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Author(s): MAYRA BEERS
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MAYRA BEERS

Murder in San Isidro: Crime and Culture during the Second Cuban Republic

ABSTRACT

This article uses the murder of a well-known politician in Cuba, Alberto Yarini y Ponce de León, who was also a celebrated pimp, to delve into questions of national identity and nationalist discourse. The theoretical framework relies on the importance of gender images and prostitution in nation-building rhetoric, arguing that these matters have been used in support of political interests. Its methodology analyzes the tensions and ambivalence surrounding Cuban national identity in the first two decades of the republic. The murder of Alberto Yarini catalyzed a seemingly odd convergence of Havana elites, underworld figures linked to prostitution, and the social and cultural layers in-between. The confluence of class and culture displayed the duality that was — and some argue remains — a fundamental feature of Cuban national identity. However, this article questions the extent to which national identity — *cubanidad* — was the product of a nativist counterculture that contested elite nationalist discourse. The romantic version of Yarini was the embodiment of that developing consciousness. In the midst of endemic institutional corruption and graft, his most cited attribute was his "honor," within the nuanced context presented by the environment of popular classes and their sense of esteem. This work will, therefore, examine the sociocultural milieu that produced this tension, which formed part of the identities and solidarities that energized Cuban popular culture, thus providing new ways of observing an emerging national identity and drawing important but hidden connections between gendered discourse and popular leadership.

RESUMEN

Este artículo utiliza el asesinato de un conocido político cubano, Alberto Yarini y Ponce de León, que también era un célebre proxeneta o "chulo", para incursionar en cuestiones sobre la identidad nacional y el discurso nacionalista. El marco teórico se basa en la importancia de las imágenes de género y la prostitución en la retórica para construir una nación. Arguye que estos asuntos han sido utilizados para apoyar intereses políticos. Su metodología analiza las tensiones y ambivalencias sobre la identidad nacional cubana durante las dos primeras décadas de la República. El asesino de AlbertoYarini sirvió de catalizador de una aparentemente extraña convergencia de la elite habanera, figuras del bajo mundo relacionadas con la prostitución, y las capas culturales en el medio. La confluencia de clases y culturas mostró la dualidad que era — y algunos dirán que aún es — parte fundamental de la identidad nacional cubana. Sin embargo, este artículo cuestiona hasta que punto la identidad nacional — la cubanidad — era el producto de una contracultura nacional que retaba el discurso nacionalista de la elite. La

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versión romántica de Yarini es la encarnación de esa naciente conciencia. En medio de los chanchullos y la corrupción nacional endémica, la característica que más se le atribuía era su "honor," en las sutilezas del contexto que ofrecía el ambiente de las clases populares y su sentido de respeto. Este trabajo, por tanto, examina el medio sociocultural que produjo esta tensión que formaba parte de las identidades y solidaridades que alimentaban la cultura popular cubana, dándonos nuevas formas de observar la naciente identidad nacional, y estableciendo importantes aunque escondidas conexiones entre el discurso de género y el liderazgo popular.

"Not since the funeral of Máximo [Gómez]," reported the Associated Press, "[has] Havana witnessed such a tremendous demonstration of popular sympathy and respect as that which attended the funeral of Alberto Yarini."[1] On 24 November 1910, thousands of spectators lined the sidewalks and men quietly tipped their hats in respect as Yarini's funeral cortege made its way through Havana's main boulevards; many in the somber crowd joined the procession as it passed by.[2] Led by a police escort under the command of General Armando Riva, the city's chief of police, the procession included a band of musicians who walked behind the officers while mourners rhythmically marched to their somber tune.[3] Behind them came the hearse, drawn by eight plumed horses, each draped in the yellow and black finery of the city's most expensive funeral house.[4] Several men jockeyed in the street for an opportunity to carry the bier on their shoulders. Yarini's father and brother, dressed in mourning clothes, solemnly followed the young man's coffin.[5] Next came four wagonloads of flowers, with numerous wreaths hanging from the coaches, their purple ribbons with gold-lettered dedicatories streaming in the breeze.[6] A procession of several thousand (one estimate calculated the crowd at more than ten thousand), including delegations from Havana's various political and commercial bodies, followed the flower-coaches.[7] More than a hundred carriages, carrying representatives of the best society figures in the city, government officials and dignitaries, and officers from the army and navy ascended the knoll known as "El Bosque" on the road to the Cementerio Colón. Also in the throng that inched its way along Galíano Street that November morning were "all the elements of the 'red light' district," "gaudily attired women," and members of "vodoo societies." Few pimps have ever been interred with such pomp.[8]

The spectacle must have been impressive since coverage of Yarini's funeral was picked up by the Associated Press and featured on the pages of U.S. metropolitan dailies the day after Thanksgiving. The *New York Times* ran the story under the headline, "Laud Yarini as a Patriot." The *Tampa Tribune* headline read "Demonstration over Remains of Bad Man." The *Washington Post* story heralded the death of a white slaver and included his connection to vodoo societies.

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Images conjured by the funeral cortege of the young Cuban and by the U.S. headlines were contradictory and portentous. Although a member of Havana's elite, Yarini was nevertheless involved in the demimonde of prostitution. Honored by multitudes but condemned by newspaper editors, lauded as a patriot yet denigrated as a "bad man," the contrasts and contradictions enveloping Yarini illustrate the social flux and political chaos that accompanied the first decades of Cuban independence, when the country reeled in the aftermath of revolution, two U.S. interventions, and a second attempt to found a republic.

Historiography

In recent decades the demimonde of prostitution has served historians as an analytical device to explore gender issues and nation building in both Europe and the Americas. The groundbreaking work of Judith Walkowitz for Victorian England and Donna Guy for Argentina focused attention on gender issues associated with female prostitution at the turn of the twentieth century.[9] The paucity of sources, however, makes the principal actors in these studies a cadre of male politicians, criminologists, sociologists, doctors, and other professionals. The males, at times aided by elite female activists, are shown as impinging upon the institution in their attempts to sanitize its practices and eliminate or minimize its presence. The voices of participants in the trade are often inaudible. In addition, this growing body of work has focused on Europe, and especially on studies of fin de siècle Paris, London, and New York.[10]

A small number of feminist historians dealing with Spanish America, however, have been particularly concerned with the import of gender images and prostitution in nation building. Supporting the findings of Guy, Sueann Caulfield's research on Brazil argues that gender and prostitution issues were invoked in support of "particular political interests."[11] Invariably, the studies conclude that the debate over state regulation of prostitution and weak efforts toward its abolition were part of an orchestrated attempt by the new Spanish-American nations to be recognized as a part of a "modern" world.[12] Few studies, however, address the apparent cleavage between official rhetoric about, and popular responses to, prostitution.[13]

By the second half of the nineteenth century, prostitution and its control had become hotly debated topics both in Europe and the Americas. The massive immigration from Europe during the last two decades of the century renewed the zeal of "enlightened" nations to "clean up" the urban centers and "protect" their citizens. Prostitutes were targeted in morality and public health campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic, but for Latin America the added incentive for elites was in luring foreign capital. For example, Caulfield argues, "the aims of urban authorities [in Spanish America] included transforming the capital cities into showcases of dynamic modern nations." She concludes that

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"liberal professionals believed that their policies would accelerate progress, understood as a linear process through which both urban space and the culturally and ethnically diverse Latin American populations would come to resemble those of white, industrialized Europe."[14] Often, as in the case of Cuba, however, elite ideals for the nation ignored popular sentiment and contrasted sharply with the reality of the streets.

Few studies of the mechanisms of prostitution in Cuba have been published, and, except for an anecdotal history by Tomás Fernández Robaina, they deal with prostitution in the post-Revolution years.[15] After examining the barrage of newspaper stories, police reports, judicial proceedings, and subsequent dramatic depictions of the Yarini episode, I conclude that the political expediency of modernization and nation-building rhetoric was hard-pressed to find popular support. This apparent paradox mirrors the Cuban quandary in crafting a national identity and attempting to present itself as one of the modern and independent nations of the world. Having come late to independence, Cuba struggled to "catch up" to the rest of Latin America as it sought to define "Cuban" in white, Northern European terms. At the state level this meant consolidation of the nation, although, as Aline Helg argues, European immigration was seen as the "salvation of the nation," as it had been in Argentina.[16] At the cultural level, following Martí-style nationalism, a new kind of anti-imperialist and populist nationalism surfaced.

The Second Time Around

The young Cuban nation struggled physically and ideologically to establish a place among the progressive countries of the world. Havana's officials tore down sections of the old colonial city walls only in 1853; a Republican Cuba completed the job in the early twentieth century in an effort to show the world its commitment to modernity.[17] As Spain's last colony in the Western Hemisphere, and stinging from imposed U.S. control, Cuban society underwent traumatic transformations during the first decade of the republic. Louis A. Pérez Jr. has argued that with intervention, "a Cuban war of liberation was transformed into a U.S. war of conquest," and that even the terminology, the Spanish-American War, denied Cuban participation in achieving independence and deprived the Cuban people of agency.[18] Such symbolic emasculation deeply affected expressions of nationhood. "*Por el bien de Cuba*" (for the good of Cuba) was the compelling force of both the *independentistas* and those favoring continued U.S. control. Perhaps it was only during such a time of crisis that a man like Yarini could have emerged as a cultural icon for the Cuban people, providing fodder for what has been termed the Cuban Republic's first myth.[19] In part, this essay argues that in early republican Cuba the prostitution debate, illustrated by the contrasting responses to Yarini's death, is indicative of the failure of Cuban

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elites to craft a national vision that garnered and maintained popular support during the first decades of independence.

In 1898, as the United States engaged Spain in an imperialist war, thirty years of revolutionary rebellion against the Spanish Crown by the Cuban people abruptly ended. Although characterized by President McKinley in an announcement to Congress on 11 April 1898 as "a forcible intervention . . . as a neutral stop to war," in reality the intervention measures established U.S. claim to the island by virtue of arms.[20] Observers in the United States noted the lackluster military operations of the Cubans in their independence struggles as indicative of the irresolute Cuban character. Cubans were excluded from the peace talks with Spain while the United States negotiated a unilateral peace. In addition, claiming to have ended Spain's colonial rule over Cuba, the United States asserted its own right to govern the Cubans. After four hundred years of Spain's colonial rule, official U.S. occupation of the island began on 1 January 1899.

