

## LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

# Geography and the Enlightenment: Patriotic Views of the Port City of Havana, 1761–1791

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This article focuses on how two Spanish American Creole writers perceived their port city as a symbol of national prestige, devoted patriotism, and utilitarian significance, at a time when the military and economic status of the port was undergoing transformational changes. It centers on the works of two eighteenth-century Cuban writers, José Martín Félix de Arrate's *Llave del Nuevo Mundo, antemural de las Indias Occidentales: La Habana descrita* (1761) and Ignacio José de Urrutia y Montoya's *Teatro histórico, jurídico y político-militar de la Isla Fernandina de Cuba y principalmente de su capital La Habana* (1791), to show the ways in which these authors articulated their love for their country while endowing the port and the port city with local political power and cultural prestige. This sense of "topophilia," a concept described by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan as the "affective bond between people and place," is what guided the aforementioned authors' geographic view of the port.

In *Historia General de las Indias*, Bartolomé de las Casas describes the port of Havana: "En la ribera o costa Norte hay buenos puertos, y el mejor y mucho bueno es el que llaman de Carenas y agora de la Habana; éste es mucho bueno y capaz de muchas naos, y pocos hay en España, y quizá ni en muchas otras partes del mundo que se le iguale" (1985, 511).<sup>1</sup> This passage is part of a chapter entitled "Que contiene de la grandeza y sitio de Cuba"; it calls attention to the fact that, as early as the sixteenth century, the port of Havana already constituted part of the excellence and grandeur of the island because of its location and physical geography. For Las Casas, there were not many other ports, in Spain or in the rest of the world, whose physical attributes equaled those of the port of Havana. In the eighteenth century, some Cuban Creole writers agreed with Las Casas that this port's physical attributes were representative of the island's grandeur. For them, the port's geography made Havana a special and illustrious place.

This article focuses on José Martín Félix de Arrate's *Llave del Nuevo Mundo, antemural de las Indias Occidentales: La Habana descrita* (1761) and Ignacio José de Urrutia y Montoya's *Teatro histórico, jurídico y político-militar de la Isla Fernandina de Cuba y principalmente de su capital La Habana* (1791). I examine the manner in which they express their love for their country while granting the port and the port city with political power and cultural prestige. In contrast to other scholarly works pertaining to these two authors, I look at the manner in which a physical space such as the port fosters strong emotions of devotion and admiration that are motivated by the historical conditions of the time. Geography as understood in the eighteenth century functioned as a discursive tool to highlight what set Havana apart from other urban centers in the Americas.<sup>2</sup> This view, which I would like to call patriotic geography, centered on a view of the port as a place and a space determined by its geography. It was also accompanied by a strong emotion of love that became in itself a form of knowledge deeply embedded in the Enlightenment view of space as a

<sup>1</sup> *Historia de las Indias* was written by Bartolomé de las Casas between 1527 and 1561. This passage is included in volume 2, book 3, chapter 22.

<sup>2</sup> Geography was conceived as "a science that deals with the universal description of the entire earth" (*Diccionario de autoridades*, vol. 2, 46). In the eighteenth century it was also conceived as a discourse which encompassed practices such as "observing, mapping, collecting, comparing, writing, sketching, classifying, reading, and so on—through which people came to know the world" in spatial terms (Withers 2007, 12). Space became for Enlightenment intellectuals a critical tool through which they could both understand the world and produce knowledge of that world. Please note, unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish into English are mine.

source of intellectual inquiry.<sup>3</sup> If other eighteenth-century Spanish American intellectuals, such as Juan de Velasco (1727–1792) in the case of the kingdom of Quito, Francisco Javier Clavigero (1731–1787) in the case of Mexico, and Juan Ignacio Molina (1740–1829) in regard to Chile, based their patriotic views of their respective lands on the natural resources that made their countries special, Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya chose to focus on a different type of spatiality: the geographic nature of the port and its surroundings.

### La Havana: A Port City

Patrick O'Flanagan has suggested that “to study colonialism is to study port cities” (2008, 11).<sup>4</sup> According to O'Flanagan, once colonial port cities were “incorporated into western capitalist circuits, they were transformed into points on surfaces and networks representing hubs in core-periphery trade articulations” (2008, 11). Besides representing centers of commercial exchanges, port cities also functioned as places where military encounters and dynamic social activities occurred. The spaces that composed the port included its coasts, anchorages, bay, customs buildings, forts, and the coastal cities. These were the places where people met, interacted, disagreed, fought, and strove to impose order as part of the market transactions that took place there. Ports also became important sites of knowledge production through which the *patria* was defined and rethought. This process of thinking and rethinking the port city as a *patria* is characterized by a patriotic exaltation of space and place as a symbol of cultural prestige.<sup>5</sup>

Port cities can be seen as part of the cultural identity of those who inhabited them. Consequently, they can be perceived as places endowed with particular histories that fostered pride and special feelings of belonging. I begin by calling attention to specific historical particularities that contributed to the emergence of the port city of Havana as an important port settlement in the colonial era. This brief historical synopsis will help us to understand what triggered Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya to focus on the port as the object of patriotic devotion and cultural prestige in the late eighteenth century. I intend to demonstrate how its geographical location made the port and port city valuable places and how this was discursively conveyed.

Havana became a strategic port for the colonial administration from the early colonial period. Its proximity to La Española (the first Spanish settlement) and the new maritime routes established after the conquest of Mexico contributed to this situation (Guerra y Sánchez 1962, 77). Alejandro de la Fuente argues that “as the routes of oceanic shipping were being defined,” Havana’s “strategic importance” became more “evident” to the Crown (2008, 4). Indeed, in the sixteenth century, Havana became part of the navigational routes that departed from the Viceroyalty of New Spain to return to Spain bringing great quantities of bullion. Treasure fleets departed from the Yucatán channel, stopping in Cabo San Antonio and Havana before continuing on to La Florida, the Azores Islands, and then to Spain.<sup>6</sup> In some cases, ships sailed directly from Veracruz to Havana. As de la Fuente indicates, “ships brought consumers, merchants, products, and business to town. They were the engines that propelled the local economy and the reason that the Crown spent millions of *reales* to fortify the port” (2008, 11).<sup>7</sup> Havana as a “transit point in transatlantic navigation” was transformed from a port town into a port city referred to by colonial authorities as “‘the key to all trading’ in the New World,” or “llave de las Indias” (De la Fuente 2008, 12). In the sixteenth century, the port city still played a secondary role in Spain’s administrative and commercial endeavors. However, one can argue that it was piracy that contributed to the urgent need to have the port of Havana more present in the minds and on the maps of the Spanish Crown, because treasure fleets passed through the port and were exposed to foreign attacks.

