ability to provide all classes of services.

In opposition to these full service models there existed specialists who focused on one aspect of the memorial process. All parts of the mourning ritual were available at modest prices. From tailors who offered mourning clothes and shops that specialized in funeral wreaths, to candle makers who carried memorial candles, and even a locksmith and ironworks that specialized in the fixtures for pantheons and mausolea; all were available in Havana. The most prolifically advertised businesses were for the \textit{Establo de Carruajes de Lujo} (Luxury Carriage Stables) and the \textit{Marmolista} (marble workers). These two services represented the most expensive, and therefore the highest status symbol of death rituals. \textbf{(Figure 4-5)} Numerous \textit{Establo de Carruajes de Lujo} specifically listed that they serviced \textit{entierros, bautismos, casamientos} (funerals, baptisms, weddings), alongside other important events.\textsuperscript{33} In the densely populated Havana maintaining a stable was prohibitively expensive. Keeping horses and coach was used as a symbol of extreme wealth, and limited to the very rich. By renting luxury coaches for important events, the \textit{establos} permitted families of more modest means access to the same service.

The \textit{Marmolería}, the workshops in which artisans created the great marble tombs and statuary of the nobility, also encompassed a recognizable marker of the elite status. \textbf{(Figure 4-6)} The Carrara marble so prominently featured in the monuments lining the principal avenues was expensive. The marble came from quarries in Italy, and the luminescent quality of its carved surface was popularized by its use in

\begin{footnotesize}
32 \textit{La gaceta de la Habana}, “D. Leandro Lozano,” January 3, 1871, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami.
33 “El Prado de Saturnino Paragón,” in Del Valle, \textit{Legislación sobre cementerios}.
\end{footnotesize}
numerous European sculptures and monuments. The iconic buildings of Rome linked it to the great civilizations of the Western World, and the use of it by sculptors like Michelangelo associated it with high culture. The elite of Havana adopted it as the premier marble for the cemetery; the rarity and expense, coupled with the beauty of its finish, made it a mark of both wealth and taste.

Havana’s *marmolerías* emphasized their ties to the Italian carving tradition, and the availability of Carrara marble in their workshops. (Figure 4-7) Yet side by side with this they underscored that they built monuments for all classes, from the simple to the elaborate monuments. One lists marble from the Isle of Pines as being available, alongside its more prestigious Italian stock. Still others state that they work with all types of marble, as well as offering monuments in stone. There existed a striated selection of ostentation and material available to the citizens of Havana, with the standard being set by the elite classes in the prominent and visible sections of the necropolis, and the less affluent copying and imitating the exclusive models with lesser materials.

**Race and Society**

Race, in nineteenth century Cuba, was a construct as convoluted as class. If the Creole elite represented one end of the cultural and economic spectrum that was the social hierarchy of Havana, then slaves occupied the other. Between these two extremes lay an intricate layering of socioeconomic stratification. Position in this tiered system relied on numerous markers, including an individual’s gender, education, birthplace, and occupation; within this structure, the colour of a person’s skin was a strong determinant of status. The nineteenth century marked a period in which ideas of race were being contested and reformed, and this process was influenced by events both within Cuba, and beyond its borders. The Ten Years’ War, with its need for insurgent forces, presaged this ideological move by its

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inclusion of people of colour within its ranks. The cemetery in Havana during this period demonstrates that the social order was still divided along the lines of colour.

The elite classes, whose vast fortunes were derived from the proceeds of sugar plantations, had a vested interest in prolonging the institution of slavery. They needed access to a cheap workforce in order to extract the profits from the labour intensive process of harvesting and refining sugar, and they saw the African slave trade as an ideal means of filling this labour pool. Despite the Cuban elite’s desire to maintain the plantation slave system, the slave trade in the Atlantic world was collapsing. Atlantic powers were withdrawing from the slave trade, beginning with the British in 1807, followed by the Americans in 1808, and finally by the Spanish empire itself in 1820. An illicit slave trade took place after the official one was no longer functioning, with Cuban plantation owners desperate to keep the flow of African slaves entering the country. To the sugar producers, maintaining the slave system was a critical component of maintaining their economic supremacy.

The complexity of race in Cuba comes from the fact that alongside enslaved people of colour, there resided a significant population of free people of colour. This group occupied the socioeconomic spectrum that lay between the slave population and the white population. Legal restrictions still held people of colour from professional positions, but many flourished in other areas, gathering a certain degree of wealth. Occupying positions ranging from menial workers to highly skilled artisans, free people of colour were an active, and large, component of Havana’s social spectrum. The growth of this segment of the population was driven by manumission, coartación, and immigration. The white population of Havana saw this growing demographic as a threat, regarding the close proximity of free people of colour and slaves as a potential site of racial insurrection.

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41 Simons, *Cuba*, 122.
Race, as a locus of fear for the white population, steadily grew. The event that solidified the mounting fear was the 1790 revolution in Saint-Domingue. In 1843 their concerns seemed justified; three slave uprisings caused racial terror of the white population to erupt into violence and persecution. The government alleged a conspiracy, later called la escalera, between free people of colour, slaves, British diplomats, and Creole abolitionists. These groups were accused of planning a general uprising in Cuba. The repression of this conspiracy, which took place in 1844, was marked by the mass arrest, torture, and public execution of individuals accused of involvement in the conspiracy. While the direct violence of 1844, known as the Year of the Lash, ended, decades of social and economic persecution against the free people of colour followed.

The Ten Years’ War, begun in 1868, was launched initially as a political and economic battle between the planter class and the Spanish authorities. It was a war about nationalism and independence, and the issue at stake was which political unit would ultimately control economic policy on the island. And yet the question of race was present from the beginning of the uprising, when Creole planter Carlos Manuel de Céspedes declared Cuba independent of Spain and simultaneously freed thirty of his slaves to fight in his army as free men. The war started in a climate of fear and repression of people of colour on the island. It ended with a fighting force of mixed race, the rise of individuals of colour to high ranks, and the freeing of sixteen thousand slaves who fought against Spain. Cuban’s conception of race had changed dramatically in the ten-year period of the war. The construct of a ‘raceless’ nation, born out of the rhetoric of the insurgent leaders, and expanded on by Cuban intellectuals, became a familiar trope,

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46 Gott, Cuba: A New History, 64-67.
47 See Reid-Vazquez, The Year of the Lash.
48 Knight, Slave Society, 158-159.
49 Simons, Cuba, 140.
50 Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba, 16-17, 63.
albeit one which is still contested today.\textsuperscript{51} The adoption of a new racial identity was not without discord; the conservative white population continued to resist change. Perhaps the most powerful change occurred in the population of colour. The experience of the Ten Years’ War highlighted the restrictions of the existing practices, while pointing to the promise of change. The people themselves were unwilling to return to subjugation and servitude.\textsuperscript{52}

**Race in the Graveyard**

Those who work at the Cementerio Colón tell a story about its foundation, that in the early years of its operation, people of colour were buried in a separate section of the space. Despite popular reiterations of this story, there is a lack of documentation of this practice, either in the nineteenth century literature, or in the cemetery layout documents.\textsuperscript{53} The ostentatious nature of the Creole elite’s monuments was crafted to publicly proclaim their family’s status; the markers of race are less overtly announced. While conceptions of race may not have been encoded in the monuments themselves, race manifests itself in terms of practice.

Racial segregation was a reality in the Espada general cemetery, the precursor to the Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón. The older cemetery was divided into four quarters, with the front sections reserved for los blancos, and the partition to the rear left for pardos, and the rear right for morenos. Further to this, the prices for internment were broken down under the classification of race and freedom: lower class whites and free people of colour had one cost, slaves had another. The burial of free, white children was different from the cost to bury the children of slaves. It is clear that there was both a material separation along the

\textsuperscript{51} Alejandro de la Fuente, “Race and Inequality in Cuba 1899-1981,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, no. 1. 131-133.


\textsuperscript{53} While documentation does not indicate a segregated burial practice for people of colour, the control of mourning practices was strictly enforced on this segment of the population. For a discussion of the strict protocols for black access and use of the space for ritual and mourning purposes, see Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Conflict in the Nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean*, (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 39-40.
lines of race, encoded in a physical separation, as well as a conceptual one, which emerged in a different value being ascribed to services based on race.\textsuperscript{54}

The regulations for the \textit{Cementerio Cristóbal Colón} dropped the race-based division of space. The spatial segregation was absent from the formal plans of the cemetery. Indeed, the only spatially distinct areas were those for non-Catholics, and the ground reserved for burials during epidemics.\textsuperscript{55} There is no price differential listed for the purchase of lots, the internment of bodies, or the exhumation and transfer to the osario. The segregation of space had seemingly vanished, but the conceptual divide based on skin colour was still in place.

While the overt manifestations of racial difference in death were gone from the \textit{Cementerio Colón}’s space, it continued unabated in the conceptual divide between people of colour and the white population. The cemetery kept separate records for white burials and the internments of people of colour. In some aspects, these records are quite similar. Both record the date of burial, the name of the individual, the immediate family, and when known, the cause of death. Where they differentiate is in the details included in the entry. The records for people of colour include a description of the race of the individual, the most common being \textit{pardo} and \textit{moreno}. This designation also includes descriptions indicating place of birth. One record lists the individual as a \textit{Moreno adulto natural de esta Ciudad} (mixed blood adult born in this city) while the next record describes an \textit{adulto natural de Africa} (adult born in Africa).\textsuperscript{56} The legal status of the individual, either \textit{libre} (free) or \textit{esclavo} (slave), is indicated.\textsuperscript{57} In addition to the deceased status, the status of the individual’s family is also indicated, with the colour and freedom of the parents and spouses noted. In circumstances where the family connections of a slave were unknown, it

\textsuperscript{54}Domingo Rosain, \textit{Necrópolis de la Habana: historia de los cementerios de esta ciudad} (Habana: Amistad 100, 1875), 21-22.