The Cuban people, however, actively challenged U.S. intervention. While an ascendant bourgeoisie welcomed the occupation with relief and gratitude, *independentismo* resurfaced as the most formidable challenge to North American control and hopes of eventual annexation of the long-coveted island. The "better-classes," U.S. officials assumed, were for annexation and only the "rabble," singularly unfit to govern, demanded independence. U.S. officials hoped that over time, the Cubans would "come around" and clamor for annexation, having realized the benefits of being a part of the United States "Empire." As General Wood noted, "The real voice of the people of Cuba has not been heard. . . . When they do speak, there will be more voices for annexation." But in the elections of 1900, the Cubans did not elect the U.S.-sponsored candidates and instead opted for what occupation officials termed "demagogues" and "emotional candidates," thus proving their "inadequacy for self-government."[21]

In view of the Cuban people's reluctance to submit to U.S. demands, by 1901 the occupation quickly became an expensive burden for the United States — some half a million dollars a month. The Platt Amendment, passed by Congress in 1901, while guaranteeing an end to the occupation, imposed U.S. controls on Cuban self-government, especially in the area of foreign relations and debt restrictions.[22] After several months of sometimes violent protests and demonstrations by the citizenry, the delegates of the Constitutional Convention convened in Havana acquiesced and by a single vote the Platt Amendment became a part of the Cuban Constitution of 1901.[23] After the military occupation ended in 1902, Tomás Estrada Palma, an "ultraconservative" and a U.S. ally, became the first president of the republic. His reelection in 1906 provoked an armed uprising in Cuba and, after a desperate plea from Cuba's president to Washington, renewed U.S. occupation ensued from 1906 to 1909. Estrada

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Palma's reelection and the subsequent U.S. occupation once again stoked the fires of the *independentismo* movement.[24]

In *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, Pérez argues that "rather than expressing economic interest in any one class, the separatist movement was expected to open up opportunities for a heterogeneous social amalgam."[25] The movement appealed to Cubans of all classes who expected independence to create a new society. However, Pérez also contends that in 1902 "Cuba entered nationhood with its social order in complete disarray and its class structure totally skewed."[26] The dominant Creole bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century had toppled in the wake of the sugar crisis and of revolution. The economic vicissitudes of the planter elite also produced a dispossessed peasantry. In an agricultural economy, agriculture was at a virtual standstill and economic opportunities in every sector stifled. Foreigners — including U.S. citizens with over $200 million in investments on the island — controlled sugar production, land speculation, mining, railroads, utilities, and banking. Foreign capital funded the island's limited industry, and few Cubans were willing to invest in manufacturing in the absence of a viable market as cheap, U.S.-manufactured goods flooded the island.[27]

A new elite looked to politics — including graft, bribery, and embezzlement — for their livelihood.[28] For example, in 1909, after the U.S. relinquished control of Cuba for a second time, the Liberal Party candidate, José Miguel Gómez, ran on a platform that assured the restoration of cockfights and the lottery; he handily won the election.[29] The Gómez presidency (1909–1913) was notorious for graft and corruption.[30] Irene Wright, a U.S. journalist living in Havana during the first decades of independence, noted in 1910 that government "offices [were] considered plums, [they] fall not to the fit, but to the favorites of the Great Paternal Power — the central government."[31]

Adding to the political and economic turmoil, as in most of Spanish America, immigrant workers from Europe (usually young, male, and single) arrived in Cuba in large numbers after 1900.[32] Competing with Cuban labor in all sectors, some 30 percent of immigrants remained in the capital city. Foreigners usurped economic opportunities in every field and *peninsulares* quickly replaced Cuban women as domestics.[33] This added displacement deeply affected *criollas* who already faced social restrictions and economic hardships on the island.

The Women and the Trade

In Cuba, the ideology of appropriate roles for women, both within the family and the community, restricted employment opportunities, especially for white women. A double standard existed in Cuban society: "The woman is at home and the man is on the street."[34] Carefully constructed public and private spaces

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insured that women's influence was relegated to traditional roles within private space. Motherhood and female domesticity were revered in Cuba's moralistic, romantic tradition for women. Traditional cultural values that excluded women from occupations requiring contact with men effectively undermined female agency.[35] Except for teachers, employment outside the home was not acceptable for married women and left the vast majority of female wage earners as single or widowed. This distinction crossed lines of race and class.[36]

War and reconcentration efforts of the 1890s displaced many women from the countryside. Widows in postwar Cuba represented 50 percent of the adult female population. "The life of a woman is very sad here in Cuba," Wright commented. "The only right a woman had was the right to starve to death when her support failed."[37] Nevertheless, more than 2,440 women engaged in prostitution, the "fourth largest source of employment" for women on the island. The occupation government did not act expeditiously in issuing prostitution restrictions. It was not until 27 February 1902 that Military Order #55 adopted a General Decree (Reglamento General) in an attempt to regulate the practice of prostitution both in the capital and throughout the island, and further sought to segregate the prostitution trade within the city of Havana.[38] Within the approved zones, prostitutes catered to the vibrant maritime traffic, the large number of mostly single, male immigrants who arrived regularly, and to military personnel both Cuban and U.S.

The prostitute community of Havana was unique in Spanish America. Ramón Alfonso, Secretary of the Special Hygiene Commission, in his 1902 annual report, offered a detailed demographic analysis of the island's prostitutes.[39] Unlike the large number of immigrants among the prostitute sector in countries such as Brazil and Argentina, in Cuba the vast majority of prostitutes were *hijas del país* (585 of the 744 counted for Havana were Cuban-born). The prostitutes concentrated in the capital, where the 1899 census listed more than 700 prostitutes living in some 338 brothels.[40] More than half of Havana's prostitutes had been born in the capital, while most of the rest had emigrated from provincial capitals or other national urban centers.[41] These women worked in Havana's *zonas de tolerancia* in the oldest parts of the city by the wharfs and industrial sectors. Alfonso also noted that unlike the statistics published by Benjamín de Céspedes in 1888, who found that 60 percent of Havana's prostitutes were black, by 1902 white prostitutes were in the majority (64 percent). In addition, Alfonso found that prostitutes from the western half of the country (Pinar del Río, Havana, and Matanzas) were less educated than those from the eastern half (Las Villas, Puerto Principe, and Santiago de Cuba), although the majority from all regions were illiterate.[42] Foreign-born prostitutes included Spaniards, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, with a few other nationalities represented in small numbers. Of the 744 surveyed, 425 were white, over 300 were illiterate, and a majority had held previous occupations as servants; a few had

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been laundresses and seamstresses (the most common occupations for women in Cuba according to the 1900 census). These women, generally between the ages of 18 and 25, poor and illiterate, represented the most marginalized sector of the economy.[43]

Nevertheless, prostitution had a long and celebrated history in Cuba, and in particular, in the capital city. Céspedes, in his 1888 study of prostitution and disease, noted that as early as 1493, the crew members who accompanied Columbus had "prostituted" Indian women and introduced syphilis to the New World.[44] The subsequent arrival of large numbers of young, single men as conquistadors and colonists was accompanied by that of *mujeres de mal vivir*, who, according to Céspedes, had escaped from the clutches of the Inquisition.[45] In a letter to the King, dated 23 December 1584, Governor General Gabriel de Luján accused the mayor, the town's chief military officer, and a sergeant of "housing" several women. By 1657, the accusations sent to the Spanish Crown included charges against the Bishop of Havana, J. Manuel Montiel, and various priests and friars, contending that the poisoning of the previous Bishop, Diez Vara, resulted from disputes over prostitution among the clerics of the city. According to Céspedes, with the introduction of African slaves to Cuba, the prostituting of black women became a viable and profitable enterprise throughout the island, as slave-owning entrepreneurs catered to the large numbers of white, single men who constituted the vast majority of Cuba's population.[46] Céspedes noted that during the eighteenth century, while several governors of the island made sweeping reforms toward "good government," none addressed the issue of prostitution, so inculcated was its necessity for the economic interests of the island. A move toward reform was made in 1776 when the Marquis de la Torre established La Casa de Recogidas to house the large numbers of "delinquent and rowdy" women who lived on Havana's streets.[47]

The first attempt to regulate prostitution in Cuba materialized in 1873. In April of that year, Governor Pérez de la Riva ordered that a hospital be opened to treat the large numbers of syphilitic prostitutes in the capital. Prostitutes were to be registered and licensed, with proceeds used to pay the expenses of the Sanitation Hospital (Hospital de Higiene) that opened in June 1873. On 27 December 1873 the first regulations and laws governing prostitutes were published. Four hundred prostitutes were listed in the registers for the inaugural year.[48] Using the revenue from the 30 peso, 80 centavo annual "license" fee, these women were to be examined at home twice weekly, once for a general external exam and once internally by use of a speculum. Many prostitutes, however, unable to pay the heavy fee, became *fleteras* (streetwalkers), often living and performing services between parked carriages and rail cars or in the alleys of the city.[49]

By 1875, military authorities, complaining that 10 percent of the armed forces were infected with syphilis, demanded that the government issue more-

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stringent regulations. That year, Dr. Claudio Delgado was appointed Director of Physician Hygienists and drafted a new study of the prostitution "problem," which called for more-stringent enforcement of existing regulatory decrees.[50] On 9 September 1888, *La Cebolla*, a Havana newspaper reportedly published by and for prostitutes, protested the new regulations in an editorial. "It is sinful," the editor complained. "It is unconstitutional. It is a miscarriage of justice against unfortunate women who seek to carry out their business under the auspices of the law, for which they pay a hefty fee."[51] Two weeks later, the paper published an unsigned letter, supposedly from a prostitute, which further denounced the new reforms and regulations:

> The Mayor, who is old and cranky, so that not even a fly dares to land on him, has decreed that we cannot exhibit ourselves in the doorways of our own establishments. . . . Is this fair? What country prohibits the businessman from showing the public his merchandise? The "horizontals" of this city pay more contributions to the state than necessary. Yet, although we contribute more than any other sector to bolster the revenues of the state with the sweat of our . . . brows, we are treated as if we were slaves; as if we were outlaws. In other words, we are considered citizens so as to meet our obligations, but not to enjoy the rights of citizenship.[52]

Each edition of *La Cebolla* also included a tantalizing centerfold labeled simply La Guajira, La Madrileña, or some other similar description.

