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Havana on Steam Power: Literature, the Railroad, and the City in Nineteenth-Century Cuba

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The British Railway Mania reverberated globally through the nineteenth century.[1] Beginning in 1834, Britain became the main sponsor of Havana's railroad enterprise; from that moment onward, English bankers invested in the project with loans and locomotives. Not surprisingly, the Spanish colony mirrored Britain's accelerated expansion of railroad lines. Enslaved people, *emancipados*, and Chinese immigrants were forced to build almost fifty miles of track per year throughout the western part of the island during the 1840s and 1850s (Zanetti & García 57). As the wealthiest sugar mill owners established a transportation system to send their product to Havana's port, the railroad widened the gap between social classes, strengthened the slave system, and introduced new forms of slavery in Cuba.[2]

Although the railroad prompted radical transformations in the sugar industry in Cuba and the urban colony's setting, the introduction of the steam engine and its repercussions in Havana continue to be understudied from a cultural and literary perspective. During the 1990s, Oscar Zanetti and Alejandro García published the pioneering *Sugar and Railroads: A*

[1] Christian Wolmar offers a comprehensive analysis of the different periods of railroad mania that Britain experienced. He also explores how this speculative tendency evolved in Switzerland, France, and Italy throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition, the author describes the "railroad fever" in the U.S. during the last part of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth (122-137).

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Cuban History, 1837-1959, analyzing the emergence of the first railroad, its correlation with and limitations due to the sugar industry, and the complex social changes it brought. More recently, as part of his study of the picturesque as the core feature of nineteenth-century visual culture in Cuba, Víctor Goldgel interprets the futuristic steam train represented in "Iglesia y Camino de hierro de Regla" by Federico Mialhe as an allegory of the coexistence of the machine, the enslaved people, and the slave owners on the island. In addition, Camillia Cowling has investigated how *emancipados* and enslaved African and Afro-descendants were able to travel throughout the island due to the introduction of both the steamboat and the steam engine in Cuba.

However, scholars have not yet studied the role of nineteenth-century writers in creating a local mindset regarding the introduction of the steam engine in Havana, or the proliferation of literary works related to steam power throughout the 1840s. During the British Railway Mania, Cuban writers echoed English authors' reflections on the new age that steam encompassed.[3] For example, in the 1840s, Cirilo Villaverde wrote "Caminos de hierro," included in *Paseo pintoresco por la Isla de Cuba;*[4] the journal *Semana Literaria* published a series of four articles on the topic; and José María de Cárdenas y Rodríguez did the same in his drama *El tío sordo*. In these works, *habanero* authors embraced the technological transformations of this new age.

My essay examines how writers comprehended and depicted the political and economic struggles around steam power in Havana. I will specifically explore a Cuban text focused on the railroad, "Mi viaje a tierradentro" (My Journey Inland), published anonymously in 1840 in the literary journal *Cartera Cubana*. Contrary to the abovementioned texts, this four-chapter story is the only one that reflects upon the racial dimension of the steam train in Havana. How did the author conceive the new relationship between humankind and machines? How did the writer portray the railroad's social and racial dimensions? What strategies did the author follow to shape *habaneros*' views regarding the uses of steam? I will address these questions in two sections. First, "¿From Where Should the *Ferro-carril* Depart? Political Confrontations in Havana" offers historical background on the introduction of the railroad to Havana, its departure location, and the power struggles surrounding it. Then "'A Journey Inland': Literature and Steam Power" explores some of the most significant literary themes regarding the railroad, as evidenced in the anonymous text under consideration.

¿From Where Should the *Ferro-carril* Depart? Political Confrontations in Havana

During the second half of the 1830s, Havana witnessed an impassioned political rivalry involving Claudio Martínez de Pinillos, the Count of

[2] As Michael Zeuske has defined it, the "second slavery" lasted from 1800 to 1886: "Cuba developed one of the most advanced and modern types of slavery in both technical and technological terms, so that such activity became successful and profitable, both economically and socially, for the slave owners and slave traders" (313).

