

## FIVE



### Sugar, Slavery, and Disinheritance

The heritage process to which the foundational ceiba tree site in Havana belonged employed neoclassical architecture, history painting, and ideal sculpture to reify both the imperial status quo and a sense of Cuban place. Yet these forms operated within colonial society and could function in the establishment of normative social relations. The social ideologies constructed by the imagery and architectural space of El Templete in 1828 merit consideration for how heritage, constructed by the fine arts, became a cultural tool of hegemonic groups. The social context of “high” cultural production during and after the so-called Enlightenment and the role of the arts in maintaining a revised status quo have been dealt with by a number of scholars.<sup>1</sup> In the context of early-nineteenth-century heritage production in Havana, the neoclassical architecture, history painting, and ideal sculpture became integral to the production of not only cultural but also social knowledge. The heritage of the ceiba tree thus belonged to a project of rigorous social differentiation driven by the increasingly bitter politics of race as a result of the sugar industry, slavery, and demographic shifts.

El Templete became not only a struggle for the possession of signs, such as Indians, conquistadors, and Greco-Roman revival temples, but also a means of supercoding them through academic classicism. The perceived Africanization of the island, which was of such concern to royal officials and

social elites, led to an intensifying need among this elite to rationally delineate race, lineage, and *calidad* in order to maintain the social hierarchy and the hegemony of masters over slaves. Architecture and visual representation had mediated colonial social relations, reasserted hierarchies, and validated reality for centuries at this point, as was Spanish colonial practice.<sup>2</sup> Yet the epistemological and subjective transformations compelled by reform and modernity required new modes of rational expression, resulting in a paradigmatic place for academic classicism as a tool of social control wielded by the “custodians of the classical.”

El Templete’s ability to make myriad international forms locally relevant testifies to processes by which Atlantic societies reshaped late colonial classicism for local purposes. The tension between the particular and the universal suggests a transcultural product in which local things were situated within a validating language, just as classicism was made locally relevant. By the 1827 census, reprinted in Alexander von Humboldt’s *The Island of Cuba: A Political Essay*, the population consisted of a total of 311,051 whites, 106,494 free people of color, and 286,942 slaves, for a total of 704,487 individuals.<sup>3</sup> Although the accuracy of these numbers is not entirely certain, as not all individuals were counted, they do suggest that Africans and their descendants composed almost 56 percent of the island’s population by this time. Within the colonial city, blacks occupied many of the same social spaces as whites, including plazas, churches, private houses, and promenades. Increasingly relegated to the *barrios extramuros*, people of African descent inhabited such areas as Jesús María, La Salud, and S. Lazaro, marked on a plan of Havana from 1829 (fig. 5.1). These extramural neighborhoods were populated by a large percentage of *libertos*, slaves, and African *cabildos de naciones*, which were banished from the *intramuros* in the 1790s. Black communities could also be found in great concentration in the town of Regla on a peninsula across the harbor from Havana, where they worked as shipwrights, mariners, and dockworkers. The growing wealth from the sugar industry, the rising black population, the issue over fine arts as the cultural property of whites—these all generated conditions that called for a reassessment of the ceiba tree memorials’ purpose and signification. The rise of the sugar industry, the Africanization panic of the early nineteenth century, and the significance of ceiba trees to people of African descent in Cuba suggest the need to look for an expanded dissonance in El Templete.



5.1 Anonymous, plan of Havana and its neighborhoods outside the walls, 1829. Courtesy of the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

As the scholars of heritage Brian Graham, G. J. Ashworth, and J. E. Tunbridge intone, the practice of disinheritance emerges from “the zero-sum characteristics of heritage, all of which belongs to someone and logically, therefore, not to someone else. The creation of any heritage actively or potentially disinherits or excludes those who do not subscribe to, or are embraced within, the terms of meaning defining that heritage.”<sup>4</sup> As addressed in previous chapters, the “terms of meaning” for the ceiba tree site after 1754 included approved and elite historical narratives rendered as texts, objects, and images through colonial newspapers, histories, the fine arts, architecture, and spatial arrangements appropriating academic ideas.

Neoclassical architecture, history painting, and ideal sculpture could serve to elevate Havana to “the rank of the towns of Europe,” but how could they also serve to construct the social ranks within the colonial city?

El Temple as part of a process of disinheriting was certainly complex, for entangled in this heritage expression were various efforts to simultaneously include and exclude. The transcultural nature of Cuban forms made up of numerous intertwined Spanish, Amerindian, African, and Creole threads suggests that the ceiba tree monuments, as the products of the entire society over time, built upon collective historical experiences that conditioned multiple receptions of forms. Thus the disinheritance of the African required a substantial reworking of African cultural memory in Cuba. Perhaps this dynamic is where the cultural authority of classicism became most important, as part of a symbolic agenda intended to reorder and conceptually manage Cuban visual culture in the service of elite interests.