In spite of such protestation, the movement for regulation and abolition of prostitution continued in Cuba as elsewhere. Increasing cases of disease among prostitutes and their clients in the 1880s and subsequent decades and the inability of government to pass meaningful regulatory measures had spurred Céspedes to join many of his contemporaries in conducting "scientific" studies of prostitution. This coincided with many analyses of prostitution produced at a time when proving modernity was a priority for many nations. At the turn of the twentieth century, in countries such as France, Spain, England, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, doctors, scientists, and women activists "studied" prostitution, its causes, and its regulation, and especially its danger from disease.[53] A second concern, culminating in a League of Nations inquiry and subsequent resolutions aimed at solving the problem, was the traffic in "white slaves."[54]

Historical inquiries, however, have largely ignored the internal workings of prostitute communities at the local level. After the turn of the century, the prostitute community, both inside and outside the *zonas de tolerancia* in Havana, boasted a strict moral and social hierarchy. Especially in San Isidro, the most well-known prostitution barrio in the capital, there existed a "manifest camaraderie, true friendship, and solidarity. . . . The barrio had its ethical and moral standards and whoever did not tow the line was criticized and looked down upon."[55] Named after an ancient colonial church and hospice, the street

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of San Isidro gave its name to the entire prostitute community. Wright reported, "There are districts in Havana—one street, in particular—where, I am told, indecency beggars the average man's imagination . . . [and] inspires many visiting women to drive, with their husbands, through this section."[56] Incidents reported in local newspapers simply read "lo de San Isidro" in identifying prostitute problems.[57] Located close to the wharfs and in the oldest part of the city, San Isidro gained fame as a place for prostitutes, pimps, free living, and for harboring Afro-Cuban religious syncretism.[58] San Isidro was described as a place where "the strongest of human passions [found] a counterpoint in racial co-existence, popular religion, and even in politics."[59]

Within San Isidro and other prostitution zones, the residents recognized an ordered social system. As Reay Tannahill argues for France, the hierarchy of prostitution depended on the established nature of the prostitute; the more mobile she was, the less the respect she commanded within the prostitution community.[60] In San Isidro, members of the community were differentiated among established prostitutes and *fleteras*. Matrons and pimps who kept their own houses and had several women working for them were at the top of the social order; independents who rented a room by the month came next; and *fleteras* ranked lowest in the female community.[61] Those prostitutes who had a room or a house were held in highest regard, for even though they were at the mercy of policemen bent upon extortion, they had some protection under the law. *Fleteras*, on the other hand, were regularly rounded up and often beaten in the streets before being sent to the *vivac*, or local prison.[62] Whether these distinctions were a result of the differentiations originally imposed by government officials in the regulations or originated within the community itself is difficult to ascertain.[63]

Several additional distinctions were evident among the prostitutes. Ethnic and racial discrimination existed, although apparently not between prostitutes; it was in the clientele that racial differentiation became an issue. While "Consuelo," a prostitute who lived in the Zona Colón and later in San Isidro during Yarini's time, reportedly would sleep with men of all races, many of the other women would only sleep with white men.[64] French women who arrived in San Isidro after 1900 were seen as a threat to the social order, especially by Cuban women, since they were supposedly more sensuous and created a new standard for the barrio.[65] "Religion" was also important for established prostitutes in San Isidro, and it was common to see a prostitute cross herself for good luck before her first trick each night. None were beyond consulting a Santería practitioner if things were not going well.[66] Race, ethnicity, and *buena suerte* defined the most desirable prostitute.

The pimps of San Isidro also held different positions and demanded varying degrees of respect within the community. There were the "working" pimps

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who were employed on the wharfs, in banks or industry, or as white-collar workers, depending on their social status. Another group, the "delinquent" pimps, sold drugs and committed burglaries or petty thefts. "Real" pimps did no work at all. The most respected, such as one Suavecito ("Easy Does It"), had several women, while others had but one each, with whom they lived in common-law relationships. On the lowest rung of Havana's social ladder within the prostitute community were the *"café con leche"* pimps. These men were distinguished as the poorest and least respected. Unlike most of the "respectable" pimps, who owned apartments and cars, the *café con leches* lived in the parks; they had to hang out in the streets, waiting for their "woman" to finish with a customer, as they had nowhere else to go. One prostitute noted with indignation that one could easily differentiate between pimps, since *café con leche* pimps had to suffice with cheap watches, while the more "respectable" ones flashed expensive gold watches, bracelets, and large diamond rings. The worst insult one prostitute could hurl at another was that she belonged to a *café con leche* pimp.[67]

Political turmoil, graft and patronage, legalized vice and prostitution, all characterized the capital city, where in 1910 the lottery was in full swing and cockfights were scheduled every Sunday.[68] In San Isidro, however, life was ordered and honor well defined, even if under a unique rubric.

Lo de San Isidro

It was during the unsettled decade of independence and U.S. occupation that Alberto Yarini came of age. Born in 1882, Yarini was a member of one of the island's prominent families. His father was a highly respected dental surgeon and professor at the University of Havana and his brother, José de Jesús Yarini, became a successful Havana surgeon and dentist.[69] Thus, the young aristocrat had the political, social, and cultural connections to ensure a prominent and lucrative career in whatever field he chose. As a member of one of the island's most prominent families, the U.S.-educated Yarini would have been a most desirable catch for a Havana socialite. But, as Wright noted, Cuba was the "land of topsy-turvy . . . where life runs, not like reality, but after the style of librettos of stage plays."[70] In fact, Yarini became the young republic's most celebrated and respected pimp.

By the end of the second U.S. occupation in 1909, Yarini had already acquired a reputation as a brave and honorable man, despite his sideline. Consuelo la Charmé, a prostitute who began to ply her trade at that time, remembered that Yarini "not only was a good man, but a friend, yes, sir, a good friend; the kind that when one was really in trouble [*jodida*] you could count on for help, without any conditions; he expected nothing in return, even though he

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was a politician, and a Conservative." She boasted that "he would not greet you because you were a somebody. No! He would speak with a negro; or a Chinese; with anyone. He did not tolerate anyone who put on airs."[71] He was highly respected among the inhabitants of San Isidro because of his aristocratic and political connections, which he used regularly to help his friends and acquaintances, and for that matter, anyone who asked for his help. It was reported that Yarini offered financial assistance to anyone who was out of work; he was, according to Consuelo, "the first to open his bag and the last to close it."[72]

It seems that Yarini first gained widespread notoriety when at age twenty-six he provoked an altercation in a local café. When he overheard two officials from a U.S. warship stationed in Cuba's harbor in 1906 denigrate Cuba and Cubans, he challenged them to a fistfight. Consuelo described the incident—U.S. newspapers in 1910 reported it as an "assault on J. Cornell Tarler, charge d'affaires of the American legation"—as a patriotic defense of the integrity of the Cuban people.[73] The two officers had been eating in one of the numerous corner cafes that dotted the streets in Havana. Speaking English, the pair objected to the Cubans because, "in this country blacks and whites hang out together and there are blacks everywhere." Yarini, who apparently spoke fluent English, was in the café with General Jesús Rabí, a prominent Afro-Cuban military leader, but shortly thereafter he left the bistro accompanied by a group of friends. Yarini then excused himself from the group, saying that he had left something behind at the table. Returning to the café, the Cuban "yelled insults at the Americans," screaming that General Rabí had fought like a lion, along with many other blacks, for Cuba's independence, and "who the hell did they think they were saying such things [about Cubans and blacks]." With that, Yarini jumped on the men and a fistfight ensued. Onlookers and friends who wanted to avoid trouble with the U.S. authorities stopped the fight, which Yarini reportedly was winning.[74]

During his short life, Yarini enjoyed wide popularity in San Isidro. The prostitutes were "fascinated as he rode by on his immense steed, as majestic as he was. It was also said that he was very special in the 'other.' "[75] Several women, seven or more, were "with" Yarini, but often, because of his involvement in politics—he was president of the Conservative Party Committee for San Isidro—he would not visit them for three or four days.[76] Their most-often-heard complaint was that Yarini would sleep with them only once a month. After the young pimp's death, other prostitutes boasted that they had been with Yarini and that he had paid them and "made love" to them.[77] It was a mark of honor to have slept with Yarini or to have been one of his women because "they were happy." The young politician gained legendary status among the prostitutes and other residents of San Isidro, who viewed him as their protector.[78] For example, when Consuelo's French pimp, Pierre le Doux, threatened to cut

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her up with a knife, she ran to one of Yarini's establishments for protection; only there did she feel safe since no one would dare to challenge the young Cuban.[79]

According to *Diario de la Marina*, Havana's ultraconservative newspaper, problems between Cuban pimps (*guayabitos*) and French pimps (*apaches*) had long existed. Several altercations—knifings and fights—involving the two groups had taken place in the barrio streets.[80] Generally, French pimps in Havana handled women that had been recruited in France. And on occasion, with permission from the well-bribed Havana city officials, the French pimps would travel to France to bring back fresh women for the trade. It was allegedly during one such trip by the *apache* Louis Lotot, in 1910, that the prostitute Berta Fontaine left his establishment for that of Yarini. This was the worst infraction that an "intern" prostitute could commit; switching houses and pimps was considered overstepping her "place."[81] When Lotot returned, however, perhaps sizing up Yarini's political and social connections, his "bravery," and his support within San Isidro, he apparently thought twice about provoking a confrontation. He reportedly concluded that he had "come to Cuba to exploit women, not to die for them. It was his professional ethic." According to one report, the other French pimps pressured Lotot to make an example of Yarini for the good of their group; after all, "what would the *apaches* do if all their women, both French and Cuban, were to leave them?" Later, a report by the Havana secret police noted that several French nationals had met at a café on the corner of Habana and Desamparados Streets. There they had been overheard plotting Yarini's murder. But it was also rumored at the time that the Liberals had fostered the confrontation, for they wanted to have Yarini out of the way in the upcoming elections.[82] The favorite in the race, Yarini was widely supported in Havana by the prostitution sector, the Conservatives, and by the *ñáñigos*, the secret cult of Abakuá. This Afro-Cuban society was especially powerful because its practitioners held to a code of honor and brotherhood that supported and protected its members against "outsiders."[83]

In any event, what followed was a carefully planned ambush, although at first the authorities thought it was a crime of passion. On the appointed night, 21 November 1910, shortly after seven o'clock in the evening, five of Lotot's compatriots stationed themselves on the rooftops opposite the house where Yarini visited with Elena, one of his "women."[84] Lotot and Jean Petijean arranged to "bump into" Yarini as he left Elena's house at number 60 San Isidro.[85] According to Consuelo, Lotot already had his pistol drawn, a .38-caliber Smith, when he encountered Yarini. Realizing it was an ambush, Yarini drew his weapon and fired off several rounds against Lotot and Petijean. The men stationed on the rooftops, however, wounded Yarini, who apparently never saw them. Pepito Bastarrechea, Yarini's companion who was in the house next door, heard the shots, ran outside, and fired at the pair of Frenchmen in the street. One round

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felled Lotot immediately. Firing at the men on the rooftops, Bastarrechea forced them to run away, and he, too, took flight out of San Isidro, disposing of his revolver in the street. Eight French and two Cuban women were held as material witnesses and fourteen others were arrested in connection with the shooting, including Bastarrechea.[86]

Both Yarini and Lotot were seriously wounded, and both were taken to a nearby hospital. Lotot had been shot five times, once in the head, twice in the left hand, and once in each arm.[87] He was pronounced dead on arrival and was later identified as a twenty-eight-year-old chauffeur by Jennie Fontaine, his concubine.[88] While Yarini was being treated, Berta Fontaine, Cecília Martin, and Elena Morales, "his favorites," paced in the waiting room.[89] Dying of his gunshot wounds, Yarini became aware that Bastarrechea was being accused of having murdered Lotot. In what some describe as the last honorable deed of an honorable man, Yarini made a deathbed confession in which he took sole responsibility for Lotot's death; it read, "Concerning the shots that killed the Frenchman, I am solely responsible; I shot him in self defense." Written on hospital stationery, the pencil-scribbled confession was witnessed by a distinguished *habanero*, Licenciado Freyre Andrade.[90] No one expected less from the politician/pimp. "After all," Consuelo noted, "that is how true men act."[91]