[3] For a deeper understanding of how English writers portrayed the steam age, consult Herbert L. Sussman's *Victorians and the Machine: The Literary Response to Technology*. For an account of the impact of the new form of locomotion on nineteenth-century Englishmen's daily lives, consult "The Coming of the Railroad to Early Victorian England, as Viewed by Novels of the Period."

[4] During the 1830s, the railroad was referred to as "caminos de hierro" in the Junta de Fomento's annals and documents, and the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País's written agreements in Havana. Later, it would appear as "ferro-carril."

Villanueva and President of the Junta de Fomento (Development Board), and Miguel Tacón, the Governor of the island. The railroad's departure point seemed to be the origin of the political conflict, which ended with the Crown's acceptance of Tacón's resignation in 1839.

Martínez de Pinillos was elected President of the Junta de Fomento in 1832. As soon as he assumed his position, he relaunched plans for building the railroad from Havana to Güines, an area where rich Havana proprietors had established their sugar mills.[5] In doing so, Martínez de Pinillos tried to solve one of the most recurrent problems for the *sacarocracia* (sugar aristocracy) since the end of the 1790s: the deteriorated condition of roads on the island due to the transportation of sugar, among other major problems. The project also sought to alleviate the high cost of delivering sugar to the port.[6] From 1832 to 1834, the president and other members of the Junta worked diligently to solve both the railroad's financial problems and technical matters. They signed a loan contract with the English banker Alexander Robertson and hired the U.S. citizen Alfred Cruger as the first engineer in charge of the project.

Once in Havana, Cruger and his team suggested various alternatives for the railroad's departure point and initial sections of the line. The Junta decided that the best option would be for the railroad to start at the Botanical Garden, going west along the Zanja Real to follow the Military Promenade or Paseo de Carlos III, and passing to the south near the Castillo del Príncipe (27). But the line would intersect the Military Promenade, which was still under construction under the auspices of Miguel de Tacón, who had assumed the role of Governor of the island in 1834. Due to the Governor's multiple objections and the intervention of the Crown, the railroad construction was delayed for one year. Ultimately, a Royal Order prescribed the creation of an Extraordinary Commission led mainly by Tacón and his allies, which stipulated that a terrain known as Garcini's Fields should be the railroad's departure point (see fig. 1).

That option would not only cost the Junta de Fomento an additional 60,000 pesos, but it would also entail multiple transportation and urban planning issues, given the fact that Garcini's Fields was quite far from the port of Havana.[7] Consequently, rich *habaneros* expressed their dissatisfaction with Tacón's final resolution. They also speculated about the reasons behind his fierce opposition to the Junta's plans. Domingo del Monte, a patron of letters and later Secretary of the Railroad from Cárdenas to Soledad de Bemba, for instance, wrote in 1836 that Tacón was trying to diminish Creole power and to profit indirectly from the railroad enterprise.

Del Monte's action illustrates some of the blistering battles between Spaniards and Creole elites to dominate the colony economically and politically. Tacón envisioned centralized control over Havana. As part of this aspiration, he sought to accuse Creoles of insurgency and imprison

[5] Zanetti recounts that the governor of Cuba, Dionisio Vives, created the Junta de Caminos de Hierro (The Railroad Commission), of which Martínez de Pinillos was a member. Vives also submitted the project of building the Havana-Güines railroad to the Junta, but after multiple meetings and rivalries, the project was abandoned, and the Junta dissolved in 1831 (21-23).

[6] For a historical perspective on the road conditions, consult José Antonio Saco's *Memorias*. For a literary approach, consult Buenaventura Pascual Ferrer's works on *El Regañón de La Habana*. Moreno Fraginals explains how, since 1795, the *sacarocracia* devoted multiple treatises to advocating for road construction and improvement. Zanetti also devotes a chapter to transportation on the island and the impact of the sugar industry.

[7] Zanetti comments, for instance, that two months after the railroad inauguration in 1837, the enterprise's income was lower than expected due to the location of the departure point at Garcini's Fields (156).