We are not entirely sure how often El Temple’s iron gates were opened for public viewing following its inauguration, nor what members of society were allowed inside. The North American traveler Samuel Hazard wrote in 1871 that “only once a year is it [El Temple] open to the public, and that is on the 16th of November, the feast of San Cristobal.”<sup>5</sup> This account identifies the feast day of the city’s patron saint Aggayú as the only day of the year for public access, the date corresponding to today’s ritual celebration. However, Hazard’s account reveals little about the use of the monument in general throughout the nineteenth century. We can be relatively certain, nevertheless, that the city’s elite, including members of the Economic Society and Creole intelligentsia, the captain general, the bishop and elite clergy, and important members of the Cuban plantocracy could have entered El Temple to view the paintings following the completion of the work.<sup>6</sup> Even if members of the general public were never allowed into the work at all, they saw the Greco-Roman revival structure, the ceiba tree(s) replanted shortly after 1828, and such details as the bronze pineapple sculptures and bust of Columbus. Descriptions of at least two of the paintings were published in the *Diario de La Habana* for elite subscribers,<sup>7</sup> and word of mouth could have conveyed impressions of the works to members of middle and lower society. Therefore, at present, we can assume an elite viewership for El Temple and speculate on its significance if a broader section of the nineteenth-century population was likewise allowed inside.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot has defined the term “slave society” as a society dependent on slavery for its economic, social, and cultural organization.<sup>8</sup> The Havana elite could not have been what they were without slaves working among them, nor would certain representational forms and visual practices have been promoted and sustained were it not for a need to maintain the ideologies of a slave society. Cuban colonial life, economy, society, and politics were enmeshed with the issues of slavery, daily social practice, and the reification of the pervasive ideology of white dominance. Intellectual abstractions regarding population were formulated in relation to slavery, while in everyday life, slaves tended to their masters’ households and drove their owners in carriages. Beyond slavery, *libertos/as* (free blacks) interacted with whites on a daily basis and served as market women, midwives, and seamstresses.<sup>9</sup> Thus the presence of Africans in early-nineteenth-century Havana was highly tangible to the white elite. Blacks were not merely abstractions in the city. Yet abstractions could be formulated to manage black populations and to craft social spaces of white supremacy. Demographic shifts caused by the Haitian Revolution and persistent fears that a similar event could occur in Cuba produced increased social anxieties for white elites. This level of angst revived older conceptions of race and drove the production of new ones, applying Enlightenment rationalism that may have changed the perception of race for the painter, patrons, and audiences of El Templete. The paradigm of whiteness came under threat like never before and required new means of spatial and visual reinforcement in daily life. I propose that the heritage of the ceiba tree in 1828 attests to the extent that whiteness became an indispensable element in the elite conceptualization of a reformed subjectivity in Cuba by this time, if not earlier.

#### LA POBLACIÓN BLANCA AND THE NEW TOWN

As discussed in chapter 4, the use of the Indian figure and suggestions of miscegenation within the Vermay paintings carried local relevance. The social paradigm of Spanish male whiteness was constructed, in a fluid and open process, against an ever-present “other” in the Americas as in Spain. With the rise of the early-nineteenth-century slave population in Cuba fed by the sugar industry’s insatiable demands for labor, the age-old colonial obsession with whiteness or *limpieza de sangre* was reconceptualized under the pressures of modernization, insular geography, and geo-

political memory. The sugar industry and its human consequences compelled a sense of urgency to promote and maintain phenotypic whiteness in Havana. This reaction inflected the narrative of identity in El Temple with an agenda of racial cleansing and the reassertion of a revised paradigm of *limpieza de sangre*, which led to the emergence of projects of sociospatial restructuring.

As Campomanes argued, Economic Societies in the Spanish world should aid economic renovation by focusing on local conditions. The Havana Society's project to "whiten" the island of Cuba couched as a social improvement became a particular concern of this association in Cuba. On December 20, 1823, the physician Tomás Romay Chacón read a report to the General Council of the Royal Economic Society entitled "Report on the Necessity to Promote the White Population on This Island."<sup>10</sup> In the document, Romay Chacón expresses "the gravity and urgency of the assignment" with which he had been entrusted by the Society. "It [the Society] tried to fulfill with great efficiency . . . namely, what can and should be done quickly within the limits permitted by our laws."<sup>11</sup> Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, Romay Chacón would send similar reports and proposals to captains general, the king, and the Junta de Población Blanca (Council of the White Population). Established in Havana in 1817 by Captain General José Cienfuegos and the Spanish intendant Alejandro Ramírez, the special Junta committed itself to studying census figures, documenting the effects of a rising black population, proposing solutions, and communicating with Madrid. Co-opting the extant program of founding new towns in Bourbon Spain and the Americas, members of the Junta stressed the urgency of creating new white settlements for immigrants from Catholic countries. The slave revolt in Saint Domingue received frequent mention as a pretext for action.<sup>12</sup>

Anxieties over racial miscegenation and African rebellion in Cuba became particularly acute, given the extent to which the black population was integrated into the social fabric. Havana's high number of *libertos* must have seemed more dangerous to elite whites than in parts of Spanish America where individuals of African descent were proportionally fewer in number compared to the white and mestizo populations. More integrated free blacks could potentially undermine white blood purity. Furthermore, the bulk of this population could have contributed substantially to inciting



insurrectionist activity, as they might decide to help their brethren in slavery achieve freedom through radical means.