<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History*, Elena Delgado, Pura Fernández, and Jo Labanyi (2016, 2) propose the study of emotions as a category of historical analysis and as “a form of thought and knowledge” that among other things is reflected in the manner in which patriotic love is expressed. This book looks at the phenomenon of emotions from a multidisciplinary perspective, and although it is devoted to the case of Spain, some articles do address the transnational relations between Spain and Latin America in the nineteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> O'Flanagan bases his argument on C. Ozveren Keyder's “Port Cities in the Ottoman Empire: Some Theoretical and Historical Perspectives,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 16, no. 4 (1993): 519–558.

<sup>5</sup> I follow Doreen Massey's (1994) distinction between “place” and “space.” For Massey, space is “constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations,” while place refers to a particular point or location which is “open and porous” (1994, 4–5). Massey also argues that “the identities of place” are “multiple, shifting, possibly unbounded” (1994, 7). Space and place are concepts that are usually intertwined (Arias and Meléndez 2002, 16). For a more detailed discussion of the differentiation between space and place, see Arias and Meléndez (2002).

<sup>6</sup> These routes were known as the “Carrera de Indias.” For a detailed description on how these routes worked, the types of ships used to protect the routes, and the strategic value of Havana within these routes, see Marrero (1974, vol. 2).

<sup>7</sup> For a thorough and excellent examination of the emergence of Havana into a port city prior to 1650, see de la Fuente (2008).

Kris E. Lane observes that the first pirate attack to Havana occurred in 1538, followed by Jacques Sores's attack and control of the city in 1555 (1998, xxi–xxii).<sup>8</sup> John Hawkins's attempt in 1567 to reach the coasts of the Caribbean, and Sir Francis Drake's attack of the coasts of Santo Domingo in 1585 forced the Spanish authorities to name Gabriel de Luján, a military man, to serve as governor of the island and to fortify the port of Havana by building the fortresses El Morro and La Punta (Guerra y Sánchez 1962, 85).<sup>9</sup> After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Spain engaged in constant and costly naval conflicts to prevent other European empires, such as Holland, Great Britain, France, and Portugal, from gaining information about the ports, maritime routes, fortresses, and garrisons in the Americas. In the case of Havana, most of the pirate attacks were perpetuated from the island of Tortuga and from Port Royal (Marrero 1974, 87).

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the geopolitical map of the Antilles changed. Spain no longer had sole control of these geographical areas. The Dutch now controlled Curaçao, Saint Martin, Nevis, Montserrat and part of San Cristobal, and Antigua, while France had control of the other part of San Cristobal, Martinique, Granada, and Saint Lucia, and the British owned Tortuga and subsequently Jamaica. Meanwhile, pirates and corsairs of all three nations shared the northwest of Santo Domingo. More than ever, Spain needed to protect the port of Havana. Every Spanish military investment in the port city implied revenues for the island and the recognition of its strategic value.

Foreign threats in the eighteenth century persisted. As a result of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Great Britain took possession of the Port of Havana and its city in 1762, returning it in 1763 as part of the Treaty of Paris that ended the war.<sup>10</sup> The siege had economic repercussions for the port city, as millions of pesos were lost in merchandise taken by the British forces (Portuondo del Prado 1965, 206).<sup>11</sup> However, English authorities also opened the port to commercial exchange with England, including the import of black slaves and the export of sugar and tobacco (Portuondo del Prado 1965, 209). Finally, the siege reiterated the strategic importance of Havana's geographic location and the need to reenvision the port as a military outpost and commercial base. The Bourbon reforms taken place in the second half of the eighteenth century (1759–1799) constituted part of the Crown's effort to guarantee military stability and commercial progress. As Gabriel Paquette (2008, 93, 128) reminds us, these reforms aimed “to reduce smuggling, spur peninsular growth, revive the royal navy, and fortify colonial ports” in an effort to “tighten peninsular control over colonial trade.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, trade policies imposed by Bourbon reformers intended to control the problems that piracy and contraband had brought to the island. As Paquette argues, besides military reforms, trade policies served as an “attempt to augment state revenues and to sideline contraband traders who exploited Spain's impotence to enclose its colonial commerce and to defend its porous borders” (2008, 104).

Guerra y Sánchez (1962, 173) suggests that in particular the siege of the port city of Havana by British forces fostered the first manifestations of a “patriotismo habanero,” evidenced in the complaints by local citizens about the inefficiency of colonial authorities to defend the city. Although he does not elaborate on the implications of this patriotism, I contend that subsequent writings about the port city in the late eighteenth century offer us a window to understand how a physical space such as the port and its geographic relevance served to articulate a love for the patria that turns out to be geographic in nature. Creole intellectuals such as Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya expressed this patriotism in their desire to write the local history of the city by underlining what distinguished Havana from the rest of the world. They were both also aware of the historical value of the port and the port city that has been previously described. With an emphasis on the Enlightenment's ideas of reason, scientific and economic progress, utility, and order (Meléndez and Stolley 2015),<sup>13</sup> authors such as Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya decided to write the history of their own localities.

<sup>8</sup> Lane explains that the first piracy attacks to the Caribbean coasts dated to 1536 on the north coast of Panama by the Chagres River (1998, 21). According to Lane, French corsairs conducted most of the early attacks. For an excellent discussion on the history of piracy in the Americas, see Lane's *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas, 1500–1750* (1998).

<sup>9</sup> Spain also engaged in the fortification of the ports of Santo Domingo, Cartagena, and Portobello (Guerra y Sánchez 1962, 85).