Fig. 1. Havana's map in 1840. Garcini's and Villanueva's stations included.

them.[8] The quarrels around the railroad were part of his strategic plan. As Zanetti and García point out, "the controversy over the railroad was merely a convenient ruse to undermine the position led by the Intendant Villanueva and eventually force him to resign" (28). Nonetheless, the rivalry between Villanueva and Tacón epitomized a deeper problem the Crown confronted in one of the few remaining colonies after Latin American independence: the growing tension between Creoles and Spaniards.

Furthermore, del Monte unveils the race to own the city's spaces. Havana experienced unprecedented urban transformations during the period. The railroad system compelled some of them, such as the building of warehouses and tracks. Yet, these urban modifications also formed part of the intricate fight over the establishment of powers. Although both Tacón and Villanueva advocated for the colonial order, the former represented aristocrats and Spanish merchants, while the latter embraced a new age of liberties for rich Creoles under Spanish rule. As Felicia Chateloin underscores in *La Habana de Tacón* (Tacón's Havana), Tacón's urban layout was reactionary, for its recreational places were also repressive ones (91). The new urban layout implemented by Tacón, according to Chateloin, maintained rich Creoles and minority groups under Spanish surveillance even in their leisure time. The strategies of control extended the repressive urban architecture schemes, implemented under the House of Bourbon's regency inside the walled city of Havana, and now tied them directly to the immensely profitable sugar industry.[9]

Situating the railroad in Garcini's Fields may have seemed like Tacón's resentful measure against the Creole elite. According to Zanetti, Tacón petitioned the Crown to allow him to take control of the railroad, a request that was denied given the separation of powers that had been

[8] Domingo Del Monte himself mentioned in the same fragment that he expected at any moment to be taken prisoner by the Spanish government (143).

[9] See Paul Niels for more on these repressive policies during the end of the eighteenth century.

Fig. 2. Garcini's station next to the Military Hospital. Lithograph from *Paseo pintoresco por la Isla de Cuba* (1841).

newly decreed. Nonetheless, Garcini's Fields was strategically chosen as the railroad's starting point because it followed the same repressive motif of Tacón's urban plan. On the one hand, it was guarded by Tacón's Military Promenade. On the other, the Military Hospital, populated with thousands of Spanish soldiers, some of them convalescing, and other able-bodied soldiers, was also located in Garcini's Fields (see fig. 2). From 1837, the year in which the Junta inaugurated the railroad, to 1840, when the line was moved to the vicinity of the Botanical Garden, the warehouse and the railroad's departure point coincided with the Military Hospital. Hence, the railroad, with all the products it transported to Havana, and all the warehouse's activities were strictly guarded by Spanish soldiers.

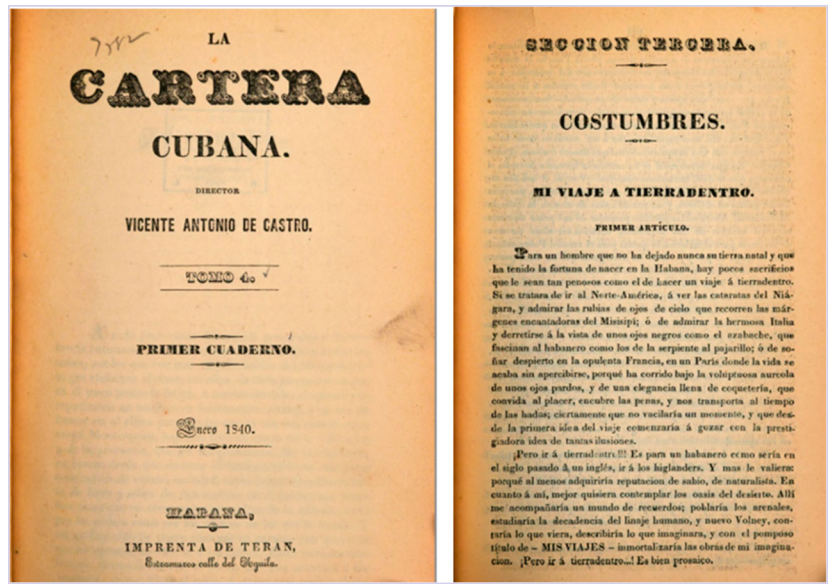
Tacón instituted unprecedented regulatory measures, as his memoirs and his contemporaries attested, to exert control over Havana and the Creole community. Nevertheless, Creoles had welcomed the steam age in Havana; their unbridled quest for profits would not have been hindered even by a governor with airs of a new Columbus.[10] After Tacón's resignation in 1839, Havana entered a new period of steam experimentation. Amid the resulting urban transformations, political rivalries, and fierce exploitation of enslaved people, literary works and essays on the steam age flourished.