The Spanish attempt to stimulate the nation's economy through a program of *nuevas poblaciones* (new towns) became the principal instrument used by the Junta de Población Blanca in Havana to attempt to offset the number of blacks on the island. This effort built on initiatives begun in eighteenth-century Cuba with the Crown's endeavor to found new towns, resulting in the creation of the town of Santa María del Rosario, for example, financed by the landowning Bayona family and situated outside of Havana to the southeast.<sup>13</sup> This town and others like it fulfilled objectives similar to those of their counterparts in Spain: to settle, populate, and regulate the agricultural hinterland. Yet the new towns program that emerged in Cuba in the 1790s, following the Haitian Revolution, began to take on a more concerted racial agenda. Francisco Arango y Parreño, in his vision of political economy for Cuba, sought to establish villages for white immigrants and lessen the concentration of rural blacks, seen as the primary instigators of insurrection. Arango wrote, "It is necessary to proceed carefully—with the census figures in hand—in order that the number of Negroes may not only be prevented from exceeding that of the whites, but that it may not be permitted to equal that number."<sup>14</sup>

Stirrings of insurrection involving blacks in the first decades of the nineteenth century only validated such fears. Informed by the visual and verbal narratives of the successful revolutions in the United States, France, and Saint Domingue, many of these rebellious subjects in Cuba were indeed *libertos*. In 1795, the fifty-six-year-old *liberto* Nicolás Morales began organizing a movement that aimed to unite blacks and whites in working toward the abolition of taxes and the distribution of land to the poor. Betrayed by a mulatto militiaman, Morales and his fellow rebels were imprisoned by the state.<sup>15</sup> The 1810 independence movement that fashioned a flag bearing a figure of an Indian woman involved a number of *libertos* enrolled in the black militias. The authorities took additional measures to police black insurgence, including the creation of a volunteer white militia that co-opted young men from recently immigrated families.<sup>16</sup> Another *liberto*, the carpenter and former *pardo* militia member José Antonio Aponte, led the 1812 slave conspiracy. Such conspiracies must have confirmed to white authorities that the rising population of *libertos/as* and slaves posed an almost imminent threat to white hegemony.<sup>17</sup>

These concerns mobilized royal officials and members of the Junta de Población Blanca. By the end of 1817, the Junta was founded and Captain General Cienfuegos had received a royal *cédula* from Madrid authorizing the establishment of new towns for white immigrants. Permission came in response to a comprehensive plan laid before the Crown by the Cabildo, Consulado, and Economic Society in Havana. Addressed from King Ferdinand VII to the captain general and intendant of Cuba, the order stated:

One of my most important possessions [Cuba] is . . . in a desert state and requires an increase of population for its general security and prosperity. Your exposition submits that after having weighed and considered a subject of such great importance, you have not been able to discover any other remedy for the existing evil than by granting encouragement to emigrants from Spain and the Canary Islands and thereby increase the white population, and further advise the principle to be extended to Europeans professing the Roman Catholic Religion and subjects of states with whom we are at peace and amity.<sup>18</sup>

This authorization followed upon the Real Cédula de Gracias (Royal Decree of Graces) of 1815, which sought to encourage Spanish settlement in Puerto Rico. Foreigners from Catholic nations would need to swear an oath of allegiance to all existing laws, and after five years' residence in Cuba, would gain all the rights and privileges of natural-born citizens.<sup>19</sup> Their children born on the island would be qualified for employment in the major corporate bodies and in the island's militia force. Foreign settlers were immune from any poll tax but would be taxed on their slaves. Each estate owner was exempt from tithes for the term of fifteen years, and for the same term, the payment of *alcabala* duty on the produce of their estates, but was forever exempt from export duties.

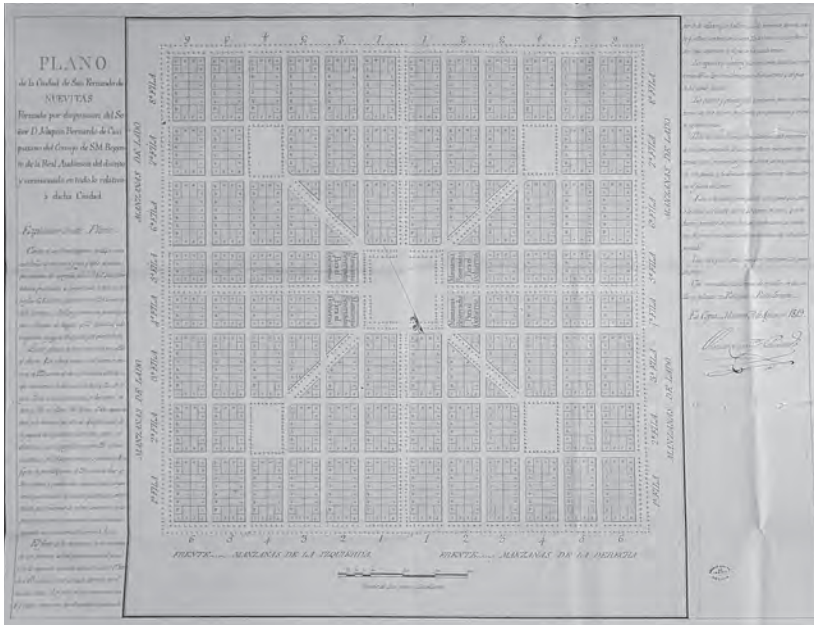
The issue of social and racial integration occupies a substantial portion of this decree. The Cuban governor would issue "letters of naturalization" to foreign settlers and these settlers would be "placed on the same footing as natural-born subjects."<sup>20</sup> As a Spanish population was preferable to a foreign one, the king instructed Cuba to forward the invitation to the mother country as well as the Balearic and Canary Islands. Reminiscent of the early days of Spanish colonization in the Americas, racial assimilation of the settlers' whiteness was strongly encouraged. "That amongst other things they [colonial governors] should always bear in mind to promote intermar-



riages with the colonists as much as possible and therefore direct them to those quarters where they may meet with females in order to encourage matrimonial connections.”<sup>21</sup>