\textsuperscript{55}Del Valle, \textit{Legislación}, 146-147.

\textsuperscript{56}Death Records 10545/10546, \textit{Libro de entierros: Cementerio de Colón 24 Noviem de 1871 al 3 de Oct de 1872}. Colón Cemetery Archives.

\textsuperscript{57}Death Record 6942, \textit{Libro de entierros: Cementerio de Colón 24 Noviem de 1871 al 3 de Oct de 1872}. Colón Cemetery Archives.
was not uncommon for the deceased’s owner to be listed in the entry.\textsuperscript{58} The manner in which death records were kept at the cemetery demonstrate how complex the idea of race was in Havana, while simultaneously reinforcing the conceptual divide between people of colour and the white population. Individuals were not simply categorized by the colour of their skin, but by that of their family members, their place of origin, and their legal status. The Ten Years’ War had widely spread the construct of a raceless Cuban nation. General Antonio Maceo’s statement that there were “no whites nor blacks, but only Cubans” aptly sums up the ideology that was emerging from the insurgency.\textsuperscript{59} The cemetery records demonstrate how the rhetoric of a raceless Cuban nation was, at best, superficial. The cemetery presents racial unity on the surface, but the reality of racial difference, and the social disjuncture it creates, had simply moved below the surface, persisting unresolved.

**Society and the Working Poor**

While class and race have been central in analyses of nineteenth century Cuban society, there remains one other factor that was significant in determining social position. In an interesting move, some refer to this third component as a caste system; a social hierarchy based on the type of work one performs.\textsuperscript{60} Labour, not necessarily distinguished by class or race, was also a signifier in determining social position in Havana. Cuban society had inherited certain perceptions of manual labour from the peninsular Spanish, and these ideas had continued to resonate in the social order of Havana.

The idea of manual labour as being an undesirable occupation has presented itself throughout the history of Cuban colonization. In the sixteenth century, the land grants to \textit{encomenderos} were met with dissatisfaction, as there was a shortage of labour to support production on the land. The white colonists balked at the idea of performing manual labour themselves, and many either abandoned their farms to seek opportunities in other parts of Spanish Latin America, or enslaved the local indigenous population.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{58} Death Records 10545/10546, \textit{Libro de Entierros: Cementerio de Colón 24 Noviem de 1871 al 3 de Oct de 1872}. Colón Cemetery Archives.
\textsuperscript{59} As quoted in Ada Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba}, 7.
\textsuperscript{61} Gott, \textit{Cuba: A New History}, 17.
From the early period of colonial Cuba, the performance of manual labour was considered ignoble, and something to be avoided by gentlemen.

These ideas about the sulllying nature of manual labour infused the plantation society of nineteenth century Cuba. In western Cuba, the wealthy plantation owners often absented themselves from their estates to congregate in Havana. There, they pursued a life of recreation, where displays of idle wealth were linked to high status. The tradition of an afternoon promenade on *el Prado*, where wealthy families displayed their luxurious carriages, their opulent clothes, and more than that their leisure lifestyle, was one of numerous performances that became part of the display that separated the upper classes from the working classes.⁶²

The growing middle classes took their cue from the elite, imitating, to a lesser degree, the obsession with leisure. As the nineteenth century advanced this section of society steadily expanded, and they established their own social markers intended to differentiate them from the working class. Their idea of culture became linked to recreation, and being seen engaging in the popular forms of entertainment was considered critical to social advancement. The popularity of social dances emerged in the middle classes at this time, which the important middle class families attended as a means of imitating the status of the elites.⁶³ For both of these classes, status was inextricably linked to a desire to be seen as removed from the physical limitations of labour.

The perception of certain forms of work as unsuitable or sulllying was not without the overtones of race. The underlying prejudice that manual labour was unsuitable for whites was one of the underpinnings of slavery in Cuba. The slow transition from slave to wage labour in the second half of the nineteenth century triggered a massive immigration of indentured Chinese labourers.⁶⁴ Free people of colour were legally barred from professional positions, and in Havana they filled the ranks of skilled manual labour. Through training and education, the ranks of artisan and skilled trades became occupied by people of colour as a means of economic advancement. Meanwhile, many lower class white creoles

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⁶⁴ Knight, “Migration and Culture,” 552-553.
avoided these positions, as they considered them impediments to social advancement.\textsuperscript{65} The conception of manual labour as being a mark of inferiority had become entrenched in early nineteenth century Havana culture. The decades of civil war that followed would challenge this construction.

The position of the working class in Cuban social hierarchy was unseated by changes brought about in the economic and political structure of nineteenth century Cuba. The Ten Years’ War, launched as a bid by the Creole elite to gain political control of the island, freely employed a language of equality.\textsuperscript{66} While this was intended to address the disparity in power between the metropolitan Spanish government and the Cuban colonial government, it had the effect of bringing questions of social inequality to the forefront; questions that would gain resonance with the working classes as Cuba moved towards independence.\textsuperscript{67}

While the revolutionary spirit of the war was one factor which contributed to the shifting ideas around the working class, the transformation of labour in Havana questioned the system which denied workers rights. Beginning with the cigar workers in 1865, urban centers began to see the evolution of mutual aid societies that formed with the intent of provide social benefits for their members. The Workers Mutual Aid Society of Havana and the Brotherhood of Santiago de las Vegas, among others, formed, and a labour movement began.\textsuperscript{68} Conservative reaction was severe, and this early iteration was quickly suppressed, but the foundation was laid for an ideological revolution in Cuba’s impoverished working class.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} Reid-Vazquez, \textit{The Year of the Lash}, 27-41.
\textsuperscript{66} McGillivray, \textit{Blazing Cane}, 21-24; Ferrer, \textit{Insurgent Cuba}, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{68} Perez Jr., \textit{Between Reform and Revolution}, 87-89.
Poverty and the Graveyard

The design and construction of the Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón in the nineteenth century was meant to showcase Havana as a world-class city. The focus of its design was centered on the grand monuments of the elite, and to this day these monuments remain the feature that garners the most attention. In spite of this focus, this was the general cemetery for the city; a city that was comprised of not only wealthy upper class individuals, but a vast population of working poor. The fate of the working class in Havana’s cemetery is deeply embedded into the physical space itself.

The design and regulation of the cemetery divided the space into four principal quadrants, and further designated a hierarchy of use upon distinct areas within these four zones. The cemetery lots in these quadrants were sold as perpetual allotments, intended for the use of families over generations. Thus, those who could afford to were able to build permanent sites of remembrance for their family. Even with a tiered cost structure, the expense of a lot in the common ground was too high for many of Havana’s families. The cemetery regulations indicate that the average lot size was four meters by seven meters, and land was priced per square meter.\(^{70}\) The average price per square meter in the common ground was ten peso de oro.\(^{71}\) The cost of the land alone was two hundred and eighty pesos de oro, before the expense of building even a simple bóveda. Faced with the number of people who could not afford to purchase perpetual family plots, there were certain provisions made for the limited use of temporary internments.

The Galería de Tobías was an underground gallery intended for temporary burials. The first of Calixto de Loira’s buildings to be completed, this was a subterranean crypt that held 526 niches granted in 10 year subscriptions.\(^{72}\) (Figure 4-8) It quickly became apparent that this subterranean style of burial was unsuitable for the climate of Havana. In 1877, after a chemical-bacteriological study of the air in the gallery was performed, it was deemed unsafe for further internments. In November of 1878, all internments were banned in this underground crypt.\(^{73}\)

\(^{70}\) Reglamento del cementerio católico Cristóbal Colón, (Habana: Librería Religiosa, 1924), Cap III, Art. 11.
\(^{71}\) Socarras Matos, La Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón, 29.
\(^{72}\) Martínez, Sucinta descripción, 48-49.
\(^{73}\) Acosta, Datos históricos, 29.
The loss of five hundred burial spots that were designated as temporary allotments was a setback for the management of the cemetery. Due to the ten year allocation, this type of burial was available in limited quantities, while the demand for them was increasing. Cemetery officials sent a proposal and budget to the bishop in August of 1879 recommending the construction of an additional two hundred and eighty temporary burial sites. The letter indicated that the additional temporary lots were urgently needed to fill public demand. These lots were situated next to the then defunct Galería de Tobías, and were built out of lower quality marble and concrete. By 1888, nine hundred and eighty four of this type of grave had been constructed. Although these were temporary lots, they represented a private allotment of land for the use of the individual for ten years. The cost of the ten year burial period in these crypts was eighty dollars, which, while much reduced from the price of a perpetual lot, was still more than many could pay.

For the poorest members of Havana’s working class, even eighty dollars represented an insurmountable cost. The regulations allowed for one final type of burial. There is an accommodation for the pobres de solemnidad and for soldiers who died in military hospitals to be buried in temporary plots in the common ground. While no description of the type of burial is included, nor of the length of internment, the regulations clearly differentiate them from the other temporary burial sites, which are described as private allotments. There is some indication that these may have been some form of communal burial. These burials were provided at no cost. Despite the cost not being borne by the family, the cemetery’s position was that it had no obligation to provide free burials, and an annual bill was sent to the Municipio de la Habana for the internments.