"A Journey Inland": Literature and Steam Power

In the early days of January 1840, *Cartera Cubana* published its new issue (see fig. 3). Among agricultural, scientific, and political novelties, readers would find in the literary section the first of a series of four chapters published throughout the year devoted to detailing a trip inland by train, horse, and steamboat. The story appeared anonymously, and it was

[10] When describing Tacón's urban transformations, Cirilo Villaverde noted that the Marte Military Field built under Tacón's auspices had four massive columns. Each of them had one name inscribed: Pizarro, Cortés, Colón, and Tacón (191). Villaverde subtly indicated Tacón's arrogance. When Tacón described the Marte Military Field to Spain and Governor Ezpeleta in 1839,

he omitted reference to this ornamental detail.



LA

CARTERA

CUBANA.

DIRECTOR

VICENTE ANTONIO DE CASTRO.

TOMO 4o.

PRIMER CUADERNO.

Enero 1840.

HABANA,

IMPRENTA DE TERAN,

Extramuros calle del Obispo.

SECCION TERCERA.

COSTUMBRES.

MI VIAJE A TIERRADENTRO.

PRIMER ARTICULO.

Para un hombre que no ha dejado nunca su tierra natal y que ha tenido la fortuna de nacer en la Habana, hay pocos sacrificios que le sean tan penosos como el de hacer un viaje á tierradentro. Si se tratara de ir al Norte-América, á ver las catarratas del Niágara, y admirar las rubias de ojos de cielo que recorren las márgenes encantadoras del Misisipi; ó de admirar la hermosa Italia y derretirse á la vista de unos ojos negros como el azabache, que fascinan al habanero como los de la serpiente al pajarillo; ó de soñar despierto en la opulenta Francia, en un Paris donde la vida se acaba sin apercibirse, porqué ha corrido bajo la voluptuosa aureola de unos ojos pardos, y de una elegancia llena de coquetería, que convida al placer, encubre las penas, y nos transporta al tiempo de las hadas; ciertamente que no vacilaria un momento, y que desde la primera idea del viaje comenzaria á gozar con la prestigiadora idea de tantas ilusiones.

¡Pero ir á tierradentro!!! Es para un habanero como seria en el siglo pasado á un inglés, ir á los highlanders. Y mas le valiera; porqué al menos adquiriria reputacion de sabio, de naturalista. En cuanto á mi, mejor quisiera contemplar los oasis del desierto. Allí me acompañaria un mundo de recuerdos; poblaria los arenales, estudiaria la decadencia del linaje humano, y nuevo Volney, contaria lo que viera, describiria lo que imaginara, y con el pomposo título de – MIS VIAJES – inmortalizaria las obras de mi imaginacion. ¡Pero ir á tierradentro...! Es bien prosaico.