As with the program of *nuevas poblaciones* in Spain, new towns in Cuba throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries bore specific functions as part of their charter. Jesús del Monte (1708) and Bejucal (1745) supported tobacco cultivation; Alquízar (1799) would stimulate coffee production; Nuevitas (1775), Jaruco (1777), Bahía Honda (1779), and Santa Cruz (1800) would provide martial support at strategic points in an effort to protect Havana; and Caraballo (1803) would focus on the rearing of livestock. The existence of medicinal waters led to the founding of Madruga (1803); available quarries, to Calvario (1735); and the rehabilitation of a port, to Guantánamo (1820). The rise of the sugar industry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries generated 156 new towns, 58 percent of which were founded between 1792 and 1800.<sup>22</sup> The voice of Arango in this campaign was joined by that of the Conde de Jaruco y Mopox, who headed a commission that carried out surveys and studies in support of the building of new towns, along with roads and canals.<sup>23</sup>

Some of these new towns in late colonial Cuba, particularly those founded in the early nineteenth century, began to exhibit the Hippodamian grid. The urban ideal here in contrast to the more irregular layouts of conquistador towns in sixteenth-century Cuba reveals a gridiron arrangement of streets meeting at right angles with a geometrically defined plaza, usually in a central location. In an example inflected by baroque city design, a plan for the Cuban new town of San Fernando de Nuevitas depicts a series of squares and rectangular house blocks in a grid pattern with a four-block-square central plaza and diagonal promenades stretching away from this space at its corners in four different directions (fig. 5.2). The promenades each terminate in four identically sized rectangular plazas, and the plan reveals the eighteenth-century spatial ideals of order, utility, and decorum. Similarly, in a plan of the new town of Nueva Paz, Cuba, from 1804, the author configures the city as a great octagon with radiating main streets converging on a central Plaza Mayor. A plan just two years later configures Nueva Paz as a rigorous grid with square modules.<sup>24</sup> These nineteenth-century geometric and gridiron city plans suggest the adaptation of a revised template to reinforce urban order. Through the grid, reformers believed that urban spaces could be made to more efficiently



5.2 Joaquín Bernardo de Campuzano, plan of Nuevitas, 1818. Courtesy of the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

facilitate commerce; improve sanitation; and render subjects more visible, quantifiable, and socially differentiated.

By the 1820s, plans for the new towns of this reformist type, programs to “whiten” the island, and efforts to adapt drawing and academic practices in the visual arts seemed to have intersected for the Havana elite at the issue of race. Political economy in late colonial Cuba, so dependent on slavery, must have reconfigured elite views of the colonial body politic. New town construction could potentially fix demographic and cultural problems, but what of the mounting social heterogeneity of the extant cities, particularly Havana? Thus town renewal and new forms of representation seem to have been conflated with the new towns project as a socioracial improvement for the Creole and Peninsular elite. Achieving predictable homogeneity would mitigate the stark reality of difference in a heterogeneous environment, which suggests that *El Templete* was the product of a revised social knowledge from elite perspectives. The patrons made heritage in this work to authenticate this knowledge and render its claims to social order stable and predictable. *El Templete* presented a

socially reformed colonial city from elite points of view and a teleological narrative leading toward an ideal future of affluent, self-aware whites living with fewer and better-managed blacks.

#### THE HISTORICAL ENCOUNTER AS DISINHERITANCE

Vermay's inclusion of the Spanish and Indian encounter in the scenes of the first Mass and *cabildo* generated a predictable and stable Cuban foundational narrative that could have had multiple uses. Indeed, it operated to authorize things Cuban by focusing on the island's chapter in the larger narrative of the Spanish Conquest and drawing attention to Cuba's unique history within that imperial narrative. Yet, simultaneously, this narration of the Cuban past could be seen as building a bastion of white cultural heritage. It thereby operated to exclude people of African descent from full participation in the island's sanctioned history and perhaps even cleanse the ceiba tree of African meanings. If the history of Cuba began with a noble encounter between conquistador and Indian, then the island could join in the fraternity of Creoles who claimed an origination myth between the noble Cortés and Moctezuma, Pizarro and Atahualpa. The cultural authenticity of the ancient Greco-Roman temple and its theoretical origin in the tree affirmed this Cuban heritage and the exemplary racial origins projected by the city's elite. While African history in Cuba dates to the early sixteenth century, the paintings effectively purge Africa from Cuban history.