<sup>10</sup> For a summary of Spain's imperial war struggles and international conflicts in the eighteenth century, including the War of Spanish Succession, War of Jenkin's Ear, and the Seven Years' War, see Restall and Lane (2011, chapter 13). For a more thorough discussion of the siege of Havana, see Portuondo del Prado (1965, 202–211).

<sup>11</sup> Portuondo del Prado (1965, 206) states that great quantities of silver, sugar, tobacco, cacao, and leather were taken by the British forces.

<sup>12</sup> For Paquette, the Bourbon reforms refers to the Spanish government efforts “to reform government between 1700 and 1808” (2008, 1). In the case of Havana for example, the Spanish Crown ordered the reconstruction of El Morro fort and the building of new forts such as La Cabaña and Atarés (Portuondo del Prado 1965, 214). To better organize the militias, the government ordered a census or “lista de vecinos” of the city and it subdivided the city in *barrios*, adding names and numbers to the streets (Portuondo del Prado 1965, 215).

<sup>13</sup> For a thorough examination on the impact and practice of Enlightenment ideas in colonial Spanish America and on recent scholarship on the Spanish American Enlightenment, see Mariselle Meléndez and Karen Stolley's (2015) introduction to the special

Here I will examine how space and place play a significant role in the manner in which the port city of Havana was presented to the rest of the world. As David Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (1999, 15) indicate, “local sites for the conduct of knowing may be seen as productive of certain meanings. They may also be intimately related to other but more distant sites through practices of circulation and processes of negotiation designed to warrant the credibility of knowledge, the credibility of certain claims to knowledge.” Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya claimed a particular knowledge and produced a specific image of the port city anchored within a patriotic discourse that they aimed to share with Spanish authorities and the rest of the world.

### **Patria in the Age of the Enlightenment**

The general definition of *patria* in the eighteenth century referred to “a Place, City, or Country in which someone is born” (El Lugar, Ciudad, ò Pais en que se ha nacido) (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, vol. 3, 165). Maurizio Viroli (1995) offers a panoramic discussion on how the notion of patria and patriotism evolved from ancient times to the twentieth century. In ancient times, patria was conceived as the country of origin, while patriotism was perceived as a “religious sentiment”; in the Middle Ages, patria was viewed as equivalent to “republic and common good” and required a type of patriotism based on “respect and compassion” (Viroli 1995, 18, 19). With the Renaissance, serving the patria was understood as a “highest moral obligation” that demonstrated the true love for the country (Viroli 1995, 32). This moral obligation was perceived as a type of sacrifice. Along with this political understanding of patriotism, a “natural patriotism” emerged, which Viroli refers to as “an attachment to the native soil understood as a place of memory” (1995, 46). However, in the eighteenth century, patriotism was viewed as a “duty and a virtue” that guided citizens “to live in a well-ordered community” (1995, 69–70).

In the context of Spanish America and Spain, David A. Brading (1991, 2) used the phrase “Creole patriotism” to refer to the “nostalgia” that “the descendants of the conquerors and early settlers” were expressing for “both the heroic epoch of the conquest and the exotic grandeur of the native empires.” Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (2001, 206) adds to Brading’s discussion and argues that the work of many eighteenth-century Spanish American historians “crafted an epistemology that can be called ‘patriotic.’” This “patriotic epistemology,” Cañizares-Esguerra explains, “created and validated knowledge in the colonies along the lines that mimicked and reinforced wider public principles of social-racial estates and corporate privileges” (2001, 206).<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Gabriel Entin (2013, 21) proposes that patriotism in the eighteenth century was understood “as the individual sacrifice on behalf of the common interest of the homeland.” This common interest relied on the Enlightenment notions of utility and progress and on the interest to show the Spanish Crown the many economic advantages that these urban places could bring to Spain. According to Entin, for Creole intellectuals America represented a “common homeland” (*patria común*).<sup>15</sup> However, I believe the notion proposed by Entin limits the different notions of patria that circulated in eighteenth-century Spanish America.<sup>16</sup> In the case of Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya, the patria did relate to a certain extent to the native country, but I would argue that it had to do more with an urban notion of patria that was centered on highlighting geographic attributes. For both authors, patria was Havana, and what made Havana special was its status as a port city and the places and spaces that defined it. This local sense of patria was more about the port city as a center of knowledge and cultural prestige. The love for the patria consisted in praising those particularities in writing.

### **Arrate and His View of the Port City of La Havana**

The Havana-born Creole writer José Martín Félix de Arrate (1701–1765) was a councilman and a judge of the city of Havana. He completed his work *Llave del Nuevo Mundo* in 1761, although it was published for the first time in 1830. Ruth Hill (1996, 335) categorizes the work as a “geographical report” that aimed to

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issue of *Colonial Latin American Review*, “The Enlightenment in Colonial Spanish America.” There, they define the Enlightenment “as a series of cultural processes in which ideas about progress, utility, reason, and order were explored from different angles (scientific, political, religious, economic, and so on)” (2015, 9).

<sup>14</sup> Neither Brading’s nor Cañizares-Esguerra’s studies focus on the geographic approach to the practice of the Enlightenment in colonial Spanish America. Brading does briefly mention Arrate’s work to emphasize Arrate’s interest in highlighting the “Creole aptitudes” and their distinguished role in religious and administrative positions such as “bishops and canons, as judges and corregidores, and as military men”; he refers to Arrate’s work as a “historical survey” (1991, 312).

<sup>15</sup> Entin (2013) focuses his study on the writings of the Peruvian intellectuals José Baquijano y Carillo and Juan Pablo Viscardo.