The burial of the working class families who could not afford the expense of perpetual family lots did not decrease through the nineteenth century; in fact the problem became more extreme. By 1922, the

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74 “Documento referente a la construcción en el Cementerio de Colón de doscientas ochenta bóvedas que sirvan de sepultura temporal, 1879” Archivo Nacional de Cuba 460- 22697, Havana.  
75 Martínez, Sucinta descripción, 31.  
76 Del Valle, Legislación, 147.  
77 Reglamento, Art. 13-15, 129.  
78 Martínez, Sucinta descripción, 56.
problem of temporary internments had become insurmountable within the existing framework. An addition was added to the cemetery, on land purchased along the east wall of the original space, for the creation of temporary, communal lots.\(^79\) (Figure 4-9) The addition of this large section of land represented a new form of burial in the cemetery, and speaks to the unresolved issues of wealth distribution embedded in Cuban society (Figure 4-10).

**Redefined Social Symbols**

Nineteenth century Havana was a city of contradictions. Its population was comprised of waves of immigrants, some whose families had been on the island for centuries, some newly arrived on its shores. Social position in the city was determined by the performance of codified and recognized symbolic markers. Social constructs such as class, race, and caste were categorized by these symbols, and status in Havana was defined by the ability of the individual to claim belonging to these groups. When Havana built its general cemetery, the physical space encoded these social divisions.

The project of nationalism in Cuba is inextricably linked to the project to build the new cemetery. The two projects advanced together, and the changes brought about by the wars of independence were recorded in the cemetery grounds. Reading the material form of the cemetery reveals the changing conceptions of the elite class, of race, and of the working poor. The wars of independence introduced and spread ideas of social equality. Despite this, the elite class remains at the center of Cuban society, firmly embedded in the center of the space. This class holds social power, and their monuments are at the heart of the city of the dead. What shifts over the century is the adoption of the status markers of the elite throughout the cemetery grounds. The closely guarded border between the elite and the rest of society blurred as other demographic groups adopted the symbolic markers of this class. The cemetery records the slow deterioration of the control the elite held over power and prestige in Havana society. Race was another aspect of Cuban society manipulated in the wars of independence on the island. Increasingly, insurgent forces were espousing a language of racial equality. The idea of a racially free Cuba, which matured in the republican era, had its conception in these earlier wars. What is apparent in the cemetery is

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 49-50.
that although superficially race was absent from the public sphere, it in fact was simply sublimated into
a strictly conceptual realm. The cemetery ceased the practice of racially segregated burial, but the idea
and importance of race persisted in the burial records. The working poor of Havana were an integral part
of the building of the physical space of the graveyard, and yet are overlooked in its original design and
use. As this segment of the population grew, becoming increasingly politically and socially active, the
cemetery adjusted to accommodate their needs.

The changes in the cemetery did not represent a move towards equality, just as Cuba was not
becoming an equal society. Instead, the cemetery acts as a shadow city to the lived environment,
faithfully recording changes and advances as they occurred. It records a city in which the elite class
fought to hold its traditional power, a city whose attempts to ignore racial divides simply push them
underground, and a city in which vast wealth inequality fosters the creation of marginalized working
poor.
Figure 4-1 Colón Cemetery Ground-breaking ceremony, circa 1871. (Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami)

Figure 4-2 Cemetery Layout, 1913. (Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami)
Figure 4-3 Agencia funeraria Francisco Caballero, 1870-1900. (Legislación sobre cementerios, con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón)

Figure 4-4 Tren Funerario Serapio López, 1870-1900. (Legislación sobre cementerios, con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón)
Figure 4-5 Establo de Carruajes de Lujos El Prado, 1870-1900. (Legislación sobre cementerios, con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón)

Figure 4-6 Taller Apolo Marmolería, 1870-1900. (Legislación sobre cementerios, con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón)
Figure 4-7 Obras de Mármol E.A. Mantici, 1870-1900. (Legislación sobre cementerios, con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón)
Figure 4-8 Galería de Tobías interior circa 1890-1900 (collection of Antonio Medina Fernandez)
Figure 4-9 Plan of general cemetery showing extension along east wall, 1949, (Cuban National Archives)

Figure 4-10 Communal burial lots, (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Chapter 5
From Colony to Community: Building Memory, Building Belonging in the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón

On sunny afternoons, the cemetery fills with people. The marble catches fire in the bright light, and the monuments shine as tokens of Cuba’s glory. These are the images the guidebooks sell, of brilliant white contrasted against the tropical azure sky. The space is transformed on a rainy afternoon, when angels themselves seem to weep. Abandoned and silent, the cemetery is infused with a melancholy spirit. Wandering in the rain, one’s eye is no longer drawn to the artful beauty of the space, but instead takes note of more sombre details. Decay and decrepitude have crept onto the cemetery grounds. Stained glass panels are smashed, marble slabs are cracked, and the interior of family chapels have been ransacked. (Figure 5-1) The land in the cemetery was sold in perpetuity. The family was responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of their land. The disrepair speaks to the toll one hundred and fifty years of civil upheaval has had on the island. Entire families have been wiped out, or exiled. Despite distance, the affective ties to the cemetery remain, and exiles speak of one day returning the bones of their dead to Cuban soil. The space of the cemetery has become a space of recognition, one that both creates and reinforces a Cuban identity in Havana’s citizens. This type of recognition was essential for the success of the nationalist movement in Cuba, as the individual must first identify with, and then adopt, their position within the new realm.

This chapter explores the mechanisms through which the individual was transformed into the citizen within the cemetery. The categories of monuments within the cemetery reveal different claims to inclusion that are tied to the nationalist narrative. The diversity in memorialisation and internment demonstrate multiple means by which the experience of individuals was merged to the narrative of the nation. These memorial practices served, first, to create a history that was separate and distinct from the history of Spain. On one level, this legitimized Cuba’s claim to a separate sovereignty, while on another it crafted affective ties to a heritage that Cubans could be proud to claim. Second, they rooted the individual to place, creating networks of memory and tradition that justified claims of ownership of the land. Finally,
the structures within the graveyard cemented the individual’s membership in a community, and introduced the obligation of service and loyalty to this shared community. In order to explore these three narratives of belonging that emerged in the nationalist movement, and that are embedded in the cemetery, this chapter looks at the construction and use of national monuments, the formation of varying styles of family memorial, and the institution of communal monuments built by civic and professional associations. The formal aspects of these monuments display extreme variation, but they served a common purpose: they acted as the points at which the individual, in death, could gain citizenship in the national project. Through affective and memorial ties between the living and the dead, this access to belonging was extended into the lived spaces of the city.

Nationalism and the Creation of History

The project of nationalism that emerged in nineteenth century Cuba began a process of symbolic redefinition of the island, both within Cuban social structures and in the wider Atlantic world. Over the course of the century, cultural markers were being negotiated and contested on a broad social basis that would eventually form the foundation of the Cuban national identity. Despite the immensity of the changes occurring in and around the island, the project of nationalism hinged on another transformation, this one occurring on a more intimate scale. A nation is not merely a collection of ideas and symbols; it is a collection of individuals who identify with those symbols. The nationalist movement in Cuba was not simply the negotiation and articulation of a set of ideals of what the nation would be; it encompassed the gathering of individuals of previously fractured cultural identifiers into a relationship with the symbols being created. Creating the nation of Cuba necessitated the creation of Cuban citizens. The individual needed to articulate their identity within the new nation, and the success of nationalism hinged on providing multiple avenues in which individuals could envision their place.¹

The term *cubano* emerged in the beginning of the nineteenth century to denote a Cuban born national.² This marked a monumental epistemological shift, as ties to Spain were severed in favour of a new identity, one rooted in a Cuban point of view.³ Nationalist movements emerged in the late eighteenth century; fragmented and unfocused what they shared was a desire for independence from Spanish colonial authority. Civil uprisings, rooted in independence ideologies, included those of Nicolás Morales (1795), José Antonio Aponte (1812), and the *Soles y Rayos de Bolívar* (1823), during which Félix Varela, a progressive Cuban cleric who was influential in the education of the next generation of Cuban intellectuals, was sent into exile.⁴ This emergent construct, of a Cuban nation inhabited by Cuban citizens, was still tentative and malleable. The nationalist movement required a mechanism that would consolidate these ephemeral ideas into a form which would be easily disseminated to the public, and which would connect those people on an emotional level to the cause that came to be known as *Cuba Libre*. The production of various Cuban histories, narratives that differentiated the Cuban experience from the Spanish versions, were critical in mobilizing a growing sentiment for, and identification with, a Cuban nation.⁵

The Cuban histories produced in this period of nascent nationalist sentiment occupied a critical role in the consolidation of a collective national identity. They crafted a historical narrative that legitimized insurgent movements that sought to sever ties with metropolitan Spain.⁶ In the introduction to his history of the island published in 1789, Ignacio de Urrutia y Montoya writes that he hoped knowledge

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³ This process began in the eighteenth century, as increasingly the Creole population sought to differentiate the identity of the island from that of the metropolis. One form this took was in the creation of Cuban cultural institutes. In Havana, this included the establishment of Havana as a bishopric, with the construction of the Cathedral (1723), the founding of the University of Havana (1728), the opening of a public library (1793), Louis A. Perez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32-33.
⁶ Perez Jr., *The Structure of Cuban History*, 34-37.
of the past would engender, in his reader, an understanding of the “common rights of his patria.” Other Cuban intellectuals took up this call, and numerous volumes and essays of Cuban History emerged in the early nineteenth century. This surge in production was explicitly linked to inspiring sentimental attachment to the Cuban nation, or patria, and through this sentiment a desire to defend it.