The absence of an African figure in the two foundational scenes cannot simply be explained as an attempt at historical accuracy, a reconstruction of a moment prior to the influx of African slaves. The Portuguese had opened the early modern transoceanic slave trade along the west coast of Africa by 1492, and African slaves were sold in Seville in the fifteenth century. African slaves had likely been in Iberia under the Romans and during the Islamic period. Early modern Sevillian *cofradías* (confraternities) of Africans supplied the model for the Cuban *cabildos de naciones*. The historian Lynne Guitart asserts that the Spanish brought Africans into the Americas with the first wave of conquistadors in Santo Domingo.<sup>25</sup> Thus Diego Velázquez could well have brought African slaves with him during the conquest of Cuba. Yet the Vermay paintings of the first Mass and *cabildo* exclude blacks from sixteenth-century history and position this exclu-



5.3 Jean-Baptiste Vermay, *morena* domestic servant/slave with white women and child, detail of *The Inauguration of El Templete*, c. 1828–1829. Oil on canvas. El Templete, Plaza de Armas, Havana, Cuba. Reproduced courtesy of the OHC.

sion within a larger symbolic program that champions the triumph of civilization over barbarism.

Among the female figures in the lower left of the canvas of the inauguration painting, Vermay includes a woman of African descent in similar dress as the white women nearby (fig. 5.3; plate 11). Any suggestions, via clothing, that this woman possesses the same *calidad* as the women around her are subverted by her dark skin tone, denoting a much lower status. The farthest figure from the bishop and El Templete, this woman likely represents an upper-class domestic slave or servant. The dark skin tone of the slave woman sharply contrasts with the pale skin of the white women and suggests that she is representative of a *morena* (black). As in the *casta* painting genre of New Spain, the modulation of skin tones assisted in the pictorial construction of social hierarchy in a Spanish colonial social spectrum dominated by whiteness.<sup>26</sup>

The figure of the *morena* slave woman appears suspended within a larger allegory that established Indians as redeemable and noble, conquistadors as righteous, and nineteenth-century elites as cultivated men of *buen gusto*. In her space of domesticity, suggested by the seated group of wom-

en and children, the *morena* figure seems startled and confused, with an expression similar to that of the child before her. Her reaction provokes a response from the white woman next to her, who turns and gives the *morena* a harsh glance and perhaps even a motioning gesture with her right hand as if to correct her behavior at the ceremony. More than a sign of white abilities to control slaves, this vignette singles out the *morena* as the only figure that appears visibly threatened by the ceremony and the meanings constructed by the monument. Her response signifies a dearth of rationality and a failed affirmation not because the new signs of the city are ill formed, but because her taste is uncultivated and her character debased. It seems from Vermay's representation that she cannot fully perceive the greatness nor understand the significance of the monument before her, at least with any measure of restraint. In the mind of reformers, it might have been argued that her fatal disjunction between internal character and external stimuli spawns this confused reaction. The presence of the domestic slave thus serves to conflate the whiteness elevated by the larger program and its paradigm of reason by providing a foil for both.

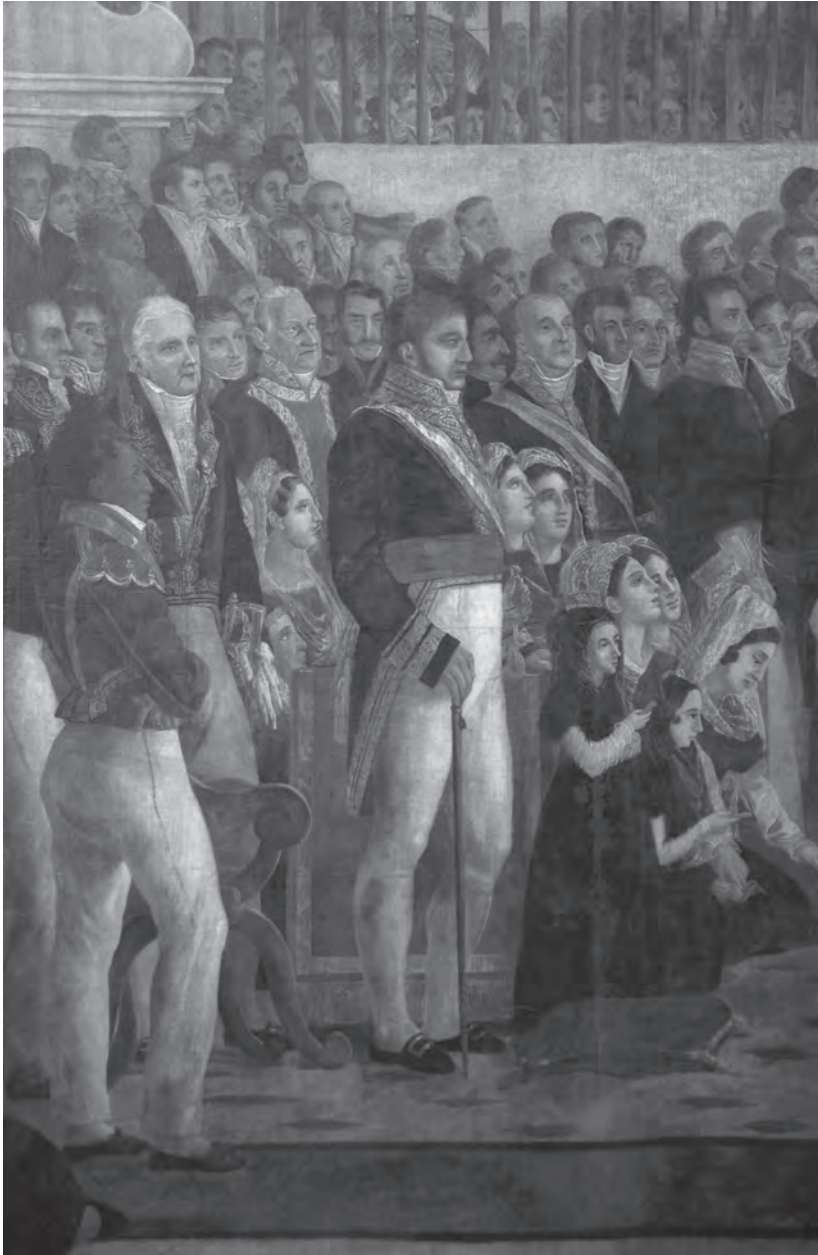
To more broadly situate the *morena*, we should consider the place of blacks within European "enlightened" discourses in the eighteenth century, as some of these were making an impact in Havana's educated circles. Eighteenth-century scientists such as Carl Linnaeus; Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon (1707–1778); and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) began the process of visual comparison between the various modes of humans, using primate juxtaposition to classify human anatomy.<sup>27</sup> The fascination with cultural and natural variety and the will to order has raised questions among scholars about how such inquiry related to or indeed participated in the racial prejudices of the time, as shared by the larger dominant societies of Europe and the colonial world.