<sup>16</sup> George Yúdice (2001, 221), with regard to nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin America, refers to “patria grande” as the one based on a notion of continental culture while “patria chica” is associated with a national culture. Yúdice’s continental notion of *patria* coincides with Entin’s notion of “patria común.”

inform the reader about “the grandeur” of the port city of Havana by reporting and praising.<sup>17</sup> For Karen Stolley (2013, 158), Arrate’s work can be read as a discourse on domesticity, a written account of merits and deeds (“relación de méritos”) and an “urban history” in which the author served as a “broker on behalf of his native city and to secure its credit not only documenting Havana’s geographically strategic location but also by celebrating the residents of Havana as human capital and describing the various secular and ecclesiastical institutions that distinguish the city.”<sup>18</sup> Hill’s discussion of the scientific nature of the work within the genre of geographic report and Stolley’s work on the discourse of domesticity represent two valuable approaches to Arrate’s work. However, what interests me is to look at space along with place as methodological tools to understand the nature of the patriotic discourse that Arrate articulates in his historiographical work. My aim is to inquire into the significance that the port as a geographic and architectural symbol played in the discursive articulation of the love for the country.

In his dedication to the Council of Havana, Arrate states that his account aims to offer a brief description of “this very noble city,” that thanks to its progress, has become one of the most “famous and celebrated cities” in the New World (3). Arrate adds: “The only objective that my work pursues is that my homeland does not lack the generous praise that other cities with less attributes and fame enjoy” (El único objeto que se le ha propuesto ... ha sido solamente aquella generosa emulación de que no le falte a mi patria lo que gozan otras ciudades de menor bulto y nombre) (3). In his prologue, he reiterates that what moved him to write his work was his love for the city and the need for others to understand what had made Havana a noble place. To achieve his goal, he bases his account on the histories written so far by authors who have briefly described the port city, including Gil González, Pedro Cubero, Inca Garcilaso, Francisco Dávila Orejón, and the Marquis of Altamira, among others. For Arrate, all of these authors and others have immortalized in their works the name and virtues of his homeland (8).

Arrate begins by acknowledging that part of the title he has chosen for his work was taken from one of the royal decrees cited by Francisco Dávila Orejón in *Excelencias del Arte Militar y varones ilustres* (1683). In these decrees, Spanish authorities referred to Havana as “the Key of the New World and the Antemural of the West Indies” (Llave del Nuevo Mundo y Antemural de las Indias Occidentales).<sup>19</sup> The title is not fortuitous, especially if we take into consideration the literal and figurative meaning of the words *llave* and *antemural*. In the eighteenth century, *llave* referred to an instrument that opens and closes. It was also considered the principal part of firearms, that which allows them to shoot; its figurative meaning alluded to what is the beginning, or what facilitates the knowledge of things (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 421, 422). Havana was conceived as a place that opens the doors to mercantile trade, which subsequently facilitated its success. Its geographical location “commanded the exit from the Caribbean Sea as well as the approaches to the Gulf of Mexico, and hence the route to Veracruz, the principal port city of Spain’s most important colony” (Kuethe 1991, 14). In this sense, it opened and facilitated the opportunity for safe trade between Spain and Mexico. Ironically, although not mentioned explicitly by Arrate, it created opportunities for pirates and corsairs to disrupt such trade. It is here when the second metaphor comes into play: Havana is considered the “antemural” of Spanish America. In Spanish at the time, *antemural* referred to a building, a fort, a rock, a hill, or any other obstacle that serves a source of defense (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 306). The port city is endowed with enormous military value. This value resided, as Kuethe (1991, 18) indicates, in that it was “strategically situated on the outer rim of the empire” guarding “the approach to Mexico. Its harbor sheltered the treasure ships that rendezvoused in its waters. The bay bottlenecked at its mouth, easing the task of fortification.” For Arrate, the port is vital for the Crown’s success against foreign threats posed to its colonies. Havana, as a key to the accomplishment of maritime trade and as a military base, came to represent a priceless place for the Spanish authorities. The port city was endowed with geographic value, making it a noble and “notorious city” (ciudad ilustre) (Arrate 77).

Nevertheless, Arrate views the contraband that takes place in the port as a detriment to Spain’s commercial trade, especially the slave trade practiced by foreign countries. In this regard, he notes that the infinite riches

<sup>17</sup> According to Hill (1996, 338), Arrate’s work was “representative of a geographical report that directs the store of its praise to civil matters rather than God, its digressions to the nature of things rather than divine nature, its reforms to industrialization rather than evangelization.” To this extent she considers *La Habana descripta* an example of “the modernization or scientization of the geographical report” (330).

<sup>18</sup> Stolley (2013, 161) argues that Arrate valued human resources over natural resources. According to her, for Arrate, the *vecinos* (neighbors) of Havana were “its most valuable domestic product.”

<sup>19</sup> De la Fuente (2008, 12) states that in an official document entitled “Traslado de provision de la Audiencia de Santo Domingo,” dated July 1553, authorities already referred to Havana as “the key to all trading” in the New World. However, a document drafted by Alonso Pérez Martel, a member of the town council of San Juan de Puerto Rico in 1550, referred to San Juan already as “the first door and key of all the islands” (la primera puerta y llave de todas estas islas) ([1550] 1983, 156).

that foreigners have taken legally and illegally from the island through commerce and slavery trade have served as a detriment to Spain's commercial trade (40). Arrate acknowledges the risks that the port, as a space, carries inherently. There is always the potential for disorder and danger. The illegal trade, particularly by foreigners, is seen as a disease that affects the healthy body of the port city.<sup>20</sup> He also blames the black slaves as another sector of the population that threaten the stability of Havana and "the virtues of the port" (*las excelencias de su puerto*) especially in their attempts to escape their masters and the social disturbances that such attempts carry (41).<sup>21</sup> Racial differences are perceived as signs of disorder in Arrate's Creole patriotic view of Havana. However, he chooses not to discuss the disorderly day-to-day realities of the port and instead prefers to underline what makes Havana geographically illustrious and a symbol of Enlightenment values.