The production of a Cuban History served to advance the project of nationalism in another way. The process of creating a historical narrative from a Cuban perspective meant repurposing individuals and events in a new light. The effect of this was twofold. First, there was the claiming of prominent individuals, either natives of Europe, the Americas, or the Caribbean, as Cuban. Second, there was the elevation of cubano individuals, and their actions, to primacy within the historical narrative. These two actions served to create a collection of national heroes, rooted in a narrative of place, that acted as template for citizenship in the emergent Cuban nation.

The cemetery became a repository for memorials that facilitated the myth making process of nationalized Cuban historiography. The cult of the hero is prominent within the walls of the necropolis. While the style of the memorials is diverse, they reflect both the claiming of the outsider and ennoblement of the native born. The memorials provide a tangible representation of the idealized national character as well as providing a roadmap for the individual to become a citizen.

**National Heroes in the Cemetery**

The emergence of a Cuban History in the nineteenth century was a means for nationalists to define and shape a vision of united Cuba, a literary and intellectual tool used to transform a fractured population into a united whole. The types of memorials in the cemetery, how they were conceptualized and who they represented, acted as material embodiments of the concept of citizen in the emergent

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8 Perez Jr. elaborates on this growing body of literature embodying the emergent Cuban nationalist sentiment and language, including the works of poets Manuel de Zequerra and Manuel Justo de Rubalcava, as well as histories by Pedro Agustín Morell de Santa Cruz and José Martín Félix de Arrate. Perez Jr., *Reform and Revolution*, 53.

9 Perez Jr., *The Structure of Cuban History*, 36.

10 Ibid.
national ethos. They defined not only who was counted as a citizen, but the mechanisms through which the individual could participate in the nation. The written histories represented a means for the intellectuals of Cuba to control the narrative arc of their own past, repurposing events to serve a Cuban perspective rather than a Spanish one. The memorials in the cemetery served a similar purpose, mobilizing a visual language to foster nationalist sentiments within the population that interacted with them. Just as the written histories permitted a claiming of the narrative, the creation of monuments was an act of claiming the stories of individuals, and transforming them into Cuban national heroes.

The first memorial associated with the cemetery was proposed before the design process had begun. The original proponents of the new general cemetery desired to create a memorial to Christopher Columbus within the space. The explorer’s remains had been relocated to Cuba in 1796, and Isabella II had decreed that they would remain in Cuba in perpetuity. The petition for the new cemetery was made in conjunction with the proposal for a memorial to the admiral. A series of letters from 1854 outline the proposal to build the memorial and relocate the remains to this site. The original design of Calixto de Loira, accepted almost fifteen years later, reserved the plaza between the North Gate and the chapel as the site of this memorial. The remains of Columbus, a man claimed by so many nations, were intended to find their final resting place in Cuban soil, remembered as an integral part of the Cuban story. The proposed memorial was never completed, as the Spanish government removed the remains from the island after independence. While the Cubans wanted to materially enshrine Columbus as part of their history, the Spanish were unwilling to abandon their prior claim.

12 “Sobre la erección de un monumento al almirante Colón y formación de nuevo cementerio.” Archivo Nacional de Cuba 185-10376, Havana.
13 Enrique Martínez y Martínez, Sucinta descripción de los cementerios de la antigüedad, primitivos de la Habana y el de Cristóbal Colón, (Habana: Ucar García u Cia., 1928), 40.
15 The controversy around Columbus’s remains continues into the present day. Numerous contradictory claims are under debate, and DNA testing is being used to try and ascertain which body is Columbus. Suemedha Sood, “The Mystery of Christopher Columbus’s legacy,” BBC (Nov 9, 2012), www.bbc.com/travel/blog/20121107-the-mystery-of-christopher-columbuss-legacy.
Another Spaniard that the Cubans memorialized within the cemetery was a man responsible for many of the early nineteenth century reforms in Havana. The Bishop Juan José Diaz de Espada y Landa was a beloved figure in Havana culture. While the first general cemetery in Havana carried his name, in recognition of his pivotal role in facilitating its construction, he was better known as a leader in the progressive circles of nineteenth century Havana. Educated at the University of Salamanca in Spain, he was a proponent of the Spanish Enlightenment, and involved in various reform projects in Havana. His cemetery reforms were part of a push for modern medical and sanitation practices. He was an early supporter of vaccination in Havana, and founded an asylum for the insane. His activities in education reform urged increased access to education, and he endowed many public schools during his thirty years as Havana’s bishop. His progressive ideals caused friction with the Vatican, and in 1815 led to accusations of “heresy and Freemasonry.” Despite this controversy, his reforms made him enormously popular in Cuba.

The idea that the new general cemetery would encompass a monument to Bishop Espada emerged as part of the early designs for the cemetery. Where land had been set aside for Columbus’s proposed memorial leading from the North gate to the chapel, the land designated for Espada’s memorial mirrors this at the rear of the space. While the plaza in the North quadrant sits empty, a negative space where Columbus never came to rest, the South plaza is filled with the Espada monument. Clearly visible from the central chapel, it is the sole monument located in the center of the principal north-south Avenue, setting it apart from the rest of the memorials.

The prominent position of this memorial was set out from the beginning of the design of the cemetery, but its construction was not completed until the end of the nineteenth century. The

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16 Ibid, 38.
18 Domingo Rosain, Necrópolis de la Habana: historia de los cementerios de esta ciudad, (Habana: Amistad 100, 1875), 215-231.
remains of Bishop Espada were transferred from the old general cemetery in 1878, despite the full monument not being completed.\textsuperscript{21} As late as 1881 there were still popular subscription campaigns working to gather the funds for the monument.\textsuperscript{22} This was not an uncommon practice, as the majority of the public memorials in the cemetery were funded either through large private donations or public subscriptions. The mausoleum for Bishop Espada was built by one of the oldest marble workshops in Havana, Triscornia, whose Italian trained artisans utilized the prized Carrara marble.\textsuperscript{23} The completed hypogeum and memorial sculpture, prominently situated in the space of the graveyard, not only holds the remains of Bishop Espada, but also has served as the resting place for subsequent Bishops of Havana. The memorial thus serves to claim the Spanish Bishop as a Cuban national icon, in recognition of his contributions and service to the island. It further forges a conceptual link between the newly articulated Cuban history and the ongoing evolution of the Cuban nation. This memorial, and the many other public memorials in the space, advanced the nationalist cause. They acted as physical sites that were designed to facilitate identification with a Cuban identity by fostering recognition of, and an affective bond with, a shared Cuban national history.

**National Service and the Cemetery**

The public monuments that claimed foreign nationals and sought to establish a collective national identity were only one means in which the memorials in the cemetery fostered a national history. The commemoration of great men established a tradition of Cuban accomplishment, intended to foster pride and loyalty to a nation not yet in existence. A second form of public monument emerged which elevated the actions of *cubanos*, and manifested the ideals of service and sacrifice that became intermingled with the idea of Cuban citizenship.

The struggle for independence, begun with the Ten Years’ War in 1868 and culminating in 1898 with the American intervention, decimated the island’s population. It is estimated that 200,000 people

\textsuperscript{21} Aruca, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 43.
\textsuperscript{22} “Documento sobre una suscripción popular cuyo producto se destina a levantar en el Cementerio de Colón un monumento que perpetua la memoria del Obispo de Espada,” Archivo Nacional de Cuba 4.913, Havana, 1881.
\textsuperscript{23} Aruca, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 43; D.A.G. Del Valle, *Legislación sobre cementerios con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón*, (Habana: impr. de José V. Santamarina, 1894), 16. (8374)
died in the Ten Years’ War alone, and double that in the 1895 War of Independence. Despite devastating loss of life and property, the insurgent forces continued to grow. This occurred as more people came to identify as Cuban nationalists, and to value the freedom of their country over their own lives. The weaving of martyrs into the History of Cuba provided examples of the sacrifice demanded of its citizens. The cemetery has become a repository of such monuments, as Cubans embraced not only the cult of the martyr, but the virtues it espoused.

The civil unrest of the Ten Years’ War had led to a polarized population in Havana, split along lines of loyalists and nationalists. The capital, while not directly involved in the ongoing military operations, saw its own share of violence. On November 27th, 1871, eight medical students were executed in Havana. They were accused of desecrating the grave of Gonzalo Castañón, a prominent Spanish loyalist. On November 24th, forty students were arrested by voluntarios, ultra conservative regiments composed of peninsulares who opposed the insurgent forces, and held for three days. A crowd of fifteen thousand voluntarios rioted and demanded the execution of the students for their alleged crimes, and a hastily assembled court martial sentenced eight of their number to death. These executions had a profound effect on the developing independence movement, as the execution of the students became a rallying cry for the insurgents. On the first anniversary of the executions, the deaths of the students were used to decry the crimes of the Spanish. The students were remembered as martyrs, and their deaths were commemorated as a national tragedy. This sentiment did not wane over time, it was repurposed in subsequent revolutions, and the students became eponymous with resistance to tyranny and repression. November 27th remains a national holiday in Cuba, and the monument to the students is one of the most visited sites in the Necrópolis Colón.