The German professor Immanuel Kant appears as an important Enlightenment figure in the context of Havana, written about by Félix Varela y Morales in his *Miscelánea filosófica*. As Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze has shown, some of Kant's efforts to conjoin his idea of "physical geography" and "anthropology" made significant contributions to eighteenth-century theories of race.<sup>28</sup> In his work *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant exposes his ideas about human beings as moral agents, positing one's "personhood" as the ability to rise above mere causality to self-reflect and impose the ego, the "I," upon the world and thus will oneself

into being. Pragmatic anthropology encompassed the inner realm of human morality, while geographic studies focused on empirical aspects of humanity, such as physical and bodily characteristics as distributed in space. These two domains of study, for Kant, intersect in his ideas about race. He classifies humans according to skin color, dividing the lot by white (Europeans), yellow (Asians), black (Africans), and red (Amerindians). For Kant, each category possessed differing capacities for moral agency, distinguishing between those with the capacity for educating themselves (principally, Europeans) and others (in particular, Africans) who must be subjected to “training,” by which Kant meant physical coercion and punishments.<sup>29</sup> As Eze states, Kant’s mentality assumes that “‘black,’ is bad, evil, inferior, or a moral negation of ‘white,’ light, and goodness.”<sup>30</sup> The black displays a significant lack of moral agency, in Kant’s view, a disposition only validated by external appearance. In societies and situations in which white and black coexist, such as urban centers and plantations within the Atlantic world, Kant even advocated for more painful types of punishments (the use of a split cane instead of a whip). In this view, blacks would exist in a perpetual state of “training” from whites, who were the moral agents.

Vermay’s positioning of the *morena* in her precise location within the inauguration painting and his articulation of her childlike reaction to the proceedings suggests an attempt to inscribe into the work “enlightened” discourses on the perceived lack of moral agency among blacks. Furthermore, the response of the white woman, who turns to correct the *morena*, underscores the role of whites in providing the necessary “training” for blacks in society and situations. It affirms an essential link between gender, race, and reason, and sharpens the viewer’s discernment of the difference in reason between multiple populations within a space designed to allow whites to gain control of their inherent moral agency. Kant contended that Amerindians were beyond educating, and we might notice a resonance between the Amerindian woman from the *cabildo* painting and the *morena* in the inauguration painting, who both appear fearful and perplexed, as though not fully comprehending the civilizing events before them, in contrast to the knowing expressions on the male figures in both scenes. It is unclear if the Indian contributes anything to the suggested bloodline of Cubans or simply serves as a trope of local authenticity and difference from Europeans. Yet the broader program attempts to cement





5.4 Jean-Baptiste Vermay, *pardo* militiaman standing alongside Captain General Vives, detail of *The Inauguration of El Templete*, c. 1828–1829. Oil on canvas. El Templete, Plaza de Armas, Havana, Cuba. Reproduced courtesy of the OHC.

the relationship between skin color and reason undergirded by the cultural authority of heritage.

According to the painted narrative, however, mixed-race males could embody reason and *buen gusto* more fully than their female counterparts. At the center of the inauguration painting, near the figure of Captain General Vives, a man with a brown skin tone stands in formal military dress (fig. 5.4; plate 12).<sup>31</sup> His status as a member of a local militia, denoted by his clothing, suggests him as a *liberto*. It is significant that his dark skin tone is a lighter shade of black or brown than that of the slave woman far to the left of him. By his posture and facial expression, he appears much more at ease and in tune with the social expectations and significance of the ceremony. These physiognomic, phenotypic, and gender differences function within the larger program to suggest a process of whitening and a gain in reason (male over female, white over black) as one ventures closer to the monument. As audiences visited El Templete and viewed the imagery, racial difference in relation to reason could be rehearsed and therefore more efficiently reinforced on the plaza.