Fig. 3. *La Cartera Cubana*'s cover and the first chapter of "Mi viaje a tierraadentro."

narrated from the perspective of a wealthy young *habanero* on a journey to collect an inheritance from his uncle, a deceased priest. The four chapters cover his voyage from Havana to San Felipe by railroad; from San Felipe to Batabanó riding a horse, where he will board the steamboat to travel inland. The story ended with his arrival in Batabanó and the boarding of the steamboat.[11]

The journey involves four different modes of transportation: by *volanta* (carriage), from his *casona* (large house) to the railroad departure point; by train, from Garcini's Fields to San Felipe Station; by horse, from San Felipe to Batabanó, and by steamboat in Batabanó. Undoubtedly, the story displays the colony's advances in technology and means of transportation. To some extent, it also seems an excuse to rejoice in being one of the first places worldwide to possess both the steamboat and the steam locomotive. Moreover, the story makes a case for convincing authorities to extend the railroad from Havana to Batabanó.

The first of the articles depicts how Havana's social groups interact during the steam age. It also portrays how those groups negotiate the city's spaces after Tacón's and Martínez de Pinillos's urban reforms and the railroad project. The author offers a stereotypical characterization of the young *habanero* protagonist as an *erudito a la violeta* (dilettante), a lazy man whose only interests are flirting with young ladies, going to parties, and squandering the family's profits.[12] According to the young protagonist: "But to go inland!!! For an *habanero* that's like going to the highlands would have been for an Englishman of the past century [. . .] But to go inland . . . ! That's really vulgar" (102).[13] His characterization

[11] The author never specified where his uncle's possessions were located. Idelfonso Vivanco, in "Entrada del vapor Almendares en el muelle de La Habana," describes the Batabanó steamboat journey to "Cuba" (Santiago de Cuba) in 1841 (48). According to John G. Wurdemann, by "way of Batabanó, Santiago de Cuba can be reached in four days from Havana" (10).

[12] I explore how, from 1790 onward, authors and Creole leaders were

allows the author to mock the wealthy *habaneros*' tendency to travel to the U.S. and Europe but never inland due to the presumption that Cuba harbors uncivilized people and inhospitable conditions. The protagonist articulates some of his main concerns:

> I want to know, first, in what categories Cuvier has placed the inhabitants of those lands. Señá Pancha, my uncle's housekeeper, and ño Gregorio, the doctor who cured his coachman's stomachache: Are they people like us? Do they dress in modern style? And, do they eat only stews and guava paste? These are questions of the greatest importance that I must resolve so that I can act accordingly. (103)[14]

The flagrant irony with which the fragment describes the young heir condemns his ignorance (and, by extension, the generation of male wealth that he embodied in Havana). The author also criticizes the education system as the *habanero* protagonist reads French authors (Cuvier, for instance) to understand Cuban customs and frivolous matters instead of studying sciences and traveling around the island (as some of the Creole thinkers of the time advocated) to understand the colony's resources and take control over them. The article also asks why *habaneros* would read Humboldt (as the young protagonist does) to familiarize themselves with Cuban customs when they should be able to acquire that knowledge empirically:

> But let's take a look at Cuvier. I found Indians, Blacks, Caucasians: in short, I found everything the naturalist speaks of except for inlanders. An unknown race in history, will I be the first to describe them? What use is Humboldt when he doesn't even mention them? These learned men are only concerned with longitudes and latitudes, incomes and expenses, and damned if they're good for something: they don't help an *habanero* in his predicaments! (103)[15]

The excerpt introduces the topic of foreigners visiting or migrating to Cuba that will reappear in Chapters Three and Four when the protagonist meets, respectively, a U.S. businessman who has settled in the vicinity of Batabanó, and a Native American chief living along the Batabanó seashore. While describing these readings and encounters, the author also characterizes Cuba as a wealthy colony that welcomes foreign workers, in accordance with the Junta de Fomento's plan to promote alternatives to the forms of coerced labor deployed to build the rail lines since 1834.