24 Perez Jr., The Structure of Cuban History, 27.
26 Gott, Cuba: A New History, 75-77.
30 Estrada, Havana, 120.
The monument itself was one of the first major public memorials completed in the cemetery. Its construction was largely the result of the efforts of Fermín Valdés Domínguez, one of the forty students arrested. His sentence was hard labour rather than death, and after his pardon he spent decades ensuring that “their innocence will be known in Havana and throughout the civilized world.”31 Popular support was behind him, and in March of 1887, the original unmarked grave of the executed students was located and exhumed, and a process began to reinter them in the Colón cemetery. As his actions had garnered considerable public interest and sympathy, a number of newspapers began a fund to build a “modest tomb.”32 The response was large, and thousands contributed to the fund. Cuban born José Vilalta Saavedra designed the memorial, and construction was completed in 1890.33

(Figure 5-4) The memorial to the students is one of the most visited in the cemetery, being both an expression of mourning and of nationalism. The marble figures of Justice and Law stand watch while sober metal plaques bear the images of the eight young men. Yet this imposing marble memorial, built in the nineteenth century and still visited today, is not the only commemoration of these Cuban martyrs. At the rear of the cemetery, there is a second memorial to them.34 It was built in 1959 and it marks the spot where their bodies lay in an unmarked grave for sixteen years. (Figure 5-5) While the white marble at the center of the graveyard is both imposing and inspiring, the space at the rear is a quiet and contemplative square. It lies just outside the original boundary of the cemetery, lying in the extension of the graveyard built in 1922.35 Tree-shadowed and calm, it is goes almost unnoticed in its less prominent location. (Figure 5-6) Its existence marks the claiming of the student martyrs by yet another cycle of Cuban insurgents, as the Revolution continued to exalt the virtue of sacrifice they had come to represent.

32 Ibid., 146.
33 Aruca, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 44.
The memorials to the students were not the only sites in the cemetery that prominently celebrated the virtues of *cubanos*. There is another nineteenth century memorial that equals the student memorial in popularity in the public eye. The memorial is dedicated *a los cuerpos de bomberos*, and it was built to commemorate the death of volunteer firefighters in a fire on May 17th 1890. The proponents of this memorial articulated a clear agenda in their proposal. They explicitly outlined their aim to instil the virtues of service and sacrifice in the public. They sought to present the popular masses with a perpetual record of illustrious men and worthy acts, as well as to preserve in the hearts of the people the great deeds of the past. This monument was meant to capture the grief of the city at the sacrifice of the twenty-eight volunteer firefighters who died saving others, and to immortalize the spirit in which they died. They wished to valorize the virtue of self-sacrifice without expectation of reward that was embodied in these men. Since the volunteer firefighters’ actions, in paying with their lives, elevated their status to the highest in society, the proposed memorial would demonstrate the respect and affection of the city. The monument is located facing the principal avenue between the north gate and the chapel, and its prominent site places the working class firemen between the monuments of the greatest families of Havana.

The monument, completed in 1897, is a massive structure by Spanish sculptor Agustín Querol y Subirats. Its plot, in the most prestigious location in the necropolis, has a footprint of 12 meters by 8 meters. It towers over the monuments around it, and can be seen from almost all corners of the cemetery grounds. Built of a combination of limestone and white marble, it is entirely covered in figurative works. The four corners of its base carry figures representing the virtues of *la Abnegación* (self-sacrifice), *El Dolor* (sorrow), *El Heroísmo* (heroism), and *El Martirio* (martyrdom). Atop the central figure is an angel carrying the body of a fallen firefighter to eternal glory. The size and elaborate nature of the monument make it an inescapable landmark in the cemetery, and some have

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37 Memoria y proyecto: presentado al concurso para erigir un monumento en el cementerio de colón de la habana en honor de las víctimas de la catástrofe de 17 mayo de 1890, (Habana: La Propaganda Literaria, 1891), 2-4.
38 Aruca, “The Cristóbal Colón Cemetery,” 44.
39 Memoria y proyecto, 7.
40 Ibid., 8-9.
criticized it for overwhelming the tombs of “so many eminent persons.” Its significance to the nationalist movement lies in the very thing it is criticized for, as it tangibly demonstrates one tenant of the insurgent movement: the idea that the Cuban nation would break old hierarchies, and open paths to citizenship and belonging for previously marginalized groups. It also showed the means of accessing that belonging: sacrifice in service to the nation.

The creation of a Cuban history was one means by which the cause of Cuban nationalism was advanced in the nineteenth century. By articulating a historical narrative with a Cuban perspective the island demonstrated its separation from the Spanish tradition, gave Cuba national heroes to admire and emulate, and provided a cultural tradition worthy of defence. The elevation of Cuban martyrs conceptually linked the glorious past to the uncertain present, while simultaneously imprinting the values of service and sacrifice into the Cuban national identity. The memorials to the heroes and martyrs of Cuban history forged ties between the individual and a Cuban culture; a history the nationalist movement mobilized to draw a diverse population into the insurgent ranks.

Nationalism and Place

The process of forming a shared national identity mobilized numerous discursive frameworks intended to accelerate the making of individuals who identified as Cuban. The formation of a historical narrative was one mode that enabled the epistemological transformation of self into citizen, but it was not the only one. The idea of place, and of belonging to a place by virtue of nativity or as a repository of memory, increasingly dominated nationalist identity politics. The relationship to place was a reciprocal one; the individual was claimed by the land through relationships of birth, death, and memory, and thus

42 Perez Jr., in Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution, speaks of the end of the eighteenth century as the period that “heightened a consciousness of community among creoles,” 53; Kapcia, in Havana: The Making of Cuban Culture, details how over the course of the nineteenth century, creoles took deliberate steps to foster a Cuban cultural identity distinct from Spain, including the promotion of Cuban art, literature, theater, music, and dance in Havana society, 43-58; Ada Ferrer, in Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation and Revolution, 1868-1898, discusses how, in order to successfully defeat the Spanish authorities, the nationalist rebel army had to adopt an inclusive policy, and how this ultimately effected change in Cuban society, 195-196.
the land also belonged to the individual. Cubano claims to sovereignty were legitimized through this connection to place.43

The connections to place were deeply personal, and were intimately linked to individual and family histories. The identification of the land as a birthplace did not simply entail a physical marking, but encompassed a conceptual repository of memory. The material locality of childhood and youth became a conceptual marker of identity, and Cuba as suelo natal (homeland/native land) became eponymous with Cuba as Patria.44 To be born of the soil came to have a powerful sentimental attachment, further advancing the ideology of Cuban nationalism. This was a powerful tool used to legitimate independence claims, as being born of the island’s soil made them Cuban in a way that the Spanish were not.

The high number of immigrants in the island’s population meant that claims to citizenship that were limited to birth were not open to everyone. A second avenue to the affective claim of Cuba as suelo natal emerged. Cuba was homeland as a place of birth, but also as a place of death. The idea of the land as the repository of memory, the physical space of burial, provided a link from the individual to the land. José Martí speaks of fallen Cubans as still being part of the Cuban people, as “they enrich our earth.”45 On a personal scale, the land represented ties of kinship and family. Understandings of self became intimately intertwined with the land that held the remains of the family dead. This connection to the earth, and the forebears it contained, became a cornerstone in the complex transformation of self required in adopting a national identity.46

The design of the cemetery reflects this awareness of ties being forged between the living and the dead. The family plot, which was adopted as the most common form of burial, tapped into desire for a generational memory of place, one that further deepened the ties to the land. The space of the new cemetery was intimately linked to memory, and to the process whereby the maintenance of individual, or

43 Perez Jr., The Structure of Cuban History, 38-39.
44 Ibid, 38.
46 Perez Jr., The Structure of Cuban History, 38-40.
family, memory intersected with the creation of communal, or national, memory. The space of the graveyard was the visible symbol of the reunion of the living with the dead. The family memorials it contains, and the shared practices of mourning enacted in its grounds, fosters solidarity between family, nation and humanity.\textsuperscript{47}

**Place and the Cemetery**

Cuba, as a Spanish colony, inherited a hierarchal family structure rooted in Iberian traditions. As Cuba moved towards independence and exerted its difference from Spain, it retained the family as the central organizing structure of its social networks. Retaining its importance in Cuban culture, the family was linked to a discursive framework of place. Notions of the family and the nation became intertwined, both acting as sites of origin and memory, and both intimately bound to cycles of birth and death. The individual knew his or her connection to the land and the nation through their kinship relationships. Rituals of mourning and memorial, displayed in the cemetery, reinforced the idea of the individual belonging to the land through the family relationship.