The visual connections between sixteenth- and nineteenth-century scenes with respect to the inferior reason of non-Spaniards, whether African or Indian, did not serve to position whites and blacks on the same kind of temporal trajectory with the encounter between Spaniard and Indian. The latter appears as part of the narrative of Cuban civilization and capacity for reason, whereas the former appears strikingly disjointed. Whites and blacks are thus not integrated at all into a mutual historical trajectory. Rather, marginalized blacks are suspended and static within nineteenth-century cultural progress. While the childlike confusion of the Indians prompts tender and paternal gestures from the conquistador Diego Velázquez, the harsh appraisal given the *morena* by the white woman indicates that a similar assessment of potential nobility is not afforded the African female. In either case, they are eternally in need of “training,” thus affixing their modernity to the progress of whites.

The figure of the *liberto* militiaman standing next to Vives presents a very different view of black reason. In contrast to the *morena*, the *liberto* stands confidently near the governor and faithfully regards the bishop’s benediction of the monument. His body language communicates calm and restraint. While this contrast indicates male reason over the female

irrationality displayed by the slave woman, the *liberto*'s skin is also lighter than that of his female counterpart in the painting. This figural arrangement affirms that El Templete, as heritage, underpins the ideal of *limpieza de sangre* itself, alluding to the exemplarity of Spanish blood. As with the scene of the Amerindian mother and child at the first *cabildo* and the Indians in that of the first Mass, as one journeys toward the temple in this painted series, the skin color of the human figures becomes progressively whiter. Thus the encounter narrative at the root of the visual dialogue on human nature in the painted series manipulates a trope suggestive of miscegenation and the paradigm of Spanishness to return to a white paradigm in El Templete. In contrast to Mexico and Peru, colonial difference as found in the Indian racial category is more subdued in this Cuban expression, because of the anxieties toward the black population. It is tightly contained in various areas of the paintings and situated on historical trajectories in which Indianness vanishes and blends into whiteness. Blackness, however, stands outside of Spanish American history as a problem in the nineteenth century that must be negotiated, assessed, and constantly attended.

The social tensions of late colonial Cuba seem to have reshaped even racial classification. The historian Matt Childs argues that the situation led to the disappearance of the "Indian" racial category in early-nineteenth-century census figures in Havana.<sup>32</sup> As this absence of the Indian category is also found in census data from other provinces on the island, it does not seem to be due to a sudden epidemic or warfare. On the contrary, Childs argues that "as Cuba's population became increasingly divided along racial lines as a result of the slave trade, the 'Indian' population became collapsed into the category of white or mulatto."<sup>33</sup> This effort to see the Indian as white suggests a move beyond seventeenth-century efforts to offer Indian blood as redeemable through intermarriage with Spaniards. Rather, it indicates a complete whitening of the Indian in an effort to grow the white population in a situation that the elite perceived as one of racial crisis.

#### MARRIAGE, LINEAGE, AND *LA MORENA*

Urban attitudes toward blacks in Cuba were gradually reshaped by the rise of the nineteenth-century sugar industry, the Haitian Revolution, and various slave and *liberto* conspiracies in Cuba. This process was marked by

increased suspicion of black disloyalty, a concern for policing intermarriage and colonial sexual relations, and a more vigorous maintenance of *limpieza de sangre*. The historian María Elena Martínez has identified such a process at work in the early seventeenth century in central New Spain, following a foiled black conspiracy against Spaniards in the colony.<sup>34</sup> As in Havana, the racial order of Mexico City was made and reproduced by adherence to a *sistema de castas*, a classification system attuned to colonial hierarchies and based on the proportionality of Spanish, Native, and black blood.<sup>35</sup> Within this system, black blood most frequently meant a stain on lineage and blood purity. In part, this typically negative view toward blacks was a result of their association with slavery and often lingering connections with the “curse of Ham,” a stained biblical lineage equated with perpetual servitude.<sup>36</sup> In the early sixteenth century, as the Crown’s New Laws of 1542 declared Indians to be vassals in an effort to undercut the *encomienda* system that exploited Native labor, blacks became more associated with slavery. In contrast to Natives and mestizos who could present documents proving that their ancestors had been converted to Christianity, people of African descent generally could not validate such ancestry through the Spanish legal system. Thus the stain of blackness, its inherent ideological impurity, and Africans’ association with slavery were stereotypes that circulated in the Spanish world and could be resuscitated and reinforced in times of social tension or economic transformation.

The image of the slave woman in the inauguration scene functioned on more levels than a commentary on the African female’s place within a discourse on reason.<sup>37</sup> She is included in this public social grouping, but by virtue of her race is relegated to servitude. As domestic servants and slaves of African descent often bore a substantial amount of the effort to raise and nurture the children of the white elite in Havana, the most socially typical posture might have been to find the slave woman seated alongside a white child. However, she is spatially separated from the white boy in front of her by a group of seated white women. Perhaps the painting represents customs that prevailed in public; however, this placement could encode ideas about blacks in the domestic sphere and other genealogical associations.