At this point, Arrate considers it more relevant to explain why the port of Havana has come to be known as "Key of the New World and the throat of all the West Indies" (*Llave del Nuevo Mundo y la garganta de todas las Indias Occidentales*) (41). The physical nature of the port, emphasized by the metaphoric connotation between port and throat, underscores the port as the passage from the mouth (Havana) to the stomach or lungs (the rest of the West Indies). Without the throat, swallowing (commercial trade) is not possible. In naval terms, the throat refers to a minor opening in the gunboat found in fortresses for the use of artillery (*Diccionario de la lengua española* 1992, 722). This connotation highlights the military importance of the port as a key for imperial defense. According to Stolley, this description also presents "a combination of a spectacular geographic configuration and human accomplishment" (2013, 162).<sup>22</sup> The port of Havana has become a relevant place which has brought great commercial and military advantages to Spain. Arrate was quite aware of the importance of reminding the colonial authorities of the crucial role that Havana was able to play in their policies of imperial governance and reform.<sup>23</sup>

Geographically speaking, the port city is considered superior to other cities in Spanish America. Arrate indicates, "[A La Habana] no le asaltan los temblores que a Lima, las inundaciones que a México y Jamaica, los volcanes que a Quito y Guatemala, ni las víboras, ni otros ponzoñosos que al Nuevo Reino; por ello es que no hay región tan benévola, ni puede haberla tan feliz que no tenga que tolerar el ánimo de sus oriundos" (75). The port city of Havana is conceived as a perfect geographic place endowed with an enviable location for any enterprise that the Crown may decide to conduct in its Spanish American territories. Arrate argues that the port's location has been praised by "local and foreign writers with many epithets and sublime eulogies" (42). The port's geographic location in the north coast, its proximity to Florida and the Bahamas channel, its narrow pass, and the Morro fort made the port city famous and contributed to its international reputation.

The geographical advantages of the port, according to Arrate, are undoubtedly the main reasons why it became one of the most valuable and strategic places out of all the Spanish possessions. It made the exchange between two worlds and two oceans feasible. It served as a middle point of trade and defense, and economically, as De la Fuente (2008, 12) explains, as a "transit point" of commercial exchange. The port endowed the city with a notorious political position and unparalleled geographical importance. This patriotic view of space and place, or patriotic geography, underscores the port as epitome of local and global prestige. The combination of favorable winds, deep waters, plenty of space for embarkation, easy access to the beautiful town, comfortable space for shipyards, and a perfect way station for all Spanish fleets, made the port of Havana an ideal place (Arrate, 42–43). The "admirable location" of this celebrated port makes it unique and of great "benefit and utility" to the Crown (45). The port of Havana becomes a place and a site of production from which knowledge and economic potential emanate. The Enlightenment's ideas about "reason, progress, and utility" are encapsulated in the port as a space and place (Marchena 2003, 153). Arrate's epistemological exercise helps us to consider, as Withers (2007, 234) suggests, "the presence of geography in the Enlightenment, to document the geographical practices by which the world then was revealed as an object of geography, and to outline the metaphorical and rhetorical power of thinking geographically." The port of Havana as an object of geography serves Arrate to emphasize the denotative and connotative

<sup>20</sup> The foreigners to whom he is referring to are Genovese, Portuguese, French, and British.

<sup>21</sup> Arrate does not explain or elaborate on the particular types of escapes and disturbances with which the slaves were involved.

<sup>22</sup> Stolley's discussion centers primarily on Félix de Arrate's "entrepreneurial project" in which "human resources ultimately trump natural resources" (2013, 159). Havana's local residents came to represent a crucial part of "the maintenance not only of the city itself but also to a larger imperial project" becoming themselves "valuable domestic product[s]" (2013, 161).

<sup>23</sup> It is important to keep in mind, as Paquette (2008, 93) indicates, that between 1759 and 1808 in particular, these reforms "sought to identify, devise, and implement measures to reduce smuggling, spur peninsular growth, revive the royal navy, and to fortify colonial ports." Paquette discusses this phenomenon within the context of Spain's discourses of "national regeneration and rededication" (93).

power endowed in the port as a place. It also fosters a profound love in those born in the city that, in the case of intellectuals such as Arrate, is better expressed by the act of writing about it. As antemural, key (llave), and throat (garganta), the port of Havana is discursively elevated to a patriotic stronghold with global implications that Spain could not ignore.

### **Patriotic Views and Cultural Prestige: Ignacio José de Urrutia y Montoya**

In 1791, the jurist Ignacio José de Urrutia y Montoya completed his *Teatro histórico, jurídico y político militar de la Isla Fernandina de Cuba y principalmente de su capital La Habana*, which for him represented a “proof of his love and obligation to the State and the Homeland” (una prueba de mi amor y obligación al Estado y la Patria) (1877, 19).<sup>24</sup> What the Havana-born writer perceives as paramount is the need to understand the past in order to better manage the present and to subsequently plan for the future. As he indicates: “The perfect news about the past allow the creation of laws to govern the present, and to help with the development of norms to think prudently about the future” (1877, 21). The methodical plan he establishes for his work follows a tripartite chronological structure based on past, present, and future: “learning about the past, making judgment about the present, and pondering about the future” (aprendiendo lo pretérito, haciendo juicio de lo presente y discuriendo sobre lo futuro) (1877, 33).<sup>25</sup>

Urrutia is interested in offering a local-historical perspective of the island, one which, according to him, is currently missing. To write about his dear homeland (“amada patria”) constitutes part of a public cause (“causa pública”) (1877, 11–12). He employs the term “causa pública” to imply that his work would act as a useful tool to future generations in their pursuit of better acquainting themselves with their homeland. The fact that particular histories of the island are missing prompts him to write his *Teatro* (1877, 18). Urrutia’s project coincides with eighteenth-century historiographical trends that, as Stolley (1996, 349) describes, shift to “local histories which chronicle the discovery, exploration, and settlement of a region or even a specific city.” Urrutia indeed produces an urban history as he devotes most of his chapters to the history of Havana, starting with the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the island and extending to 1779. The port city becomes the main protagonist of the *Teatro* and it is described as one in which its architecture, nature, geography, and the interactions between locals and foreigners mark the character of this privileged space.