The majority of the plots in the *Cementerio Cristóbal Colón* were sold to families. The regulations regarding ownership intended for these plots to be used by single families over generations. The process of purchasing land was carefully regulated. Land in the cemetery was sold by the square meter, with a variation of sizes available. The minimum size the cemetery would allow was 1.35 meters by 2.7 meters. This smaller size lot was in limited supply, being available only if someone had previously purchased a larger space adjacent to it. These small lots were suitable only for a single grave, and were limited to spaces that fell in the far perimeter of the common ground.\textsuperscript{48} Families were permitted to purchase larger sized lots to suit the scale and style of monument they intended to build. The family would submit a request to the *Sr. Ingeniero del Cemeterio*. This request would include the number of meters required, the quadrant, square, and category they desired, and their proposed design. If it complied with all the regulations for that category and location, it would then pass onto *la Secretaria de Obispado*

\textsuperscript{47} Del Valle, *Legislación sobre cementerios*, 23.
\textsuperscript{48} *Reglamento del Cementerio Católico Cristóbal Colón*, (Habana: Librería Religiosa, 1924) Art 11-12
for final approval. Upon receiving this approval, the family would be permitted to purchase the land.49 The title to the land was meant to remain in the bloodline. The family was not able to lease out burial space, the lot itself could not be used to pay debts, it was not subject to legal proceedings against the family, and they could not take out a mortgage against the land. The sale of the lot was not permitted, the only way it could change hands was through inheritance or if it was given away.50 These regulations ensured that the cemetery plots would remain within families for generations.51

The cemetery not only regulates the ownership of the lots, but the construction of graves on the land. Although earth burial was not forbidden, it was discouraged. This was only an option available in the common ground, and even here it was regulated. When earth burial took place, the family was required to build a brick or stone covering over it. This temporary internment had to be exhumed and moved to the ossuary after no more than five years, at which time the covering had to be removed.52 A more acceptable option was the construction of a simple sepulchre or grave. The simplest of these was made of stone or concrete, and was simply a deep rectangular box that extended into the earth. The minimum interior size of these was 0.8 by 2.1 meters, with a depth of 2 meters.53 On average, about half a meter of the sepulchre would show above the ground level, creating the appearance of a low bed. (Figure 5-9) If the plot was large enough, a family ossuary could be constructed on the site, being a minimum size of 0.5 by 0.5 meters.54 Only the smallest available lots did not accommodate an ossuary alongside a single grave. The minimum length of internment was three years, and while there was no mandated exhumation

49 Ibid., Art. 15-16
50 Ibid., 26-27
51 The regulations regarding ownership have remained relatively stable over time. One of the remarkable sights in the cemetery today is the number of crumbling and damaged monuments and vaults. The families who have died out, or gone into exile, retain ownership, despite their inability to use or maintain the property. The monuments of the first order have been nationalized, and the Cuban government is restoring these monuments. Other areas are left to crumble. Many exile families have buried their dead in vaults in Miami, with the intention of returning them to Cuban family site once the regime changes. José de Cordoba, “Grave Issues: Exiles, Even in Death, Seek to Return to Cuba,” The Wall Street Journal (May 26, 1996); “Havana’s Famed Colón Cemetery Suffers Ravages of Time,” Miami Herald (May 18, 2009).
52 Martínez y Martínez, Sucinta descripción, 59.
53 Reglamento, Art. 11
54 Ibid., Art. 13
points for family sites, the cemetery’s listed exhumation fees were for three or ten years.\textsuperscript{55} After exhumation, the bones would be placed with generations of the family in the shared ossuary. The size of a small plot in the common ground had the capacity to indefinitely fill a single family’s needs, as up to three burials could be stacked one atop the other in this depth of grave.\textsuperscript{56} The cemetery facilitated the purchase of burial grounds intended for generations of kin to be returned to the earth together. The perpetual family memorial created a physical site for the location of memory.

Wealthier families followed the same basic structure and format of burial, if in more elaborate memorials. The difference was in the number of graves within the lot, and the erection of large monuments. One of the most popular nineteenth century styles was the construction of a chapel with the graves contained within the structure.\textsuperscript{57} There were two options for the placement of graves in this type of construction. The first would see them be set in the floor of the chapel, usually with a small altar and the ossuary at the rear. If they followed the tradition of the hypogeeum, the graves and ossuary would be located in an underground crypt.\textsuperscript{58} Utilizing a hypogeeum was also common for the largest monuments, those that occupied the entire plot with significant artistic work.\textsuperscript{59} (Figure 5-10 & 5-11) The access to the lower level would often be located to the rear, so as not to interfere with the monument itself.\textsuperscript{60} In addition to the chapel, or the large monument, a common arrangement in the nineteenth century was the construction of two or more side-by-side sepulchres, with the family ossuary at the back, and a figurative work in the rear center.\textsuperscript{61} Regardless of the difference in styles, the family burial represented the same conceptual tying of the individual to a specific place through the process of memorialisation.

The power of the family plot to create and strengthen emotive ties to place was centered in two structures, the family ossuary and the family memorial. Both of these acted in such a way as to bind the individual into a memorial practice that minimized them as individuals and emphasized their place within
a lineage of others. The memorial then acted as a locus of memory for the family, rather than as a site of commemoration for the single life lost. The ossuary, in which the remains of generations returned and intermingled, was a material sign of the individual identity being subsumed by the family identity. In death, the individual’s essence was returned to the family and land that birthed them. Nineteenth century Cuban exiles often spoke of their absence from the island in terms of the separation from the family remains. Mariano Aramburo y Machado spoke of the island by referencing the place that held “the coffin that contains the bones of my mother, the land in whose bosom the bodies of my ancestors await Resurrection.” Being separated from the family grave meant they were denied not only the ability to connect with this place weighted with memory, but that they were denied the right to return to the family and the land in death.

The nomenclature of family memorials also reinforced the idea of the individual returning to the family. The monuments in the cemetery serve generations of families, and their design and construction often celebrate a single prominent individual, or the family name. Often only the family name, or the name of the first individual to have been interred, is displayed on the monuments. When future generations are buried, the immediate relatives would often place a commemorative tablet on the grave while the body was interred. Carved of marble or stone, they feature a preponderance of forms, but were most commonly shaped as books, tablets or pillows. These temporary additions rested atop the grave, marking the name and date of the death, for the mourners to visit. The death of the individual was marked and remembered by their immediate family, but their names only touched the plot in a temporary manner, vanishing as subsequent generations remembered more immediate losses. The family crypt was meant to connect the living with the generations of dead buried there, and fostered a connection to place that ran deeper than the present, profoundly tied to the land of their kin.

As discussed in Chapter four, there was a large segment of the population that could not afford to purchase perpetual space in the graveyard. In the midst of a cemetery in which family is adulated and

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memorialized, the working classes of Havana were kept outside the family plots. The temporary internments that were available for them to purchase represented a different approach to burial. These were not just temporary, being available with three, five, or ten-year leases, they were communal.\(^{63}\) In the nineteenth century, this meant up to three bodies could be interred in one grave.\(^{64}\) When the cemetery was extended in 1922, the communal graves held five coffins. Individuals buried here were buried without marker, either individual or familial, and the location of the grave is identified by its location. Upon exhumation, the bones are sent to the general ossuary, which serves as the repository of all those who do not have a family site for their permanent internment.\(^{65}\) (Figure 5-12 & 5-13) Within the traditional family model, they were an unrecognized segment of the Cuban community. Over the century, new forms of burial took root that clarified and made space for them within the Cuban nation.

**Nationalism and Community**

The space of the cemetery was, in many ways, a space of contradictions. On the one hand, its design reflected a rigid social hierarchy that was the inheritance of the Spanish colonial system. On the other hand, it included the markers of an increasingly modernized worldview, as it engaged with the progressive nations around it. Much of the contradiction emerged from the fact that over the course of its design and construction, Cuba itself had undergone a significant transformation. The Ten Years’ War began as a bid by *criollo* elite to advance their own political and economic interests. In order to build support for their cause, they mobilized rhetoric of equality carefully designed to draw fighters to their nationalist cause. Between the *Grito de Yara*, the speech that began the uprising in 1868, and the final, bloody struggle for independence in 1898, this language of equality was no longer just a tool; increasingly it had become the center of the struggle.\(^{66}\) The Cuban nation was increasingly linked to ideas of brotherhood, of equality, and of social justice. It was possible for all demographics of people on the island to be drawn into a construction of Cuban national identity that was built on community and camaraderie.

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\(^{64}\) Martínez y Martínez, *Sucinta descripción*, 59.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 34-43.

\(^{66}\) Knight, *Slave Society*, 162.
The repercussions of an insurgent war that mobilized a language of equality were that the nationalist cause adopted social reform as a central tenet of its movement.\textsuperscript{67} The demographics of Cubans who were marginalized in the colonial system were drawn to a national identity that claimed the collective well being of the populace as a core value. These groups, denied a voice under the old structures, increasingly demanded that their interests be recognized. From the middle of the century on, different community organizations emerged with the focus of providing social benefits to their members. Many of these groups formed in response to shared grievances, often defined along racial, professional, or ethnic lines, and seemingly reinforced the fractured nature of the islands demographic composition. Yet the possibility of agency through association, the collective power to affect change in the new national order, in fact offered individuals of diverse backgrounds recognition and place in the emergent nation. These sociedades, unions, cultural and religious organizations furthered the cause of Cuban nationalism by offering a path to self-transformation through the assimilation of the individual into a Cuban community.

The types of organizations varied to suit the needs of their particular constituents, but the common forms took the shape of social organizations, communities affiliated with different ethnic groups, and the unionization of different workers. The social organizations that formed in Havana often focused on exploring Cuban intellectual and cultural pursuits. These associations celebrated the literature, music, and scholarly contributions of Cubans, and were often limited to upper middle class and elite members.\textsuperscript{68} One of the earliest to focus on the intellectual development was the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, a progressive organization whose offshoots became centers for dissident and separatist thought.\textsuperscript{69} Other organizations, such as the freemasons, also began to establish lodges in the city.\textsuperscript{70} Alongside those which celebrated and advanced Cuban artistic and intellectual contribution, largely gatherings of the middle and upper classes, there emerged associations which focused on the needs of

\textsuperscript{67} José Martí, “1882 letter to General Maceo,” in Perez Jr., \textit{Between Reform and Revolution}, 109-110.
\textsuperscript{69} Gott, \textit{Cuba: A New History}, 43, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{70} Eduardo Torres-Cueves, \textit{Historia de la masonería cubana: seis ensayos}, 67; Kapcia, \textit{Havana}, 36-37
particular ethnic or racial groups. Immigration had contributed to a diverse population, and the formation of immigrant associations grew rapidly.\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Sociedades de Color} also evolved, changing and reshaping themselves alongside their constituents. Intellectual associations, as well as ones acting to preserve religious and cultural traditions, negotiated for position in the changing society of Havana.\textsuperscript{72} The emergence of professional unions began in the 1860s, with the cigar workers, but labour unions expanded slowly throughout the later nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{73} The proliferation of social organizations in the late nineteenth century marks the change in the nationalist movement in which the idea of collective well being, and social reform, took hold of the popular imagination and altered forever the trajectory of the independence movement. The ideological change in nationalism can be traced in the creation of new forms of burial in the cemetery.