In addition to young Creoles, migrant workers, and distant country relatives, the *costumbrista* article also introduces a doctor who is adept at betting at cockfights, a novelist, artists and translators who want the young protagonist to help them publicize their work throughout the island, and a Spanish priest who asks him to carry a letter and Galicia ham to another Spanish priest inland, both friends of his deceased uncle. The author offers a picturesque portrayal of each new character who depends on the young heir and the railroad to fulfill his requests. As the scene denotes, while the railroad had been introduced in Havana principally to catalyze the sugar industry, it also transformed the

concerned with developing the generation of young men who would be in charge of leading the colony economically and politically. They started to use the *petit-maîtres* (dandy, dilettante) motif to diminish that new generation with derision and redirect them. Consult my "Petimetres en la urbe: cuerpos en crisis en La Habana colonial (1790-1805)."

[13] "¡Pero ir á tierradentro!!! Es para un habanero como sería en el siglo pasado á un inglés, ir á los higlands […] ¡Pero ir á tierradentro … ! Es bien prosaico."

[14] "Quiero ante todas las cosas informarme en qué clases ha colocado Cuvier los habitantes de aquellas tierras. ¿Señá Pancha la ama de llaves de mi tio; ño Gregorio, médico que curó del padrejon á su calesero, serán gentes como nosotros? Están vestidos á la moda? En fin, ¿se come solo ajiaco y dulce de guayaba? Son cuestiones de la mayor importancia que debo resolver para obrar en consecuencia." All excerpts translated to English by Jason Weiss.

[15] "Veamos á Cuvier. Hallé indios, negros, circasianos: en fin, de todo hallé en el naturalista menos tierradentros. Raza desconocida en la historia, ¿seré yo quien te describa primero? ¿De qué me sirve Humboldt cuando ni siquiera la menciona? Estos hombres sabios no se ocupan sino de longitudes y latitudes, rentas y gastos, y maldito si sirven de algo: ¡no socorren á un habanero en sus apuros!"

circulation of consumer goods, objects, and literature from Havana to the rest of the island.

After agreeing to undertake all the tasks mentioned above, the young protagonist is driven in a *volanta* to Havana's railroad station, "a sort of vacant lot, with aspects of a swamp and the hazards of a precipice, which is the place they call Garcini" (171).[16] While registering the protagonist's anguish due to the fortune that transporting all his baggage to Garcini's warehouse cost—echoing Creoles' opposition to the establishment of the railroad's departure point at the remote Garcini's Fields—the author compares the chaos produced by the tumult of *volantas* and carriages to the day of the Three Kings' celebration:

> While I was there, surrounded by swampy water, other coaches arrived and swept us aside, stirring up such mayhem it seemed like Three Kings Day [. . .] I only had one resolution. I called to one of the darker fellows in the vicinity, I gave him a peseta, and he gave me a piggyback ride to the passengers' entryway, while the luggage went safely to its destination. (172)[17]

The metaphor subtly emphasizes that the drivers leading those carriages are Afro descendants; some of them are enslaved people, while others had bought their freedom and now worked as *volanta* drivers on Havana's streets. Those Black drivers managed movement throughout the city, creating the apparent chaos underlined by the narrator. According to Adriana Méndez Rodenas, "The Three Kings Day celebration represents the collective appropriation of public space. It functioned as a carnivalesque inversion of hierarchies, a popular spectacle that subverts official culture, in this case the rigid bureaucracy of the Spanish empire, replacing it, at least temporarily, with the spinning lines of dance and its anti-hierarchical spirit" (222). The Three Kings Day celebration took place during a regulated day in the city, but the scene that the author describes may have been happening every day due to the urban changes the railroad and modernization brought about in Havana. Hence, the movement of *volantas* and carriages fashioned spontaneous dances featuring Black workers and slaves, urban movements that witness the fissures of the alleged white control over the city during the period.

Scholars have extensively documented the enslaved groups, *emancipados*, and *cimarrones* who were forced to build the Havana-Güines railroad line. The railroad's introduction to Havana also generated new profit possibilities for Afro descendants in the city. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, wealthy Creoles sought to have a *volanta* imported from England to exhibit their affluence, so thousands of new *caleseros* (coachmen) were needed in Havana and others for feeding and caring for horses. Garcini's Fields' considerable distance from Havana's port demanded the constant movement of carriages from and into the walled city. As a result, free Afro descendants and slaves may have benefited from the elite's battles for symbolic power.