In *Teatro histórico*, Urrutia is trying to fill a lacuna with regard to the history of the island. He complains that “no one knows about the chronological history of the Island because it does not exist” (nadie sabe la historia cronológica de la Isla porque no la hay) (1877, 20). He cites the posthumous works of Don Pedro Morell de Santa Cruz’s ecclesiastical history *Historia de la Isla y Catedral de Cuba* (ca. 1760) and José Félix de Arrate’s *Llave del Nuevo Mundo* as two defective works pertaining to the history of the island. Urrutia mentions that Arrate’s history “suffers of errors due to its superficiality and limitations as it is composed of forty chapters and curious matters with no type of chronological order” (padece equivocaciones por superficial y limitada a poco más de cuarenta capítulos, y de materias curiosas sin orden) (1877, 20). For Urrutia, Havana deserves a written history that can provide a better account of the past (“perfecta noticia del pasado”) while proposing rules that could prudently help to manage the future (“reglas para preocupar prudentemente lo venidero”) (1877, 21). In order to achieve this, Urrutia integrates a reasonable amount of archival material including letters, royal decrees, legal documents, and *relaciones* located in the archives of Havana with the intention of providing proof of his truthful interpretation of the history of the island. The title he chooses, *Teatro histórico, jurídico y político militar*, stresses the spatial nature of his work, as the word *teatro* at the time was used to refer to the place where people gathered to witness a function or a spectacle, or metaphorically speaking, the place in which something is exposed so it can be praised or universally censored (*Diccionario de autoridades* 1990, 266). His book constitutes a discursive platform from which the spatial nature of the island and its urban center (Havana) can be read.

<sup>24</sup> There is not much biographical information written about Urrutia or his work. Born in 1735 in La Habana, he studied canon law in Mexico and performed several administrative positions in Havana. He worked as Abogado de los Reales Consejos y Audiencias de México y Santo Domingo, Colegial de Elección del Real Pontificio Tridentino Seminario Mexicano, Comisario de la Real y Pontificia Universidad de San Jerónimo de La Habana, Auditor interino de Marina, Juez de Bienes de Difuntos and cofounder of the first Cuban newspaper, *El Pensador* (1764). Urrutia published one volume of the first part of *Teatro* in 1791; however, the second volume remained unpublished, along with his *Compendio de memorias para escribir la historia de la isla Fernandina de Cuba, dedicada a don Carlos IV*. The first volume narrates the history of the island until 1555, and the second volume continues to 1779. See “Ignacio José de Urrutia y Montoya,” Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí, Biblioteca digital, <http://bdigital.bnjm.cu/index.php?secc=autores&author=96>. All quotes from *Teatro* follow the original orthography used in the 1791 edition.

<sup>25</sup> For Urrutia, history is the best discipline to study the past, jurisprudence would most appropriate to understand the present, and political discourse functions as the best critical tool to discern the future (34).

Urrutia argues that the compilation and inclusion of archival material in his book is part of a patriotic effort to rescue from oblivion documents that Spanish governors and administrators were incapable of organizing. Documentation would also serve to avoid any doubt on behalf of the reader of his intellectual capacity to produce a complete historical account (1877, 32). He knows the time and effort he devoted to composing his work is something his homeland will forever appreciate: "And this is what my beloved homeland will owe me" (*y esto es lo que me debera mi amada patria*) (1877, 32). His *Teatro* is then part of a patriotic endeavor in which he envisions his writing similar to the one of a skillful architect who first gathers the material in order to tackle his work (1877, 34). His book functions symbolically as a building, which houses the precious history of his homeland. But what is in the history of the island, and particularly Havana, that makes it imperative to write about it? How are the island of Fernandina, and its capital, Havana, represented in patriotic terms? There is no doubt that this history has to do primarily with the importance of the port city as representative of what makes the island unique. It is the urban center that defines his country's preeminence.

Some of the geographical elements that make Cuba a unique place are its ports and bays. According to Urrutia, "all the coasts [of the island] enjoy many beautiful ports and bays which are considered among the best of the world, even our Herrera states that they are naturally more enclosed and safer than it they would have been built by hand" (*Goza en las repetidas costas de muchos y hermosos puertos y bahías, entre los cuales corren algunos por los mejores del mundo hasta decir nuestro Herrera que son más cerrados y seguros que si los hubiesen hecho a mano*) (1877, 116).<sup>26</sup> For Urrutia, the island's location and its coasts contributed to its geographical uniqueness. From the abundance of fish, the presence of numerous and famous rivers, the best salt mines, to its navigable waters, the island was a superior place as "the creator endowed it with plenty of abundance and superior quality" (1877, 119). Besides the island's wonderful coastal location, Urrutia adds the island's perpetual foliage to its list of attributes, and numerous medicinal and fruit trees. In sum, the island possesses all the natural resources needed to succeed economically. Although Urrutia's objective is to offer a more complete history of the island in general, it is the port city to which he devotes greater attention.

His description of Havana begins with the origins of its foundation. According to Urrutia, Havana is the combination of two settlements: Carenas to the north and San Cristóbal to the south, which became known as San Cristóbal de la Habana after 1519. What made Havana an ideal and strategic location, its port, also entailed a vulnerability to pirate attacks.<sup>27</sup> It began, according to Urrutia, in 1537, when the French reduced Havana to ashes, and continued with the British attacks throughout the eighteenth century, particularly the siege of the port city in 1762. Urrutia mentions that the early attacks were possible because the port was missing a fortress making it impossible to resist the fearful event (1877, 314). Piracy earned Havana the attention of colonial authorities and it reinforced the importance of the port city's strategic location. The early attacks prompted the construction of the first fortress known as the Real Fuerza located at the end of the Puerto de la Villa channel which could be seen now clearly from the port entrance allowing the vessels to enter the channel with more protection (1877, 333). Piracy, along with the need to secure Spain's maritime routes around the island, indirectly allowed for Havana to transform from a town ("villa") into a city. This new way of spatial conceptualization was the result, as Renzo Dubbini (2002, 28) comments in another context, of "converging concerns of fortification technology and military topography."<sup>28</sup> Dubbini adds, "constructing an architecture of warfare complemented a systematic plan for controlling a territory and for rendering it recognizable, particularly in its crucial strategic points, natural limits, and frontiers" (2002, 30).