The following morning, 22 November, Yarini was still hanging on to life. Havana's morning newspapers carried the story of the shooting and Lotot's death on their front pages. *Diario de la Marina* noted that the events that had taken place in San Isidro the previous evening were reminiscent of a picaresque novel by Cervantes — an appropriate, if unintentional, reference, in view of Yarini's almost Quixotic reputation in Havana. That afternoon, a group of Cubans of "all races" ambushed the mourners who had attended Lotot's burial as they were returning from the cemetery.[92] Later that night, shortly before 11 p.m., Yarini finally died. The following morning, Havana's mayor ordered several brothels in the city closed permanently. However, an editorial by José Viera, published in *Diario de la Marina*, doubted that the mayor's order would have much effect. "Instead of paying for their lawlessness with a jail sentence," noted Viera, "they [the pimps] put on the airs of great gentlemen. Today, any miserable person who lives off of prostitution . . . looks down upon decent people with disdain and speaks with pride of his many spheres of influence. . . . The world belongs to murderers and prostitutes." The piece ended with "We'll see, we'll see."[93]

Announcements of Yarini's death were circulated throughout the city:

R.I.P.
ALBERTO YARINI Y PONCE DE LEÓN HAS DIED

Subscribers, Presidents, Delegates, and Secretaries of the National Conservative Party, plead that all affiliated with the Party and all the population in general attend the viewing, Calzada de Galiano, No. 22, tomorrow, Thursday, the 24th of this

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month, at 9 a.m., to accompany the body to the Colón Cemetery, this favor will be greatly appreciated.

Havana, 23 November 1910

The notice was signed by some of the most prominent men in the city, including General Andrade and José Bastarrechea.[94]

Answering the call, "whores, *guayabitos*, *ñáñigos*, and people of all social classes" attended the viewing and burial of Yarini. Dressed in their most somber clothes, trying not to attract undue attention, most of the prostitutes of the city went to pay their last respects; a few were accompanied by their "husbands."[95] Even some of the *apaches'* prostitutes went to the Yarini family home at Galiano 22. Many of the women in the crowd wept quietly throughout the night, but in the morning, when it came time to remove the coffin from the house to assemble the funeral procession, most wept openly and loudly.[96]

During the all-night wake, so many people converged on 22 Galiano Street that crowd control became an issue.[97] The men present formed a human barricade, creating a path for mourners who wished to express condolences to make their way to the home's front door. The family received visitors throughout the night in their living room; Consuelo described it as "full of wreaths and other flowers." The dedicatory ribbons indicated the variety of classes that were represented in the crowd:

"To my unforgettable Alberto Yarini, from Mercedes Tamayo."
"R.I.P. Alberto Yarini, with fond memories from Sara López."
"To her unforgettable Alberto, with fond memories from la Johly."
"To Alberto, the National Conservative Party."
"To our unforgettable President, the Conservative Committee of San Isidro."

Amid the messages and flowers, and "next to the door in the room where the coffin stood sat the deceased's family. In four enormous silver candelabra burned an equal number of candles, their flames dim in the somber air." A steady line of visitors passed by the coffin until its departure for the Colón Cemetery.[98]

The funeral cortege that left Galiano at 9 a.m. on Wednesday was more than three city blocks long.[99] As already described, the procession was varied and impressive, growing longer as it made its way down Havana's most important boulevards. When the body of the young man passed in front of the headquarters of the Conservative Party, flowers rained down on the coffin from every window. Police monitored, reportedly without incident, the minor scuffles that took place over who could carry Yarini's coffin on their shoulders. Many mourners awaited the cortege at the cemetery, where military commander Miguel Coyula gave the eulogy.[100] The *ñáñigos* also had a farewell ceremony, *el enlloró*, for Yarini in the field beyond the cemetery.[101]

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While pimping in Havana's barrios often involved violence and even death, the murder of Yarini had important repercussions for the city of Havana. Both Cuban and French pimps sought revenge, and the subsequent assaults, knifings, and shootings put the entire city on guard for several weeks. The ambush of Lotot's mourners by Cuban pimps had injured several Frenchmen and killed one, resulting in several arrests; in response, Frenchmen assaulted Cubans randomly in the streets of San Isidro.[102] Consuelo remembered that the revenge was spontaneous: "A Cuban had been murdered by the apaches [the ambush took place before Yarini died], and complete justice was not to be expected from the authorities." After all, she noted, "the deceased was a conservative, the liberals were in power and had amiable relations with the apaches, who not only procured for them 'good women,' but also bags of money in order to continue with the traffic and engage in trade in the area."[103]

On 24 November, *Diario de la Marina* reported that the chief of police was proceeding to "clean-up" San Isidro with an iron hand, moving against all those who were violating existing immigration and prostitution laws. His draconian measures were directed against both pimps and prostitutes. Even some members of the police force were reprimanded. Police captain Ledón of the 10th precinct, for example, was dismissed for negligence in not having prevented the incidents associated with Lotot's funeral.[104] But prostitutes, who were indiscriminately rounded up and sent to the *vivac,* felt the brunt of the measures imposed by the police chief. Establishments and businesses in San Isidro were "inspected," heavy fines were levied, and many were ordered to close down.[105] Several citizens were falsely accused and arrested, and many women had to resort to *fletear* (turning tricks in the streets) in order to subsist.[106]

From all provinces of the country, newspaper editors, too, reacted, firing off editorials that demanded government action.[107] The initial response of *Diario de la Marina* was to blame the United States for what had happened. "The Americans outlawed cock fights, bullfights, and the lottery," complained editor Joaquín N. Urumburú. "Why then did they leave public prostitution? In the United States it does not exist, it is not permitted, and neither is it permitted in other civilized countries."[108] In fact, during the initial occupation, both in 1899 and again in 1902, the United States had not outlawed prostitution, but had tried instead to guide reform efforts toward the enactment and enforcement of reforms, organizing the Department of Hygiene as an independently supported authority and outlawing all unregistered prostitutes.

Interestingly, although it thoroughly covered the arrests and the "clean-up" campaign associated with the murders, and through it published many editorials against legalized prostitution and in support of the police, *Diario de la Marina* did not carry any description of the funeral procession, only noting that police had been on hand in case of disturbances. The newspaper's coverage of the events largely took the form of editorials and official reports. For exam-

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ple, a two-part editorial appeared under the headline "Por el bien de Cuba" in the morning editions for 25 and 26 November. The editorials criticized the administration and called for the abolition of the trade. In the afternoon edition of 25 November, in a front-page editorial, the newspaper lambasted the city's image as immoral, regressive, and a cause of shame for Cuba in the international community: "Where such things happen, how can one expect the regeneration and prosperity of collective honor and national strength?"[109]

The afternoon editions of the paper featured *baturillos,* or random thoughts, on the "bloody occurrence" in San Isidro. The murder of Yarini and the two Frenchmen had "revealed, through the power of scandal, a terrible evil, a hub of moral corruption, against which [the editors] have been incessantly clamoring, although society, in whose interest we cry out, has not paid attention." The article continued: "Three men are dead . . . others are injured; some are in prison; a respectable home is draped in mourning; the gray hairs of a learned old man and the decorum of an honest family stand in contrast against the irrational acts of a son, already a corpse; new crimes are committed daily; and all eyes, frightened and curious, turn to that diseased zone where *chulos* and *horizontales* [prostitutes] disgrace our country, while the authorities stand by complacently."[110]

The moralistic editor of *Diario de la Marina* also pointed out the prevalence of "an interminable series of pornographic stories and illustrations, postcards and epigrams, and impudent tales printed in newspapers read by women." Such publications, according to Urumburú, had made vice acceptable for Cuban society.[111] At the same time that the newspaper denounced the public's indifference to vice, it also published letters received from readers who voiced similar concerns, although they numbered only "six or eight." One letter, in particular, from a "Galician," generated a long and pointed response from the editor. The writer contended that while regulation of prostitution was necessary in modern society, he doubted that prohibition was effective, and thought that it was actually immoral. Urumburú's response sharply criticized both society's acceptance of "immoral vices" and the corrupt government officials who "told prurient anecdotes" in some of the most respectable living rooms of the capital and winked at the increase in prostitution.[112]

The response of Cuba's national government to the crime was ambivalent. On 28 December 1911, Decree #1158 closed San Isidro as a *zona de tolerancia* and moved its operations to the barrio Luyanó.[113] Under pressure, the government nullified the move to Luyanó some ten months later.[114] One year later, on 23 October 1913, the legislature suspended the regulations on prostitution that had been in force since 1899 and eliminated all specified zones for prostitution, thus relaxing all controls. Claiming that the social and public health benefits that had been promised by the regulations had not materialized, the decree, sponsored by the Secretaría de Sanidad y Beneficiencia (Department of Health and Welfare), contended that the opposite had occurred. State regulation had

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merely fostered pimping, had criminalized women, and had discredited public administration. The decree further stated that obligatory medical exams and hospitalization had proved ineffective in controlling venereal disease and had instead offered the public a false sense of security. After noting the probable world opinion of a country that allowed prostitution to continue and the anti republican nature of the current system of regulated prostitution in Cuba, the decree stipulated the abolition of all regulatory measures.[115] Twelve years later, on 30 September 1925, Cuba would ratify resolutions adopted by the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children. Under international pressure, the Cuban government would also subscribe to the accords published previously, in 1904 and 1910. From 1911 until 1915 more than twenty new immigration decrees were enacted by the Cuban government that restricted women traveling alone internationally, set the minimum age for women immigrants, required fingerprinting, and generally tightened controls for all immigrants. In particular, National Decree #384 ensured Cuba's support of the Convention by prohibiting and punishing the introduction of any women into Cuba for the purpose of prostitution, gradually aligning Cuban policies with international sensibilities.[116]

Réquiem por Yarini

For all the governmental and media hyperbole and publicity, little permanent change actually ensued after 1910. Prostitution issues in Cuba took a back seat to the continued convulsions of nation building for several decades after Yarini's death. No new prostitution-related legislation was passed until the 1950s. However, renewed campaigns for moral reforms followed the debates over the new Constitution drafted in 1940. On 7 January 1951, the magazine *Bohemia* carried an extensive photo-spread of recent murders in the barrio Colón, where a drug-dealing pimp had been murdered. The magazine lauded police action in breaking up the vice and drug cartels that were entrenched in Colón. In a related article, university professor Francisco Carone offered his opinion that "prostitution was as old as humanity, and satiated many primordial social, economic, and even doctrinal needs, [but] it also carried consequences — including the existence of pimps." In the same article, however, Cardinal Manuel Arteaga of Havana publicly commended government officials of the Secretaría de Gobernación for having "attacked the empire of corruption and vice, [and] for turning off all the 'red lights' of moral infection. It is what Cuba expects."[117] He also commended them for having passed a new resolution that forbade the creation of new *"zonas"* in the republic.[118]