[16] "una especie de descampado, con honores de ciénaga y achaques de derrumbadero, que es el lugar que llaman Garcini."

[17] "Mientras estaba en esta contemplación, entre rana y barado, llegaron otros carruajes y nos barrieron el paso, armándose tal pelotera que parecía un día de Reyes [. . .] Solo me quedaba un arbitrio. Llamé á uno de los morenos que estaban en las inmediaciones, le dí una peseta y me llevó a caballito hasta el callejón de entrada de los pasajeros, mientras los tercios iban sin novedad á su destino."

The above fragment also displays the protagonist's strategy to coopt the mobility achieved by the Black groups in the text. To keep his clothes pristine, the young Creole pays a "moreno" to carry him on his back: "me llevó a caballito" (172). The narrator likens the black worker to a horse, a domesticated animal, to impose his (and those of the group he represented) superiority over the other groups described in the scene. This analogy constitutes the first instance of a racialized motif that I will trace throughout the text, a core topic that reveals the anxiety over the real influence that Black groups have reached in the colony.

The story continues with a meeting between the priest Antonio and the young heir at the train station. The young Creole has forgotten the Galician ham and the letter, so the priest Antonio brought them for him. The arrival of the train drives a short dialogue between the two characters about the railroad's invention:

> "At first glance, the railroad is a useful invention," the priest told me, "although seen from a philosophical perspective, it tends right to materialism."
> "Every important discovery has been accused of such charges," I replied. "But what makes you say that?"
> "Because it's the predominance of the machine over the intelligence. When you go by horse, the creature does not do as it pleases but rather constantly obeys you, and in those cars you go as the fire takes you. Yes, my friend, this is the Devil's invention." (173)[18]

This conversation opposes the priest, who represents Spanish old Christian values—elsewhere in the text, the priest even regrets the ending of the Inquisition—to the new times that the young Creole will end up embracing. For the priest, there is a risk that machines might control humankind. He believes the steam age will turn humans into the horses they have domesticated. In this excerpt, as we can notice, the author uses the horse motif to suggest to his readers the question: should we accept that machines relegate us to the place we have lowered our animals/slaves? It also seeks to emphasize the analogy between horses and Afro descendants, both groups domesticated, both, according to the text, lacking intelligence and seen as destined to serve. Finally, the debate between the priest and the young heir enters post-humanism's domains: can we humans (they exclude Afro descendant from this category) merge our intelligence with machines to advance our species? For the priest, machines belong to the demonic realm, thus it is impossible to achieve a communion between them. The young Creole, as we will see, will find an answer to that question during his journey to Batabanó.

The priest asks the protagonist to publicize the letter he brought inland. The letter includes a translation of a European article in which a young soldier celebrates the scientific inventions of the steam age while aboard a steamboat. As he mocks his ancestors because they could not understand steam's greatness, the steamboat explodes, killing all the crew members except the soldier, who survives because he was near the stern of the

[18] "-A primera vista es útil la invención del ferro-carril, me decía el padre, aunque mirada bajo un aspecto filosófico, tiende directamente al materialismo.
-Ningun descubrimiento importante ha dejado de recibir esa acusación, le respondí, ¿mas en qué se funda V. para decir eso?
-En que es el predominio de la máquina sobre la inteligencia. Cuando V. va á caballo, este no anda á su antojo sino que constantemente le obedece, y en esos carros va V. á disposición del fuego. Sí, amigo mio, esta es una invención de Satanás."

steamboat. Nevertheless, the article welcomes science and technology, the possibility of controlling nature, time, and space with steam machines. After reading this letter while on the train, the young protagonist seems to support the priest's vision.