The prominence of the port as part of a commercial route and military post transformed Havana into a very fluid space that colonial local authorities believed needed to be regulated. Urrutia adds that "necessity" (*necesidad*) along with the "useful" (*útil*) location of the Port demanded the port be policed and surveilled (1877, 373). Urrutia adds that, commerce itself prompted greediness among Indians and blacks which was accompanied also by excess drinking to the point that colonial authorities prohibited to sell wine to them, especially wine from Castilla (1877, 373). For Urrutia, it is crucial to emphasize the attention that this useful

<sup>26</sup> Urrutia refers to Antonio Herrera y Tordesillas and his *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del mar Océano que llaman Indias Occidentales* (1601–1615), known as *Décadas*. Other sources cited by Urrutia are Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1568–1632); Gil González Dávila, *Teatro eclesiástico de la primitiva iglesia de las Indias Occidentales* (1649); Gregorio García, *Origen de los indios de el Nuevo Mundo e Indias Occidentales* (1607); Gabriel de Cárdenas Cano, *Ensayo cronológico de la historia general de la Florida* (1521); and Inca Garcilaso, *Historia de la Florida* (1605), among others.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion on Cuba's process of settlement with regard to San Cristóbal and Havana, see De la Fuente (2008, 4–5).

<sup>28</sup> Dubbini refers to the case of early modern Europe.



port received from royal authorities since its inception, as this adds to its economic and political significance. He also emphasizes the constant effort by colonial and local authorities to keep the port regulated. As in the case of Arrate, for Urrutia it is the human factor, specifically those racially different from white Creoles, who constitute a constant threat to the port as an orderly social space.<sup>29</sup> However, it is again the geographic and physical importance of the port that becomes his major point of discursive attention.

With the attack on Havana by British forces in 1762, the questions of military fortification and social order became major points of discussion. Through the description of this attack, Urrutia shows a very nostalgic view of his homeland. He indicates that in the eighteenth century, pirates and corsairs flooded the ocean surrounding the island. In his recollection of one of the naval attacks that occurred in 1748, he comments “that His Majesty prohibited the Spanish vessels to go out in the ocean to defend the gulf because of the many pirates and corsairs that flooded the area” (Por esta causa previno S. M. que saliese la escuadra a limpiar los mares del Seno y sus cruceros de tanto corsario y manual que los inundaban) (2005, 160).<sup>30</sup> Urrutia recalls the arrival of British forces on June 6, 1762, to the coasts of Havana as a dreadful day (“fatal día”) and unfortunate period (“infeliz época”) (2005, 166–167). The port areas turned into a military battleground surrounded by enemies. Urrutia offers the image of a city occupied by military artifacts that little by little transforms itself into a type of inferno. He begins his summary of the siege with the following description:

La plaza montó en sus fortalezas y murallas muchos cañones de bronce, y más de 200 de hierro de 42 libras, con 2 morteros de varios calibres. Tenía como cinco mil fusiles, batería y pólvora; tres batallones de infantería de los regimientos Fijo, España y Aragón, no completos; un regimiento de dragones de don Carlos Caro; piquetes de artillería y municiones; las milicias del país de a pie y caballería, a que unió las demás del campo y lugares internos, que se computaron comúnmente más de cinco mil hombres. (2005, 167)

Ships, ammunition, battalions, regiments, artilleries, and soldiers served as walls, ready to defend the port city and its inhabitants against a very visible and powerful enemy. Urrutia’s description of the enemy implies the daunting task awaiting the Spanish and local forces. He adds that the British navy (“armada enemiga”) was composed of more than twenty-two naval ships and twenty thousand men. Military weapons, ships, and a racially diverse militia flooded the ocean surrounding Havana. Immediately, the enemy took control of the eastern side of the port city (Guanabacoa) where soldiers with swords and machetes fled in desperation and where many of them died: “bewildered by the thundering they were not expecting; some of them fled not because of fear but because of the miseries they witnessed; some wounded and others dead” (“aturdidos del trueno, que no esperaban, huyeron, no de temor, sino de miseria, apartándose algunos heridos y quedando tal cual muerto”) (2005, 168). The inhabitants fled out of fear and left their houses to the invaders, who made a post out of this side of Havana. Women, children, and elderly people ran in all directions, getting stuck in paths flooded by water and mud. The port city of Havana had now been transformed into a chaotic social space in which terror instead of order prevailed. Urrutia emotionally recalls how loud noises compounded this frenzied scene when more than two thousand bombs and bullets hit the port city.

After forty-eight days, El Morro fort lost its “face” and its symbolic identity as bombs destroyed the 1589 inscription added to its façade when it was originally built. After this, Havana was finally occupied by British forces, an event that was viewed by Urrutia as a memorable loss:

El 12 de agosto de 1762 se entregó la plaza, armas, etc.; entrando en ella la tropa que estaba fuera y partiendo los corazones el ver enarboladas por todas partes las banderas británicas.... Así quedó convertida en humo toda la gloria de la Isla en la restauración de La Habana, aunque siempre gloriosa la intención de sus amados hijos. (2005, 173, 178)

<sup>29</sup> As Paquette (2008, 10) states, through the Bourbon reforms, Spanish authorities aimed “to justify a broader sphere of state control over society and the economy.” In the case of the Americas, “enlightened administrators,” in an effort to manage and impose social control, aimed their reforms to avoid contraband, to prevent the emergence of colonial revolts, to better control slave trade, to expel foreigners from the colonies, to improve military security, to promote the exclusion of Creoles to colonial administrative posts, and to control any “unsubdued indigenous populations” in the periphery (Paquette 2008, 93–110).

<sup>30</sup> Urrutia recounts how in 1748 Admiral Charles Knowles, an officer of the Royal Navy, surrounded Havana with six warships in what is known as Battle of Havana, capturing one Spanish ship. For a summary of this battle see Urrutia, vol. 2, 161.

Urrutia underlines in these comments his view of the port city as symbol of the island's glory. Havana's fort and plaza physically taken by foreigners are visual reminders of the temporary loss of that glory. An emotional sense of loss and broken hearts ("partiendo los corazones") also accompanies his view of the port city as a place. For Urrutia and in this particular point in time, the port city of Havana has become a place of sorrowful memories. This "rhetoric of sentiment," as Yi-Fu Tuan (2014, 156) calls it in another context, is based on Urrutia's attachment to the port city as his beloved patria and as a place endowed with profound memories that range from glory to loss.