\textbf{Community and the Cemetery}

The tradition of family vaults, the most common form of burial in the Cuban general cemetery, dominated in the early years of its use. This began to change by the end of the century, as increasingly new forms of monument appeared. Rather than owned by a family, social associations owned the newer monuments, and they offered burial in the cemetery as a benefit to their members. This type of tomb began to emerge in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and by the turn of the century, their use exploded. While the earlier model for the cemetery featured no place for the poor and the working classes, these monuments demonstrated a place for them in the social system of the emergent nation.

Charitable institutions that supported different immigrant communities constructed some of the earliest of this type of memorial. The influx of immigrants in the nineteenth century created a large population of wageworkers, yet the positions available to them were often the lowest paying work available. The cost of burial was prohibitive for individuals in these communities, and this led to the first wave of the new model. The public demand for them drove the creation of many new constructions; the

\textsuperscript{71} Kapcia, \textit{Havana}, 42.
cemetery has ninety-seven sites that belong to charitable associations for immigrants from various parts of Spain alone.⁷⁴ (Figure 5-14) One of the first was built in 1888 and belongs to the sociedad Vasco-Navarra de Beneficencia (Basque-Navarre Charitable Society). While it was an early example, it provides a model for the proliferation of memorials that were intended to give immigrants a place in the conceptual structure of Cuban society.

Following the example of the immigrant memorials, there emerged community memorials for different intellectual and cultural associations. Some of the earliest of these are the memorials that were built by freemason lodges. (Figure 5-15) Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the sign of the freemasons becomes increasingly common in the cemetery space. Different lodges had their own lots, and the construction of new Freemason tombs continues until the nineteen fifties.⁷⁵ Other than the preponderance of Freemason tombs, the cemetery is remarkably untouched by the other cultural societies of nineteenth century Havana. The most logical explanation for their absence would be that they catered to an upper class membership, one that had access to other modes of burial within the cemetery. The freemasons, who accepted members from a broader socioeconomic spectrum, had more members who required access to burial sites.

The monuments dedicated to unions and professions also grew exponentially in the same period. As the concerns of labour expanded in the late nineteenth century, the number and cohesion of labour groups increased. Working class unions increasingly fought for social benefits for their members. One of the benefits was burial for its members. (Figure 5-16) There are a large number of professional and union memorials, covering a range of occupations from pharmacists to baseball players. One of the earliest lies immediately behind the memorial for the bomberos. It seems part of the larger memorial, but it was in fact constructed five years later, in 1895. It is for professional firefighters who have died in the line of duty.⁷⁶ In some ways it mirrors the commemorative sentiments of elevating Cuban martyrs seen in the more prominent, earlier monument. But while the first memorializes the deaths of a single tragic event,

the later one honours the profession. Other monuments that follow also collectively memorialize a calling. Trades, such as electricians, have their own place. Professional positions, including teachers, architects, and those who work in the sciences, have also built tombs for their members. Even Cuban dancers and athletes have memorials for their calling. What emerges is a creation of community memorial based on work rather than family. This form highlights the tension inherent in the project of nationalism in Cuba. Louis Perez Jr. aptly pinpoints the source of this tension when he states that economic growth brought social change, but that political change was not advancing apace. The working poor in Havana were granted limited belonging in the nation, while simultaneously those who held wealth and power denied them full participation.

**A Nation of Many Parts**

A nation is nothing without its people. The project of nationalism in Cuba faced the challenge of uniting a diverse population. To persuade the population to fight, and potentially die, for the cause of independence, required that individuals be transformed into citizens. They needed to not simply recognize that the nation was possible, but see themselves as a part of the nation. The project of nationalism mobilized a number of mechanisms that fostered ties between the individual and the idea of a Cuban nation. The cemetery itself was a didactic tool that both provided the conceptual framework of belonging, and shaped the individual into the role of citizen.

The national monuments built in the cemetery represent a powerful mode of meaning making for the nation. There are two principal forms that acted to foster affective ties to the nation, and to instil certain values in its citizenry. The monuments to great men acted to claim important figures, many of who were foreign born, as part of the Cuban narrative. These monuments redefined the Spanish historical narrative into a Cuban perspective. By emphasizing the difference between the Spanish experience and the Cuban, these monuments served to justify claims to independence. They portrayed a history of the island that its citizens could be proud of, and enacted a Cuban lineage that was worthy of defence. Side by side with the monuments to great men were the memorials to Cuban martyrs. These monuments were

77 Perez Jr., *Between Reform and Revolution*, 52.
intended to valorize the ideas of service and sacrifice, demonstrating how even the lowliest of Cuban born
individuals could achieve greatness in the new nation. These types of monuments acted together to create
emotional ties between the individual and the nation, ensuring that the ranks of insurgent forces were
continuously replenished.

While the national monuments created ties to a noble history, and a willingness to fight and die
for the country, the family monuments acted to craft links to the land, and to the place that was Cuba.
These monuments built cross-generational sites of memory, permanently intertwining the individual’s
sense of self with a site of memory. Increasingly, claims for Cuba’s independence were legitimized by
their ties to the land. Cubans were born of the island, and in death they returned to its earth. Conceptually,
each person returned to their family, and the family was embedded within the larger tapestry of Cuba.
While the family was the dominant unit of belonging within the cemetery, burial practice evolved to
encompass more units through which the individual could be assimilated into the nation.

The first community groups that represented this alternate path to belonging were immigrant
societies in Havana. The purchase and construction of memorials intended for different immigrant
associations integrated these communities within the national framework. The cemetery itself made a
space for these diverse groups, providing them an identity within the Cuban frame. As the century
progressed, and the working population grew and became more vocal, the cemetery began to see similar
communal memorials intended for professional and labour associations. Slowly, the groups marginalized
under colonial rule were negotiating and manoeuvring their way into cemetery space. Like the society
around it, the cemetery was not a place of full equality. But the march towards independence had
redefined Cuban values, and the old social order was altering in order to claim new citizens.
Figure 5-1 Open family ossuary, missing marble slab, (photograph Bethany Wade, 2013).
Figure 5-2 Espada memorial, on principal avenue of Cementerio Colón. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).

Figure 5-3 Advertisement: Marmolería Triscornio, 1870-1900. (Legislación sobre cementerios, con la memoria, reglamento y tarifa del de Colón)
Figure 5-4 Photograph of Student memorial, circa 1890. Reverse reads “Cuban students monument. Cemetery Cristóbal Colón. Havana, Cuba. 8 Cuban boys were shot for throwing dirt at statue of queen Isabella. Ages from 9 to 14 years.” (Cuban Heritage Collection)
Figure 5-5 Detail from student memorial by José Vilalta Saavedra, flanked by memorial wreaths placed at site. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 5-6 Entrance to medical student memorial built in 1959, featuring a replica of the original cemetery boundaries to mark the students' initial burial outside the cemetery grounds. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)

Figure 5-7 Photo of firefighters' monument, circa 1895. (Cuban Heritage Collection)
Figure 5-8 Monument to the firefighters. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)

Figure 5-9 Small family lots, featuring a single grave and ossuary. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 5-10 Front of a First Order monument. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 5-11 The rear of a First Order monument showing access to hypogeum. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 5-12 Illustration of individual bone ossuary, for storage in general ossuary of cemetery, circa 1895. (Cuban Heritage Collection)

Figure 5-13 Individual bone ossuary, from general ossuary in Tobias gallery. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 5-14 Photograph of Basque monument, circa 1890. (Cuban Heritage Collection)

Figure 5-15 Tomb for Freemason lodge, built in the 1950s. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 5-16 Professional memorial, the National Institution for Pharmacists. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Cemeterio Cristóbal Colón: Legacy of Unrealized Dreams

The engraving on the base of the great marble sculpture atop the North Gate of the Cemeterio Cristóbal Colón reads JANUA SUM PACIS, or I am the doorway to Peace.¹ (Figure 6-1) It is a remarkable sentiment considering the cemetery was designed and built during a thirty year period of bloody civil war. In many ways, it is representative of the tensions and conflicts that marked the nationalist movement in Cuba. The cemetery, envisioned and constructed over the difficult and protracted birth of the Cuban nation, stands as an impermeable record to the contested and antagonistic identities seeking a place in the new country.

In this thesis, I interrogated how the dynamics of nationalism, and the complexity of the emerging national identity, were imprinted in the space of the cemetery. In order to do this, I looked at three different facets of the nationalist project in Cuba. First, I examined how the cemetery articulated a vision for Cuba on the international stage, in dialogue with Spanish and American cultural influences. Second, I turned to the internal politics of power in the social structures of Havana. Here, I explored how the negotiated construct of social position was redefined through the claiming of fluid markers of status. Finally, I examined how the project of nationalism mobilized different routes to belonging in order to bind individuals to its cause. Ultimately, each of these three aspects of the nationalist project left their indelible mark in the space of the cemetery. The records they imprinted in the marble and concrete tell of a divided society, one internally conflicted and rife with inconsistencies. Havana, viewed by its inhabitants as the political, economic, and cultural center of Cuba, acted as a metonym for the island as a whole. The design decisions of the city speak not only about its identity, but also about the construction of a wider Cuban identity, grounded in the island’s most powerful urban center.