His journey by railroad ends in San Felipe. Then, he continues by horseback to Batabanó, and that part of the journey induces a completely different opinion about the steam age in Havana. The narrator first resolves the priest's doubts about the railroad's insecurities by humorously describing the multiple problems he faced during the voyage by horse.[19] Hence the protagonist's trip inland becomes a learning experience that will show him (and the readers) how to modify the colony's countryside, to profit from it, and the need for extending the railroad to Batabanó's seashore, a place where the steamboat departs. The protagonist concludes his trip to Batabanó by affirming that

> I would have given all the gold in the world to be born in the twentieth century, a century of hope, where there will be no horse even as a relic, where according to the famous English caricature, steam carts will carry us up to the roofs of our houses or take us down to the kitchen; where twenty experts contemplating the skeleton of a colt, preserved by some antiquarian in a cage, will wonder if it's a fossil or the only one of its species that was shut away in Noah's ark; if it came from the Ganges or was taken from Pompeii or Herculaneum! (234)[20]

The author foresees Havana as a futuristic city, inspired by accounts of modern Britain, in which machines and humans would coexist.[21] With this fragment, we witness one of the early moments in which Havana's literature imagines and fantasizes about the twentieth century.

The second part of the excerpt deepens the priest Antonio's inquiries: what would happen with humankind during that century of hope fueled by steam? I find two possible interpretations. First, the author announces the extinction of humanity as it was known during the nineteenth century. During the century of hope, humans would become God. They would conquer the impossible: nature, time, and space. Without setting aside that idea, the text also presents a nefarious consequence of the steam age in Havana. In accordance with my reading of the analogy between the "moreno" (dark fellow) and the "caballito" (piggyback) in the passage set at Garcini's station, the author appears to hope that in the new century, the fusion between machines and humans will entail the annihilation of the horse/Afro descendants. At the dawn of the new age, the text proposes, the human species will get rid of the problems and nuisances of the horse age. Consequently, the passage unveils Creoles' anxiety regarding Afro descendants' agency in the real-material city, a stentorian agency that his story seeks to negate. His futuristic Havana, then, is a racist project fueled by steam and led by white Creole (male) leaders, capable of controlling nature.

[19] *Habaneros* conceived of the railroad as a necessary evil. The news about multiple accidents prompted inhabitants to fear the train. The Condesa de Merlin, for instance, claimed confidence in the carriage in her *Viaje a La Habana* as I demonstrated in "La Condesa en volanta: Transporte y política en *La Havane* Colonial."

[20] "Hubiera dado cuanto oro hay en el mundo por nacer en el siglo XX, siglo de esperanzas, donde no habrá ni un caballo para reliquia, donde según la famosa caricatura inglesa, los carros de vapor nos conducirán á las azoteas de nuestras casas ó nos bajarán á la cocina; donde veinte sabios contemplando el esqueleto de un potro, conservado por algún anticuario en una jaula, se preguntarán si es un fósil ó el único de su especie que quedó encerrado en el arca de Noé; si ha venido del Ganges ó se sacó de Pompeya ó del Herculano!"

[21] The anonymous writer of "Viaje a tierraadentro" considers the idea of harmony between the machine and the slave system to be a fallacy. He opts for a radical idea: to eliminate the African presence in the island.

Conclusion

By 1852, nine companies had laid a total of 350 miles of track throughout the island, with 800 miles (1,288 km) completed by 1868 (Wolmar, 224-25). Despite economic crises, the colony would continue to pursue Railroad Mania initiatives. Moreover, by the turn of the twentieth century, Havana promoted the expansion of electric trains all over the city, and this newest means of transportation ushered in urban transformation. By the 1920s, white leaders would continue boosting futuristic projects, such as the creation of a subway that was never concluded.

The introduction of the railroad in Havana implicated radical urban transformations within the walled city and its outskirts. It deepened the differences between social groups in the city, increased the horror in slaves' and *emancipados*' lives, and caused new types of labor exploitation of foreign workers. The railroad also boosted the wealth of rich *habaneros*, Spanish authorities, and merchants. On other hand, as the anonymous text conveys, the railroad created new opportunities for Afro descendants in Havana regardless of the white Creoles' efforts to negate this reality.

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