Urrutia's description of this fatal historical period highlights his deep love for his patria and the importance of remembering the sacrifices of local inhabitants and leaders to defend it. Urrutia predominantly blames the Spanish military leaders selected by the colonial administration to defend the port city, as they did not possess adequate knowledge to do so. As a witness of this event, Urrutia knows firsthand the strategic errors that these leaders committed throughout the assault. Unfortunately, Urrutia's *Teatro* stops at this historical moment in 1779 but concludes: "This is just an idea of what the island of Fernandina of Cuba has been, and what needs at least to be taught about its history. The news about the present will be included in the second volume of this work. But for now, you have this" (Esto es una idea de lo que ha sido la isla Fernandina de Cuba, cuya instrucción menor toca a su historia y un asomo de lo que es. Las noticias de su actual estado tocan a la segunda parte de esta obra... Recibe por ahora esta) (2005, 45). This other part of the work was never written, so what we have is a patriotic view of his homeland from the arrival of the Europeans to 1779, mainly focused on the port city of Havana as the place which made the island an illustrious one. In sum, for Urrutia, the port city became the principal protagonist of his island's history.

### Concluding Remarks

Withers (2007, 16) suggests that when "thinking about the Enlightenment," we should pay attention "to questions of space—as real territory, as 'imagined' space, as social space, and as epistemological space—and to the difference space makes." The works of José Martín Félix de Arrate and Ignacio José de Urrutia y Montoya expand our notions of how Enlightenment ideas about space and geography in general were adapted to local historical circumstances in colonial Spanish America. In their efforts to present their country as an illustrious one, these authors chose to focus on what best embodied its international prominence: Havana. As I previously mentioned, if Creole authors such as Juan de Velasco, Francisco Javier Clavigero, and Juan Ignacio Molina based their patriotic views of their respective lands on the natural resources that made their countries special, Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya based their own on a different type of spatiality. Both authors view the city of Havana, and especially its port, as a territory whose uniqueness derives from its importance as a strategic location for the Crown and from the fact that the Crown had no choice but to recognize it as such. The port city of Havana is presented as an exceptional geographical space, while the port itself endows Havana with military and commercial prominence. The manner in which this geography contributed to the well-being of the Crown proves the crucial role the port city played in security, and how proud Creole local citizens felt about this important fact. According to Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya, physical location made the port city of Havana, along with the rest of the island, the center of cultural, political, and economic transactions, so more future investments on the island were justified.

Both authors center the value of the port city on its strategic location and its potential for economic development. Urrutia y Montoya, despite considering Arrate's work defective, seems to agree with Arrate's portrayal of the port and the port city as the island's most valuable assets. However, as Urrutia was writing thirty years after Arrate and after the siege of Havana by British forces, his patriotic sentiment was even deeper. Basing his account on what he indicates are archival documents still forgotten, he reinforces the idea of recognition that the port city of Havana still deserves but gives greater attention to its military values. More important, he seems to suggest that Spain should not allow a tragic event such as the siege of Havana to happen again.

Despite the thirty years that separate the writings of the authors, for both Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya the port city of Havana represents a place endowed with admiration and love. This emotional attachment to place is what guides their views of the city and the port as material spaces. The feelings expressed towards the port city of Havana underscore it as "the locus of memories" and the site of cultural prestige (Tuan 1990, 93). This "affective bond between people and place" fueled their view of the port city (Tuan 1990, 4).<sup>31</sup> The authors' affective ties to their land are linked to a symbolic view of the port city as the center of all

<sup>31</sup> Tuan (1990, 4) refers to this affective bond as "topophilia." Tuan does not study the case of colonial Spanish America. I would like to thank Santa Arias for suggesting Tuan's work.

commercial, military, and cultural intersections in the New World. Moreover, the port and its surroundings make Havana a space and place of epistemic value. The circulation of knowledge about the distinctive spatial nature of this place was the underlying agenda that guided that love. This effort falls within the lines of the cultural endeavors of other Creole intellectuals, such as those who contributed to newspapers such as *Mercurio peruano* (1790–1795), *Papel periódico de Santa Fe de Bogotá* (1791–1797), *Primicias de la cultura de Quito* (1791–1792), *Papel periódico de la Havana* (1790–1805), and *Gazeta de México* (1784–1821), who discursively engaged in presenting their respective cities as special and distinctive places to which they devoted their patriotic love and by emphasizing their enlightened institutions and citizens and the natural resources of their countries.<sup>32</sup> However, in the case of Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya, it was the geography of the port that endowed the port city an illustrious status.

Brading (1991, 371) argues that the discursive goal for some Creole patriots was to endow their cities “with both a distinguished past and a glorious present.” For both Arrate and Urrutia y Montoya, their city is definitively endowed with a distinguished past and a glorious present which future generations are obligated to remember. But contrary to the cases examined by Brading (1991, 2), where the past and the present are envisioned through notions of the “heroic epoch of the conquest and the exotic grandeur of the native empires,” these Cuban authors center the notion of their port city’s greatness on its geographic attributes and spatial nature. Their writings constitute intellectual sacrifices guided by their love for their land and the special place that their urban capital occupied. Their patriotism was indeed geographic in nature. For both authors, Cuba and in particular its main port city, Havana, represented in a symbolic sense a “llave del Nuevo Mundo,” “antemural de las Indias Occidentales,” and a “teatro histórico, político y jurídico,” which made it geographically unique and deserving of patriotic love.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my research assistants at the University of Illinois, Megan Gargiulo and Amanda Rector, for their comments and suggestions on this essay.

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**How to cite this article:** Meléndez, Mariselle. 2018. Geography and the Enlightenment: Patriotic Views of the Port City of Havana, 1761–1791. *Latin American Research Review* 53(1), pp. 139–151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.257>

**Submitted:** 30 April 2015

**Accepted:** 19 September 2016

**Published:** 28 March 2018

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