By the mid-1950s, however, Cuba was once again in a state of crisis, buffeted by as much political, economic, and social instability as it had experienced in its first decade of nationhood.[119] Organized crime, in partnership with

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the government of President Fulgencio Batista, enjoyed revenues from payoffs and bribes in the millions of dollars.[120] Batista relied heavily on his cut from gambling profits and on the corrupt officials and police officers who also practiced bribery and extortion to fill their pockets. Nationally, labor problems and a falling standard of living further undermined the economic and social structure. Most Cubans perceived themselves worse off in the 1950s than they had been in 1920. The protests that ensued expressed "social frustration, economic loss, and political anger."[121]

The stress of political and economic uncertainty was singularly evident in the capital city. With money from U.S. organized crime figures and with the protection of Batista's corrupt officials, Havana had become an international center of legalized vice. Drugs, gambling, pornography, and prostitution flourished. By 1958, there were 270 brothels in Havana and more than 11,500 women engaged in prostitution.[122] The growth of the industry was noted in an editorial published by *El Mundo* on 15 March 1956: "The famous barrio Colón, whose ambience was provided by two or three streets, has so grown in these last few years, that it is now impossible to clearly establish its limits. . . . It now borders on the most elegant and luxurious commercial establishments . . . conducting its business with unprecedented civility."[123] The editorial also criticized the laxity of law enforcement by the police but stopped short of citing complicity.[124] Advertisements, like those that appeared in the magazine *Información* in January 1958, lured women into prostitution with promises of high earnings: "Wanted, young women with a pleasant appearance for the new Happy-Land Club . . . Salary $90. Plus, commission and good tips."[125] Another advertisement, published in December of that same year for the Centro Bar, offered similar enticements, but this one specifically requested that rural girls apply for work. The ad included directions for appropriate bus routes to the bar.[126] On the streets, solicitation was commonplace. One writer recalled that U.S. citizens who traveled to Havana for a big weekend of carousing would reel through the streets, "picking up fourteen-year-old Cuban girls and tossing coins to make men scramble in the gutter."[127]

A significant difference separated the 1950s from the 1910s, however, at least in the view of the prostitute community of Havana. There was no Yarini to protect them from abuse, to bail them out of jail, or to influence and bribe politicians. In the 1950s, no pimps emerged who could be described as "honorable;" they were only exploitive.[128] Prostitutes were not able to maintain their "status," and *fleteras* were everywhere. Foreign, and especially U.S., capitalist interests, and not the "community," ruled in barrios such as San Isidro. Resulting anxieties and conflicts echoed the tensions that had existed between foreigners and Cubans during the 1910s.

It is significant that during the 1950s the Cuban playwright Carlos Felipe made the much discussed personage of Alberto Yarini the title character of

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what was to become his most famous play, *Réquiem por Yarini*. Lovingly dedicated to "my people of the barrio of San Isidro," Felipe worked on *Réquiem* between 1955 and 1960. However, with the "Triumph of the Revolution" in December 1958, there followed still another period of dramatic political, social, and economic change for Cuba.[129]

Felipe's body of work has been characterized by one critic as "a constant criticism, explicit or suggested, of [Cuba's] sociopolitical reality controlled by . . . insatiable plutocrats."[130] Invariably, the playwright portrays powerful elites in a negative light. But perhaps Felipe's most important contribution to Cuban theater has been the uniquely Cuban flavor of his plays, which depict scenes set close to the harbors of Havana. "No [Cuban] dramatist," note José Escarpenter and José Madrigal, "has been able to portray more eloquently the transfigured and phantasmagorical world of the Havana wharfs, where with rare articulation the vestiges of a colonial past, perpetuated in stone, mates with the cosmopolitan steam of foreign seaborne business."[131] In particular, *Réquiem* had been singled out as Felipe's most important and most "Cuban" play. Two themes that appear often in Felipe's plays are also prevalent in *Réquiem*: the search for happiness and the recovery of the past. In the San Isidro brothel, which is the setting for the action, Felipe's characters try desperately to relive the past only to find that happiness, through its chimerical changes, eludes them.

Although not a biographical work, *Réquiem por Yarini* takes place in San Isidro on the night of 21 November 1910, and the action parallels the real events of that night. The interior spaces are those of a brothel in that district, which is described as clean, decorous, and well-appointed, making it what the stage directions call "an extraordinary place."[132] The play's main characters include Alejandro Yarini,[133] "king of the proxenetas in Havana"; La Jaba, Yarini's *mulata* manageress who is totally dedicated to him; Luis Lotot, French pimp and Yarini's rival; Bebo la Reposa, a priestlike character; La Dama del Velo (the Lady of the Veil), a mysterious veiled figure from outside San Isidro; la Macorina, the beautiful (but dead) Queen of the prostitutes; and la Santiagüera, a prostitute for whose love Yarini is killed.[134]

As was the case in the real barrio, Felipe's San Isidro is a closed society where values are inverted in relation to the outside world. Yarini's fictional barrio is a microcosm where order reigns, where every member knows his or her role and where life is carefully orchestrated under the efficient tutelage of La Jaba. "My business is order," declares Yarini in the play. "There exists a Regulation that my interns must know and respect."[135] Within that "pure universe of negative values," the beautiful and seductive Santiagüera, who is deeply in love with Yarini, represents disorder.[136] It is because of her that the great lord of the pimps falls victim to disorder. He is a prisoner of love, just like

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La Santiagüera, and because of it dies at the hands of his rival, Lotot, whom la Santiagüera has abandoned. In this case, "disorder . . . leads to death."[137]

Felipe characterizes Yarini as a politician, gambler, and pimp. For example, La Jaba's opening dialogue expresses her adulation for Yarini: "Yarini the politician means nothing; Yarini the gambler is no big deal . . . but Yarini the pimp (*chulo*) . . . Yarini the pimp is the King! I would have conquered the world for him, and it would have not been enough; he deserves much more."[138] This description, however, also sets up the supernatural image of the man. In *Réquiem*, pimping and prostitution are shown not as a social evil, but as an activity with religious overtones. Bebo La Reposa acts as a sort of pastor of the San Isidro congregation. He uses *caracoles* (shells) to predict Yarini's death yet is powerless to prevent it. Throughout the play, the action is imbued with images of *santería*, as the characters call upon Changó and Eleguá, gods of the Yoruba pantheon.[139] For example, when Yarini's death is predicted, all the practitioners of Afro-Cuban religion on the island intercede before their gods with prayers on Yarini's behalf. Around him rallied many disparate entities of Cuban society. In the world of prostitution, Yarini was a king; for his "interns," a god. Men in his service imitated his dress and his mannerisms; La Santiagüera rendered him homage.

Another character in *Réquiem*, the Lady of the Veil, has been explained as representing Yarini's fame outside of San Isidro, beyond prostitution and the "Zone."[140] A woman of high society who wants to meet Yarini out of curiosity, in *Réquiem* she speaks of Yarini as the talk of all Havana, who generates great curiosity and admiration among high society. Indeed, his dress and style are mimicked by men in all social circles.[141] "They tell me," muses La Dama, "that he is the handsomest man in Havana. And he is; and I know men . . . the *danzón* [Cuba's national dance] was invented for [Yarini]."[142] Yarini's importance in Havana's collective psyche is evidenced in how Carmen, a resident of San Isidro, characterizes him: "Ah, yes! He was the most beautiful man to have lived in Havana."[143]

Escarpanter and Madrigal have offered two explanations for Felipe's use of Yarini as the hero of this tragedy. In the first, Yarini projects the subconscious mentalité of the Cuban people. He combines the island's sensualness and Iberian machismo to generate the admiration of society. The historic Yarini was young, handsome, seductive, with potent sexual attributes, intelligent, and self-assured, who "in his short life apparently enjoyed life to the fullest, and made the most beautiful women of his time enjoy it also."[144] In his controversial analysis of the Latin American "Public Man," Glen Caudill Dealy argues that "public virtues such as grandeur, generosity, and manliness are useful because they help in the aggregation of followers and it is this which makes them virtues."[145] The second explanation is based on Felipe's socio-historical com-

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mentary of what he perceives to be the Cuban reality. In the play, the anarchy and political scandals of Cuba are described as "an era of dust and mud."[146] It is these, and not prostitution, that are regarded as the truly demoralizing forces of Cuban society. For Felipe, the Cuban republic is but the sum of decades of corruption wrapped in grandiose words. This, then, is reflected in the microcosm of *Réquiem*'s San Isidro, where the only honor and order are to be found among pimps and prostitutes.[147]

To possess San Isidro was to posses the heart and soul of Havana. Thus, Yarini was the mythic prototype whom many wanted to imitate. In *Réquiem*, however, his death is necessary to transform him into a myth.[148] According to María del Carmen González, Yarini becomes a sacrificial victim for the government, for his profession, and even for his country.[149]

Conclusion

Réquiem por Yarini has often been described as the embodiment of Cuba's first national myth under the structure of the classic Greek tragedy. Yarini is the tragic hero who makes a mistake in judgment and struggles against forces more powerful than he (love and the government); ultimately, however, he is greater than earthly power and finds the long-sought love and order only beyond the grave.[150] Felipe wrote that "the Cuban artist should create his own myths. With Yarini I think that I have created a myth about a person who has become legendary in San Isidro."[151] Yarini was already a legend that only needed codification. In the Catholic Church, a Requiem is "a mass for the dead, or the music for such a mass;" its less-used definition is that of "rest, quiet or peace." Through Felipe's words and characterization in *Réquiem for Yarini*, the legendary pimp found a kind of "rest;" Yarini emerged from the world of rumor and innuendo and became a part of Cuba's mainstream culture. Felipe ends the play with the line, "Rest in peace, Yarini."[152]

During the last two decades, *Réquiem* had been produced several times in Madrid, New York, and Miami, and at least twice on the Cuban stage.[153] Although the play addresses themes of prostitution and Afro-Cuban religion, both opposed by Fidel Castro's revolutionary ideology, the production was well received in Cuba and critics lauded what they perceived as its moralistic themes: the young republic was corrupt and engaging in prostitution carries severe consequences. In 1986, Graciela Guzmán, entertainment reporter for *Bohemia*, noted in her review that *Réquiem* revealed the problem of "corruption and opportunism of that period . . . the erotic and passionate world with a creole essence, that now has found expression in new ways to enhance our development."[154] In another review, published in *Trabajadores*, the workers' magazine of Cuba's Communist Party, the first decades of independence are described as a "pseudo-republic" where "pseudo morals" prevailed.[155] Thus,

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Yarini served to validate revolutionary propaganda in Cuba some seventy years after his death. Interestingly, one of the best documented developments of the 1980s in Cuba is the proliferation of prostitutes in the tourist sectors of Havana.[156] One *jinetera*, as prostitutes are known in Cuba, complained that they "are living in a time of no kindness. That doesn't exist here. Everywhere there is envy, and people value things that are not true, and everyone is selfish now, and it is very scary in my heart. . . . Everything in the country is for sale. There is no moral center to life now."[157]

In *Foundational Fictions*, an analysis of Latin American fiction in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Doris Sommer argues that during those decades, "romance and republic were often connected. . . . [Novels] fueled a desire for domestic happiness that runs over into dreams of national prosperity; and nation-building projects invested private passions with public purpose."[158] Perhaps for neo-independent Cuba, Yarini provides a similar image. In 1986 a Cuban theater critic described Yarini as "a well-known character in his time, and not because of his great merit exercised in our historic development, on the contrary, because he was one of the most celebrated pimps of neo-colonial Havana at the dawn of the twentieth century, a city and era of contrasts, where everything or nothing could happen."[159] However, it was precisely because he could successfully navigate between the contradictory spheres of Havana's social and political strata that Yarini emerged as a cultural memory for Cuba, embodying the coalescence of elite and popular conceptions of patria.