The nineteenth century saw the advent of a period of urban reforms, both in Europe, the United States, and Spanish America. As part of these reforms, the spaces of death were drastically altered from a

form that had remained constant across Christian societies since the Middle Ages. The urban reform cemeteries of the early nineteenth century, occurring during a period of Atlantic World intellectual and material exchange, formed a shared visual language of the graveyard. The design components selected by different cities spoke, in a very real sense, of the values of their inhabitants. The design selection for the cemetery in Havana is revelatory of the ideologies the nascent country was adopting. Cuba, until this point a colonial possession, now faced the challenge of defining a vision of itself as a nation amongst nations. The Havana design resists a direct adoption of either American or Spanish cemetery forms, instead selecting an amalgam of form from both. The ultimate expression of the layout is one of a hybrid society, influenced by both of these cultures, yet conforming to neither. Instead, the cemetery form speaks to a new identity, one that expresses a uniquely Cuban perspective. The content of that identity is complicated and rife with tensions. The rigidity of the layout, along with the heirarchization of space, speaks to the persistence of a powerful center in Cuban politics, a group that is loath to abandon its social privileges. (Figure 6-2) Alongside this, the inclusion of modern, medicalized approaches to death denotes a more progressive social attitude. The conservative and liberal elements that unfold in the space are telling of a deep schism in Cuban society, one that acts as a hindrance to the emergent national identity.

Just as a division in Cuban society is apparent when the cemetery is analysed in the context of an international language of death, so, too, is it apparent when the analysis turns to internal social structures. The position of the elite class, people of colour, and the working poor within the cemetery clearly demonstrates the ongoing disparity among different demographic groups. The elite maintain their position at the center of Cuban society, literally occupying the center of the city of the dead. While the composition of the insurgent force gestures towards an inclusive national identity, the elite held to colonial structures that privilege their kin networks. For people of colour, the form of the cemetery shows the superficiality of the construct of a ‘race-free’ nation. The material segregation of burial is eliminated in the cemetery, while the conceptual differentiation continues unabated in the burial records. Race, rather than being eliminated in Cuba, persists as a very real barrier to reform. Similarly, the presence of the working poor is telling of a persistence of deep social inequalities. The prohibitive cost of burial
precludes the poorest communities of Havana being fully integrated into the space of the dead. Ongoing alterations, made to accommodate the growing need in this segment of the population, created temporary and communal burial sites for this demographic. The additional sites aptly demonstrate the polarity of Cuba’s response to the working poor: the Cementerio Cristóbal Colón made space for the poor, while simultaneously denying them full participation. (Figure 6-3) Buried in temporary, communal graves, the poor are never full members of the community of Havana’s dead. The tensions thus revealed presage the fault lines that run through the nationalist movement in Havana, and shape the politics and culture of twentieth century Cuba.

If the cemetery revealed a disjointed national identity on the international scale, and within the islands internal social structures, this duality of inclusion and exclusion extends to the level of the individual. The final area in which the nationalist project is imprinted in the cemetery is in the attempt to foster affective ties between potential citizens and the nation. The construction of national monuments was intended to create an historical narrative, through which the individual would recognize the nation. In order to instil a willingness to suffer for the country, the nationalist project needed to demonstrate a nation worthy of service. The cemetery demonstrated one route to citizenship: sacrifice in the name of Cuba. The route of the martyr or national hero is not a route that all citizens would be willing or able to pursue. A second connection to the nation was forged through affective ties to the land. The family monument, and the memorial practices it engendered, created a powerful link between the individual and the place of burial. Cubans were born of the island, and in death they would return to its soil. These powerful sites of memory acted to legitimize creole claims to independence. The cemetery embodied a second path to citizenship, as family, birth, and death tied the individual to the place of the nation. Again, this path was not open to all individuals inhabiting the island. Immigrant communities lacked the bonds of birth, while the working poor of Havana were economically restricted from constructing permanent sites of memory. Social and professional burial sites were constructed to address this lack. Through belonging to a social organization offering burial to its members, the individual gained belonging in the larger fabric of Cuban society. (Figure 6-4). The cemetery thus illustrated a final road to a Cuban identity, as
previously marginalized social communities were integrated into the broader construct of nationhood.

While the cemetery demonstrates multiple routes to citizenship, the question remains of how equal these diverse citizenships were in the lived reality of the city. The tensions inherent in the forms of the cemetery point to a society that retains many of the problematic divides that informed colonial social practice, divides that are masked by the adoption of new burial forms. The cemetery resides at a point of disjuncture, laying bare the ongoing exclusions of the developing national ideology, but simultaneously highlighting the points where authentic change has begun.

Questions Unasked of the *Cementerio Cristóbal Colón*

This thesis has concerned itself with one particular method through which the cemetery functioned to shape Cuban national identity. It primarily focused on the top down encoding of values. As a major public work, a culturally significant site, and both a civil and religious institution, the cemetery has guided at all levels by political and ecclesiastical authorities. The influence of these authorities over the design of the cemetery informs us of the structures and forms the political center desired to incorporate into the emerging nation. This is a singular, if powerful, vision of Havana’s identity, but it leaves questions of agency and difference unexplored. The space of the cemetery is not a static form, nor is it one that encourages passivity in its users. One potential route of future studies is to look at how identity was articulated through resistance to dominant social practice. How was ritual practice used to subvert hegemonic social forms? How was the material nature of the site manipulated to accommodate the fluidity of Cuban identity? And was performance, through burial practices, mourning clothes, funerary accoutrements, and the placement of memorial objects, used to subvert a rigid social order that could no longer contain a burgeoning national identity? The questions of how the use of the cemetery challenged social codes promises to be a rich avenue of inquiry.

While the questions raised around counter-hegemonic practice in the space of death looks at internal forces in Cuban culture, the population of Cuba is one marked by immigration and exile. There is a dynamism to the nineteenth and twentieth century Cuban population that inspires questions around identities on the move. Cuba was not simply a site of an outward flowing Diaspora, but of waves of
arriving immigrants to its shores. The question of the maintenance of identity in a new setting becomes critical when considering a fluid demographic body. Were immigrant communities using the cemetery to maintain a cultural identity outside the Cuban form, or were they instead adopting Cuban identifiers? And turning outwards from the island, how did the exile community use spaces of death to maintain their sense of being Cuban? By looking to how the space of the cemetery perpetuates affective ties to a nation in absentia, the full experience of Cuban nationalism will be revealed.

Cuba, as a cultural form, is a nation engaged in discourse with other nations. One critical mode of imagining Cuban culture that I mobilized in this work was the resistance to Cuba as a receiver of culture. Instead, I privileged the idea that Cuba was a creator of its own cultural forms, and that these forms emerged from the specific experience of Cuban life. In order to do this, I attempted to avoid reading the cemetery form as an adoption of a pre-existing European structure, and instead looked for Cuban agency in the decisions being made. What emerged from this is a notable absence of literature that focuses on a regional design practice within the Caribbean and Latin America. The manner in which nineteenth century urban reform cemeteries has been studied does not incorporate the potential of an intra-Caribbean form, one which responds to the unique conditions in this region. The forces of climate, geography, and local materials, as well as the influence of slavery, immigration, and syncretic religious practice create a set of factors outside of the European experience. This, coupled with the prevalence of exchange of material, intellectual, and human capital within the region, promises to lead to powerful explorations around the potential for a Caribbean design form. Literature on Latin American and Caribbean cemetery forms has yet to be integrated and cross-referenced to test the model of cultural exchange. The study of this would inform not only the work being done of intra-Caribbean cultural exchange, but contribute to the understanding of the movement as a whole.

Beauty, Death, and the Birth of a Nation

The Cementerio Cristóbal Colón is, before all other consideration, a place of extreme beauty. (Figure 6-5 and 6-6). The citizens of Havana, during a period of political uncertainty, reached beyond the conflicts of the moment and created a place of breathtaking artistry. (Figure 6-7 and 6-8). For all the
tensions and rifts it reveals in Havana society, the power of the site lies in its ability to move beyond the considerations of the moment, and connect to a deeper sense of wonder. (Figure 6-9 and 6-10). In some ways, this is the most telling metaphor of nationalism in the space of the cemetery. It is not a physical manifestation of a new order; rather it is the reaching for an ideal. Nationalism, in nineteenth century Cuba, promised a beautiful idea of what an inclusive nation could be. The reality was one of conflict and discord, as thirty years of insurgency tested the fragile bonds of shared purpose. So, too, the cemetery contains fragmented and contradictory microcosms of Cuban society, held together by the idea of unity, rather than the reality. (Figure 6-11 and 6-12).
Figure 6-1 Sculpture atop Puerta de la Paz. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 6-2 Memorial to Don Pedro de Nolasco Aubreu y Jimenez, and family. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-3 Unmarked communal burial sites. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-4 Tomb for the Union Arabe de Cuba. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 6-5 Monument, Familia Del Busto García. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-6 Monument, José Fdez. Mayato y Familia. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-7 Monument, North West quarter of Colón Cemetery. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013)
Figure 6-8 Monument, Luisa Cicero de Prats and Gerardo de Prats y Furest. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-9 Monument, inscribed Descanso y Paz (rest and peace). (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-10 Elevated third order monument. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-11 Third Order Family Monument, North West Quarter. (photograph, Bethany Wade 2013).
Figure 6-12 Monument, Domingo Bethart Bastres y Familia. (photograph, Bethany Wade, 2013)
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