Irene Wright, writing in 1910, described Havana as a city of contrasts. On the one hand, the morals of a very Iberian and moralistic culture forbade elite and middle-class women from going out alone in public; they could not attend funerals or even shop unaccompanied. When young women walked down Havana's streets in tight-fitting gowns, they were chaperoned everywhere they went. Men of all social classes, on the other hand, would position themselves on the narrow streets so that women passing by would have to come very close and would sometimes be forced to brush up against them.[160] Such double standards allowed men (especially those among high society) who felt constrained by the restrictive social norms that valued chastity in women and sexual prowess in men to make their way to the streets of barrios like San Isidro. According to Wright, "The most notorious street in town [was] within a block or so of the most fashionable church and of the American Legation, opposite it. In short the 'old city' [was] a grab bag—its contents unsorted."[161] From such "disorder" emerged Yarini.

Yarini remained fixed in the collective memory of the capital. It was not socially acceptable to admire Yarini openly, unless one was a member of the prostitution community, but his prowess made him a sort of hero for many Cuban men who imaged themselves to be like him, the most "public" of men.

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In a society where reputation and connections were all-important, he was the god of the double standard; Yarini acted in the open, not caring about what others thought. His memory long survived through gossip and popular stories, only to be openly resurrected by Carlos Felipe at the close of the 1950s. When Felipe's play was published (more than a decade would pass before it was produced in Cuba), it validated in print the gossip and stories that Consuelo said had been much discussed in Havana for many decades.[162]

Yarini the patriot, the socialite, and Yarini the pimp coexisted with dignity in a Cuba that convulsed in the throes of nation building. Politicians capitalized on the powerless, and their moralization campaigns were criticized by Felipe's mulatta madam, La Jaba, as the "moralizing of [politician's] pockets, full of scruples without risks."[163] In the midst of such corruption and graft, Yarini's most important quality was honor; his ordered "regulations" for San Isidro, his patriotic comportment, his beneficence, and even his deathbed confession made him respected and admired. While after his death some said that he had been mad, to others the twenty-nine-year-old martyr of San Isidro became a unique symbol of nascent *cubanidad*. Thus, the politics of prostitution and of independence created a truly Cuban "hero," who was also very human — not a hero crafted by elites for international interests, but one hand-picked by the common people. More than a Don Juan or a Casanova, Yarini emerged as the Don Quixote of San Isidro.[164] For its prostitutes, the barrio represented an ordered world offering respite from the social disorder that prevailed beyond its borders. In that "public" space, the *mujeres públicas* of the barrio gave birth to the young republic's first myth.

NOTES

1. *Tampa Tribune*, 25 November 1910. Irene Wright described Gómez's funeral in much the same terms as news accounts described Yarini's cortege (Irene Wright, *Cuba* [New York: MacMillan, 1910], 78–79). For descriptions of Yarini's funeral procession, see *Diario de la Marina* (Havana), 25 November 1910; *New York Times*, 25 November 1910; and *Washington Post*, 25 November 1910. The *Tampa Tribune* carried the story of the viewing on 24 November 1910, and the next day offered coverage of the funeral.

2. Tomás Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos de dos mujeres públicas* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1983), 40.

3. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 39.

4. Wright, *Cuba*, 78–79.

5. Yarini's mother was noticeably absent from the group, and Consuelo la Charmé, a prostitute, noted her absence (Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos Secretos*, 39). Irene Wright wrote that Cuban women did not attend funerals, since it was not acceptable conduct in "good society" (Wright, *Cuba*, 45). A study of nineteenth-century travelers' accounts of life in Havana confirms the limited exposure of middle- and upper-class women on Havana's streets (see Luis Martínez-Fernández, "Life in a 'Male City': Native and Foreign Elite Women in Nineteenth-Century Havana," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 25 [1995]: 27–49).

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6. Wright, *Cuba*, 79.

7. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 46. The population of Havana province was estimated to be 538,000 in 1907, while that of the island as a whole was 2,048,980 (José L. Luzón, *Economía, poblacíon y territorio en Cuba, 1899–1983* [Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica del Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1987], 83).

8. For a description of a typical Cuban viewing, funeral, and burial, see Wright, *Cuba*, 43–48.

9. Donna J. Guy, "Prostitution and Female Criminality in Buenos Aires, 1875–1937," in *The Problem of Order in Changing Societies: Essays on Crime and Policing in Argentina and Uruguay, 1750–1940,* ed. Lyman L. Johnson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 89–116; Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (1991; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Donna J. Guy, "White Slavery, Public Health, and the Socialist Position on Legalized Prostitution in Argentina, 1913–1936," *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 3 (1988): 60–80; Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

10. For Paris, see Alain Corbain, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850,* trans. Ann Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Susan P. Conner, "Public Virtue and Public Women: Prostitution in Revolutionary Paris, 1793–1794," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28, no. 2 (winter 1994): 221–41; and Susan R. Grayzel, "Mothers, Marraines, and Prostitutes: Morale and Morality in First World War France," *International History Review* 19, no. 1 (February 1997): 66–86. For Great Britain, see Linda Manhood, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1990); and Trevor Fischer, *Prostitution and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). For New York City, see Marilyn Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830–1870* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992).

11. Sueann Caulfield, "Getting into Trouble: Dishonest Women, Modern Girls, and Women-Men in the Conceptual Language of Vida Policial, 1925–1927," *Signs* 19, no. 1 (autumn 1993): 147. See also Sueann Caulfield, "The Birth of Mangue," in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America,* ed. Daniel Balderston and Donna Guy (New York: New York University Press, 1997). Other studies that engage the demographics of prostitution have focused on specific regions within a country to observe community trends in dealing with prostitution. For Argentina, see Liliana Graciela Isabello, "La prostitución y la trata de blancas: 1874–1886," *Todo es Historia* 18, no. 223 (November 1985): 83–92, which notes the lack of enforceable prostitution regulations in Buenos Aires at the close of the nineteenth century; for a demographic analysis of prostitution in the Territorio Nacional de la Pampa, see María Herminia Di Liscia, María Silvia Di Liscia, and Ana María Rodríguez, "Prostíbulos y control estatal en el Territorio Nacional de la Pampa," and Lilian Diodati, "Prostitutas, burdeles y reglamentos en la ciudad de Colón (Provincia de Buenos Aires)," both in *La mitad del país: La mujer en la sociedad argentina,* ed. Lidia Knecher and Marta Panaia (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994). For Mexico, James R. Curtis and Daniel D. Arreola argue for a spatial rather than a moral segregation of *zonas* on the U.S.–Mexican borderlands (see "Zonas de Tolerancia on the Mexican Border," *Geographic Review* 81, no. 3 [1991]: 333–44; and William E. French ("Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work, and the Family in Porfirian Mexico, 1876–1911," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 [November 1992]: 529–54) argues that Mexico followed a North American/European pattern in addressing prostitution issues as part of their efforts toward modernity. Cf. K. Lynn Stoner, who argues that the women's movement in the early Cuban Republic was uniquely Cuban in its motivation, demands, actions, and outlook and did not follow Anglicized models (*From the House to the Streets* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991]).

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12. Caulfield, "Birth of Mangue," 86.

13. Even fewer studies have focused on the male procurer's role in defining the forms of prostitution or its politics. For the twentieth-century United States, see, e.g., Neal Kumar Katyal, "Men Who Own Women: A Thirteenth Amendment Critique of Forced Prostitution," *Yale Law Journal* 103, no. 2 (1993): 791–826. For an early and sympathetic look at procurers, see E. M. S. Danero, *El Cafishio* (Buenos Aires: Fontefrida Editora, 1971.)

14. Caulfield, "Getting into Trouble," 149.

15. Julia O'Connel Davidson, "Sex Tourism in Cuba," *Race and Class* 38, no. 1 (1996): 39–50; and, tangentially, Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, "Twenty Questions on Sex and Gender in Revolutionary Cuba," *Cuban Studies* 18 (1988): 149–58.

16. Aline Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880–1930: Theory, Policies, and Popular Reaction," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940,* ed. Richard Graham, 37–69 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

17. Manuel Fernández Santalices, *Las calles de La Habana entramuros: Arte, historia y tradiciones en las calles y plazas de La Habana Vieja* (Miami: Saeta Ediciones, 1989), 26.

18. Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 178–79.

19. José A. Escarpanter and José A. Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe: Teatro* (Boulder, Colo.: Society of Spanish and American Studies, 1988), 50.

20. President William McKinley, quoted in Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 178.

21. General Leonard Wood, quoted in ibid., 181.

22. News of the Amendment sparked anti–U.S. demonstrations, and on 2 March 1901 a torchlight demonstration descended on General Wood's house. The populace was in an uproar, as telegraph lines jammed with protests from every corner of the island. Officials in Washington countered that there would be no compromise or concession to Cuban independence unless the amendment was accepted (see Geoff Simons, *Cuba: From Conquistador to Castro* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996], 211).

23. Simons, *Cuba: From Conquistador to Castro*, 208–14.

24. Raúl M. Shelton, *Cuba y su cultura* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1993), 205–11; see also Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba under the Platt Ammendment, 1902–1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

25. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 213.

26. Ibid., 193.

27. Ibid., 193–220.

28. Pérez argues that Cuban independence was the last in a series of events that effectively toppled the planter class. In its place emerged a bourgeoise that looked to U.S. largess to guarantee national political and economic stability and thus promote U.S. hegemony (see Louis A. Pérez Jr., "The Collapse of the Cuban Planter Class," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 36, no. 3 (Winter 1982), 3–22.

29. Wright, *Cuba*, 187. More than 372 indictments were brought against public officials from 1909 to 1916 (Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 217). The Cuban lottery was under the direct control of the government, and the officials who ran it personally benefitted from its revenues (see Charles Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic: A Study in Hispanic American Politics* [New York: Octagon Books, 1969], 547–63). Perhaps cockfighting was seen as a uniquely Cuban pastime, much as bullfighting was associated with Spanish imperialism by many Cubans. Bullfighting was also outlawed by the U.S. military government on 10 October 1899, and was not reinstated by republican Cuba (Louis A Pérez Jr., "Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868–1898," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 [September 1994]: 493–518).

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30. Chapman, *History of the Cuban Republic*, 231; 297–317.

31. Wright, *Cuba*, 142. The control of resources and revenues was the "central, if unstated, issue of politics at all levels of the republic." As economic conditions worsened during the Cuban republic's first decade, so did corruption and patronage. According to Pérez, by 1903, 20,000 Cubans were on the public payroll, with 40 percent (8,000) of those in the city of Havana; by 1911 the number had risen to 40,000 federal employees, which required that two-thirds of the budget be expended for payroll. In Cuba at the turn of the twentieth century, politics was a matter of "economic and social urgency" (Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 205, 220).

32. Simons, *Cuba: From Conquistador to Castro*, 221.

33. During occupation, e.g., U.S. plumbers contracted to work in the capital organized a local union that excluded Cubans. In addition, Spanish merchants hired their relatives (nephews) from Spain rather than Creoles, so that the term *sobrinismo* quickly came into common usage (Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 203).

34. María del Carmen González, "La cultura popular en el drama cubano del siglo XX," Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1984, 8.

35. E.g., Martínez-Fernández argues that "of all the major cities in the New World, nineteenth-century Havana placed the most stringent limitations on the female population" (Martínez-Fernández, "Life in a Male City," 44).

36. Pérez notes the predominence of single and widowed women in most female occupations by citing the ratios of single or widowed women to the total female workforce. In the professional ranks, 518 of 646 teachers were single or widowed and most were white. Among the occupations where women of color predominated, the single and widowed again were in the majority: 15,388 out of 20,980 laundresses; 19,970 out of 22,807 servants; 1,362 out of 1,580 cigarworkers; and 342 out of 419 seamstresses (Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 210).

37. Wright, *Cuba*, 101.

38. Milo Adrián Borges, ed., *Compilación ordenada y completa de la legislación cubana, 1899–1950*, 2d ed. (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1952), 1:94.

39. Although the colonial government provision that established the Comisión de Higiene in 1873 required annual reports, I was only able to locate reports for 1888, 1902 (when by military order, the regulations were adopted by the military government and were later extended to the republic until 1951), 1912, and 1914. In 1899 the *Reglamento de la prostitución en la ciudad de La Habana* was published by the Comisión de Higiene Especial; it adopted the colonial legislation for "independent" Cuba. See also Benjamín de Céspedes, *La prostitución en la ciudad de la Habana* (Havana: Establecimiento Tipografico O'Reilley, 1888); Ramón M. Alfonso, *La prostitución en Cuba y especialmente en la Habana: Memoria de la Comisión de Higiene Especial de la Isla de Cuba* (Havana: P. Fernández, 1902); Ramón María Alfonso, *Reglamentación de la prostitución, breves apuntes como debe ser en Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta el Siglo XX, 1912); and Matías Duque, *La prostitución, sus causas, sus males, su higiene* (Havana: Rambla, Souza, y Compañía, 1914).

40. *El Censo de Cuba* (Washington: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1900). The number of brothels is cited by Pérez; compare the 1990 figures with the 270 brothels in Havana by the late 1950s (Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 305).

41. Ibid., 207–8; Céspedes, *La prostitución*, 157–59. For figures on Brazil, see Caulfield, "Birth of Mangue," 89; on Argentina, see Donna Guy, *Sex and Danger*, 104–5.

42. Alfonso, *La prostitución*, 18–33.

43. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 207–8.

44. Céspedes, *La prostitución*, 62–64. In a wide-ranging look at changing attitudes to syphillis, Claude Quétel argues that by the close of the nineteenth century doctors used the fear of venereal disease to extend their influence. With growing secularization of society, they became not only a kind of public health police, but also set themselves up as the arbiters of the new morality. Quétel is not emphatic, but concedes that syphilis was transmitted to Europe from the Americas

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sometime after Columbus's return (see Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, trans. Judith Braddock and Brian Pike [Oxford: Polity Press, 1990]).

45. Céspedes, *La prostitución*, 66.

46. A majority of the men who came to the New World, and to Cuba, in particular, wanted to make their fortune (*hacer America*) and then return to Europe as quickly as possible. Thus, Céspedes argues, prostitution became the most practical means for this transient population to fill its sexual needs (Céspedes, *La prostitución*, 71).

47. Céspedes, *La prostitución*, 66–71.

48. Ibid., 74–75.

49. Ibid., 79; Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 85–86.

50. Claudio Delgado, "La Higiene especial de la prostitución en la Habana, su estado actual y reformas que exige el ramo," in Céspedes, *La prostitución*, 80–81.

51. *La Cebolla* (Havana), 9 September 1888.

52. *La Cebolla* (Havana), 23 September 1888.

53. See, e.g., Constancia Bernaldo de Quirós and Jesús María Llanas Aguilaniedo, *La mala vida en Madrid: Estudio psico-sociológico* (Madrid: B. Rodríguez Serra, 1901); Paulina Luisi, *El problema de la prostitución: Abolicionismo o reglamentarismo* (Montevideo: Sindicato Médico del Uruguay, 1926); George Jackson Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York: The Century Co., 1913).

54. The "white slavery scare" gripped progressive nations during the early decades of the twentieth century. Readers were titillated with exotic tales of kidnapped innocents and their misadventures at the hand of the slavers. Mark Connelly, in a study of the profusion of white slavery tracts that appeared in the United States between 1908 and the 1920s, argues that "the indignation and concern over white slavery was intense, widespread, and often hysterical" (Mark Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980], 114–15). For contemporary accounts, see Ernest A. Bell, *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls, or War on the White Slave Trade* (Chicago, 1910); Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: Macmillan, 1923); Albert Londres, *The Road to Buenos Ayres* (London: Constable and Co., 1928); Nylian Molinari Calleros, *La trata de blancas* (Buenos Aires, 1933). Cuba passed legislation to show its compliance with the League of Nations recommendations in 1925 (*Reglamento de la ley de inmigración y de las trata de blancas* [Habana: Imprenta y Papelería de Rambla, Bouza, y Cía., 1925]).

55. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 41.

56. Wright, *Cuba*, 97.

57. See *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 22 November 1910.

58. The barrio San Isidro was bounded by Acosta on the north, Habana on the south, Desamparados to the east, and Egido to the west (Santalices, *Calles de La Habana*, 24).

59. In a city notorious for changing street names often and with little provocation, San Isidro early on was renamed Calle de las Tenazas (Street of the Forceps) because of its proximity to the gate of the same name in the old city wall. Following independence, it was renamed Emilio Núñez, after a war general who later became governor of Havana. Unlike what occurred with the names of many other streets in the city, neither new name stuck; with a sense of pride, the street and the barrio are still called San Isidro (Santalices, *Calles de La Habana*, 131–32); see also Francisco Rojo García, *Plano de La Habana* [Havana: N.p., 1951]).

60. Reay Tannahill, *Sex in History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 357–64.

61. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 29.

62. Ibid., 15, 17.

63. The *reglamentaciones* of 1899 listed several categories of prostitution, each with a different maximum monthly tax: "casas con pupilas," 35 pesos; "casas de aisladas," 12 pesos;

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"casas de citas," 35 pesos; "meretrices ambulantes," 5 pesos. Each of these categories was further subdivided into five levels, each with different tax (*Reglamento*, 20).

64. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 72. The memoir published and edited by Fernández-Robaina intermingles the recollections of two prostitutes, Consuelo and Violeta la Charmé. Since it is at times almost impossible to distinguish which of the two is speaking, throughout the rest of the essay Consuelo's name will be used as representative of the two.

65. One French matron, waiting in Cuba for a visa to immigrate to New Orleans, is said to have left the island with thousands of dollars in profits (Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 72).

66. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 55, 90.

67. Ibid., 30.

68. Wright, *Cuba*, 187.

69. See Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 33. The tenure and promotion records for Yarini's father, José Leopoldo Yarini, are in the Archivo Historico Nacional (AHN), Madrid; see AHN, Folio Ultramar, 263, expediente 11, 14. The elder Yarini received tenure in 1884 and promotion in 1890. The Yarini and Ponce de León family names are linked in marriage in 1859. Although this union is probably too early to be Alberto's parents, it nevertheless indicates the close relationship of the two families (see Fernando Suárez de Tangíl y de Angúlo, conde de Vallellano, *Nobiliario cubano: O, las grandes familias isleñas, por el conde de Vallellano* [Madrid: F. Beltrán, 1929], vol. 2). With residence and offices on Galiano Street, No. 16, it seems likely that this Yarini was Alberto's "doctor brother" (*Bohemia*, November 1920, 72).

70. Wright, *Cuba*, vii.

71. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 26.

72. Consuelo noted that the term "bag" was used because during this period Cuba had no national currency and gold and silver coins from various countries, including Spain, France, and the United States, were in common circulation (Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 50; and Wright, *Cuba*, 67).

73. The correspondent noted that Yarini had taken the opportunity to confront Tarler in the "absence of Minister Edward V. Morgan." Exemplifying the moralizing campaigns being waged in the United States, the paper reported in the same issue on one of a series of purity meetings, where speakers "exhorted the people of Tampa to wage a fight against the forces of immorality," especially those in "the district" (*Tampa Tribune*, 24 November 1910).

74. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 26.

75. Ibid., 51. The first automobile arrived in Cuba at the time of its occupation in 1898.

76. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 33.

77. Ibid., 51.

78. Consuelo la Charmé stated that she, too, would have been happy if she had been one of Yarini's "women," and she regretted that she had not slept with him (Ibid., 50).

79. Ibid., 33.

80. *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 22 November 1910. The *Diario* was Havana's most conservative newspaper, with close ties to Spain and the colonial order. Its editor and staff saw themselves as "the sole zealous support of Mother Church in the Americas" (Wright, *Cuba*, 142–43).

81. Using boarding-school euphemisms, Section 8 of Article 20 of the 1899 Reglamento stated that prostitutes living in a brothel, with a female madame or a male pimp, would be called *pupilas* (*Reglamento para el régimen de la prostitución*, 12).

82. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 34; *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 24 November 1910.

83. Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe*, 60. *Ñáñigos* were members of a secret Afro-

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Cuban cult that practiced its religion in Cuba. *Ñáñigismo* worshipped the spirit of Abakuá and its slogan was "partner and friend." Members were generally considered *orilleros*, or marginalized, and were usually from the ranks of the poor and socially ostricized, although some very prominent Cubans have been leaders in the sect, which is still active in the north-central part of Cuba, including Havana. Cuban children were frightened into obeying their parents with threats that the *ñàñigos* would get them (a Cuban version of the "bogeyman"). One of *Ñáñigismo*'s characteristics, which surfaced in popular culture, was the use of colloquialisms such as *mayimbe* for a leader or chief; *parna* for friend; and *la jara* for the police. According to Consuelo (or Violeta) la Charmé, prostitutes in San Isidro generally called the police *la jara,* a *ñáñigo* term (Gisela Arandia, Rockefeller Fellowship Scholar, interview by author, 2 April 1997, Florida International University, Miami; and Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 40–45; see also Jorge Castellanos and Isabel Castellanos, *Cultura afrocubana* [Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1994]).

84. Consuelo remembered that there were two assailants on the rooftops (Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 50). *Diario de la Marina* identified five men who had been on the rooftops: Jean Boggio, César Mornan, Ernesto Laviere, Cecilio Bazzout, and one known simply as Valetit; and several witnesses testified to hearing footsteps on their rooftops on the night of 22 November (*Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 24 November 1910). The seven o'clock time was published in *Diario de la Marina*, as part of the official report of the incident of 21 November, which was signed by Fransisco F. Piñero and Jesús Olive (*Diario de la Marina* morning edition, 25 November 1910).

85. Consuelo identified the companion as (Jean) Boggio (Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 50; *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 24 November 1910).

86. *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 22 November 1910; Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 50.

87. *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 22 November 1910.

88. Lotot's place of residence was given as Desamparados, no. 42; (*Diario de la Marina*, 22 November, 1910).

89. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 13 November 1910.

90. *La Lucha*, 23 November 1910.

91. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 39.

92. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 23 November 1910.

93. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 23 November, 1910.

94. The names listed were: Federico G. Morales, Domingo J. Valladares, General Fernando Freyre de Andrade, Commandante Miguel Coyula, Commandante Armando André, Antonio León, Capitán Emilio Sardiñas, Federico Caballero, Raúl Busquet, Pedro Quiñones, Ambrosio J. Hernández, José Bastarrechea, and Eduardo Infante (Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 36).

95. The prostitution regulations of 1899 restricted garish dress outside the zones (*Reglamento,* Capitulo I, Articulo 10, Numero 5).

96. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 45.

97. Noting that the police were needed for crowd control, the *Tampa Tribune* first reported the large numbers assembled at the Yarini home for the all-night vigil (*Tampa Tribune*, 24 November 1910).

98. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 36–46.

99. The Associated Press report of 24 November anticipated that there would be crowd-control problems during the funeral procession that day (*Tampa Tribune*, 24 November 1910).

100. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 36; see note 1 above for newspaper coverage of the Yarini viewing and funeral.

101. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 40.

102. An official report of the details of the Cuban ambush of the French group at "El Bosque" was published in *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 26 November 1910.

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103. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 50.

104. *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 24 November 1910.

105. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 30 November 1910.

106. *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 28 November 1910; morning and afternoon editions, 29 November 1910.

107. *Diario de la Marina* mentions other newspaper coverage, including that of Havana's *El Mundo* and Camagüey's *El Comercio*, and repeatedly refers to the "immoral press," which sensationalized the events to increase circulation: "Almost all Havana newspapers turn into epic tales the accounts of the day's repulsive crimes" (*Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 27 November 1910).

108. *Diario de la Marina*, morning edition, 22 November 1910.

109. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 25 November 1910.

110. *Diario de la Marina*, afternon edition, 25 November 1910.

111. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 25 November 1910.

112. *Diario de la Marina*, afternoon edition, 2 December 1910.

113. The barrio Luyanó was bounded by the following streets, which were set aside specifically for prostitution: Pérez, Arango, Juan Alonso, and Rosa Enríquez. In addition, the decree moved regulatory and enforcement powers from the Comisión de Higiene Especial to the Secretaría de Gobernación y Sanidad. The decree was signed by President Gómez and Gerardo Machado, then minister of the Secretaría de Gobernación (see Secretaría de Gobernación, Decreto No. 1158, *Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba* 10: 151 [27 December 1911]: 6653).

114. Decreto No. 883, *Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba*, 4 October 1912: 4014. The Secretary of the Ministerio de Gobernación was by then Federico Laredo Bru.

115. Signed by President Menocal, Decree No. 964 voided existing regulations, except for minors; made the treatment of syphilis the responsibility of local, not national authorities; eliminated the restriction of the trade to *zonas*; gave police greater power to arrest anyone engaged in "public" prostitution; allowed two months for the "public" image of brothels to be altered; moved the treasury of the Servicios de Higiene under the jurisdiction of the Secretaría de Sanidad y Beneficiencia; turned over all records of the Servicio to the Negociado de Higiene Especial de la Dirección de Sanidad; and entrusted the enforcement of the new decree to the secretaries of Sanidad y Beneficiencia, Gobernación, y Justicia. The decree was signed by President Menocal and the secretary for Sanidad y Beneficiencia, Dr. Enrique Núñez (Decreto No. 964, *Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba*, 23 October 1913: 5453–54.

116. Immigration laws did not again command such attention until the period between 1940 and 1944 (*Compilación*, 3:428–31).

117. Manuel de J. Zamora, "Hasta donde llegara la acción de la policía en el barrio Colón?" *Bohemia* (Havana), 7 January 1951, 68–74; Jorge Mañach, "La decadencia del pudor," *Bohemia* (Havana), 7 January 1951, 49. See also Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 43, 53.

118. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 45, 53.

119. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 295.

120. Simons, *Cuba: From Conquistador to Castro*, 263; see also Shelton, *Cuba y su cultura*, 351.

121. For union problems during the 1950s, see Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 300–3.

122. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 392–93. The population of Havana province had tripled between 1907 and 1953, growing from 538,000 to 1,500,000 inhabitants; the percentage of the population of the island living in Havana province remained stable, at about one-fourth of the total: 26.3 percent in 1907 and 26.4 percent in 1953. The number of brothels decreased, however, but the number of prostitutes showed a dramatic increase, to 11,500. This figure is still impressive, even if one believes that the 1902 figures of 744 prostitutes in the city

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were vastly underreported (see Luzón, *Economía, poblacíon y territorio en Cuba,* 83). Alain Corbain argues that the decline in brothels and the growth of independent practicioners were not the result of police measures, but rather a change in the patterns of male sexual desire that resulted from socioeconomic change (Corbain, *Women for Hire,* Introduction).

123. Quoted in Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 61; see also *Bohemia*, 7 January 1951.

124. *El Mundo* (Havana), 15 March 1956.

125. *Informacion* (Havana), 1 January 1958, cited in Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secreto,* 71.

126. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos*, 71.

127. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., quoted in Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 305.

128. The 1951 article in *Bohemia* reported the gang-related activities of pimps who also worked the drug trade. The photo layout included a Yarinesque picture of a pimp who had been killed in a drug-related altercation (*Bohemia*, 7 January 1951).

129. In 1964 a second dramatic work based on the life and death of Alberto Yarini was published in Havana. *El Gallo de San Isidro*, by José R. Brene, however, did not receive the acceptance and accolades afforded Felipe's work. The events of 21 November 1910 are also the focus of *El Gallo,* but Alberto Yarini is characterized as a shrewd politician who is "working" the barrio. His largess is explained as a politician's ploy to win votes. In the play, one of the pimps boasts that "Cuba has produced the best pimps in the world. Rum, sugar, tobacco, and pimping, in these no one can best [the Cubans]" (José R. Brene, *El Gallo de San Isidro* [Havana: Ediciones R., 1964], Act I).

130. Felipe, quoted in Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe*, 22.

131. Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe*, 24.

132. Carlos Felipe, *Réquiem por Yarini: Drama tragico en tres actos de Carlos Felipe* (Miami: Ediciones Calesa, 1978), 10.

133. Note that in *Réquiem* the author changed the protagonist's first name from Alberto to Alejandro. If Felipe were consciously trying to create a myth in the style of the ancient Greeks, could this change have been an allusion to Alexander the Great?

134. "La Macorina" was Havana's most famous prostitute. She plied her trade in the early decades of the twentieth century, after Yarini's time (Felipe portrays her as having lived before Yarini.) She has been immortalized in poems, such as Alfonso Comin's "La Macorina," and in popular songs like "Ponme la mano aquí Macorina" (Put your hand here, Macorina). Disfigured in a car accident, after which she was left destitute, Macorina lived out her life in obscurity in a small apartment on Jovellar Street in Habana (Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe*, 60 n. 81; Editorial, *El Nuevo Herald* [Miami], 10 January 1983, 7).

135. Cf. the Reglamento of 1899.

136. Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe*, 40.

137. Ibid., 41.

138. Ibid., 26–27.

139. Ibid., 48.

140. González, "La cultura popular," 32.

141. Ibid., 41.

142. Felipe, *Réquiem por Yarini,* 45; see also Wright, *Cuba*, 61.

143. "Carmen," interview by author, 31 January 2001, Havana.

144. Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe*, 1, 48.

145. Glen Caudill Dealy, *The Public Man* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 41.

146. Act I of Carlos Felipe's play, quoted in Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe,* 47.

147. Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe,* 48–49.

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148. González, "La cultura popular," 43–45.

149. Ibid., 45.

150. Escarpanter and Madrigal, *Carlos Felipe,* 49.

151. Felipe, quoted in González, "La cultura popular," 23.

152. Felipe, *Réquiem por Yarini,* 65.

153. In Miami, the play was produced in November 1984, October 1990, and, most recently, in June 1998. It was scheduled to open in Madrid and Havana later in 1998 as part of the Festival Internacional de Teatro Hispano (*El Nuevo Herald,* 27 November 1984; 25 October 1990; and 4 June 1998).

154. Graciela Guzmán, "Irrumpe Yarini," in *Bohemia* (Havana), 5 September 1986.

155. Mercedes Santos Moray, "Réquiem por una puesta," *Trabajadores* (Havana), 15 May 1980.

156. See Lynn Darling, "Havana at Midnight," *Esquire,* May 1995, 96–106.

157. Ibid., 2.

158. Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of Califormia Press, 1993), 7.

159. Guzmán, "Irrumpe Yarini," 25.

160. Wright, *Cuba,* 95–97.

161. Wright, *Cuba,* 10.

162. Fernández-Robaina, *Recuerdos secretos,* 34.

163. Felipe, *Réquiem por Yarini,* 19.

164. Ibid., 39.

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