The presence of the *morena* in the inauguration painting may have offered a sign of economic opportunity for Cuban planters. As the historian Digna Castañeda points out, few female slaves were brought to Cuba in the early years of the slave trade due to the ease with which male slaves

could be obtained and the confidence of Cuban slave owners in the perpetual existence of the slave trade.<sup>38</sup> In the early nineteenth century, however, under the pressure of British abolitionism, Cuban *hacendados* sought aggressively to import African female slaves to naturally reproduce their slave stocks. Francisco de Arango y Parreño, as *síndico* (receiver)<sup>39</sup> of the Havana Consulado, proposed that slave numbers could be increased if planters imported one-third female slaves to their estates. The Royal Decree of April 27, 1804, sought to compel estate owners to introduce more female slaves.<sup>40</sup> In addition to serving on plantations, the female African slaves performed roles for their masters in the city as nursemaids, midwives, cooks, seamstresses, laundresses, and concubines.<sup>41</sup> Female and male house slaves in Havana also tended to their masters' daily needs in public and private spaces.<sup>42</sup> The image of the slave woman in the El Templete painting naturalizes the presence of female slaves in Cuba and reinforces their compliance in the service of their masters.

By keeping the black woman at bay and positioning the group of white women and children beneath the line of Creole and Peninsular men, the painting constructed an image of the "noble" marriages of Havana and their white offspring. In October of 1805, the Council of the Indies issued the "Royal decree on marriages between persons of known nobility with members of the castes of negroes and mulattos." The decree stated that "in cases where persons of age and known nobility or known purity of blood attempt to marry with members of the castes, recourse should be taken to the Viceroy, Presidents, and Audiencias so that they grant or deny their permission."<sup>43</sup> The anthropologist Verena Stolcke discusses the interrelationships between the nineteenth-century regulation of marriage among whites and castes and "family honor," deemed integral by the Spanish authorities to social order in late colonial Cuba.<sup>44</sup> Children of noble families under twenty-five years of age required parental consent in order to marry down into the racially "impure" spectrum of *morenos/as* and *pardos/as*, and they faced the dreaded fate of financial disinheritance if they violated the "purity" of their family's blood and social status via tainted marriage. Parents brought cases of illegitimate unions before the Spanish authorities, who would rule either for or against the marriage's legitimacy. If, however, a white from a non-noble family married into the *castas*, they had no social standing to lose and thus fell outside the realm of prosecution.<sup>45</sup>





5.5 Anonymous, *Portrait of the Family of the Captain of Granaderos Don Manuel Solar Campero y Vega*, January 28, 1806. Oil on canvas, 82 × 80 in. (208 × 203.5 cm). Courtesy of the Colección Museo Soumaya. Fundación Carlos Slim, A.C., Mexico City, Mexico.

This obsession with racial order and the maintenance of *limpieza de sangre* was visualized on various levels in the Novo-Hispanic *casta* paintings. Family portraiture in the Spanish Americas also directly appropriated the tree as a genealogical metaphor for blood purity. The painting, titled *Portrait of the Family of the Captain of Granaderos Don Manuel Solar Campero y Vega* (1806), denotes a nuclear family's pure bloodline by positioning parents giving rise to a tree with children placed in its branches to naturalize and even sanctify genealogical connection by appropriation of the Tree of Jesse prototype and other models (fig. 5.5). Two tree limbs grow directly from the torsos of the noble man and his wife, who stand on either side of an escutcheon, draped over the tree, identifying the family's many surnames.



The branch further subdivides pictorial space as it entwines the figural scene and opens up compartments for the couple's four children, each connected to their parents by some position along the three limbs. The artist uses the starkly white skin of each family member with the tree as a metaphor of genealogical connection to reinforce the naturalness and stability of the family's *limpieza de sangre*.

A painting such as that of the captain and his family recalls an image by José María Gómez de Cervantes made in New Spain in 1810–1811. The image *Genealogy or Book of Family Records* consists of a family tree composed of circles containing various generations and united by a curvilinear tree limb with leaves.<sup>46</sup> The image contains a family tree, a summary of ancestors, and an index and, as such, bears witness to the purity of blood and legitimacy of birth of Gómez de Cervantes in support of his candidacy for the Order of Charles III, founded in 1771. As a Creole, having been nominated, Gómez de Cervantes faced a substantial burden of proof to qualify, one that the image seemingly performs. Peninsulars received preferences in such honorific titles. Through the diagram, Gómez de Cervantes could validate that he descended from a twelfth-century warrior of the Reconquista who did battle with the Moors in Spain when Alfonso VII was king. As such, the arboreal trope operated within a broad field of visual discourse, working to validate claims to noble status, prestigious genealogy, and pure bloodlines of the elites that employed them.

El Templete worked to construct elite blood purity as a sociohistorical paradigm inevitably realized by the divine hand of Providence and the will of Nature, the authority of heritage, and the progress of the nineteenth-century city. Such mythologies worked to assuage elite fears of family members marrying into the racially mixed *castas*, a fate that severely compromised social status. Elite patriarchal society imposed strict regulations on the ability of white women to move about the city, impulses that resulted in a situation in which white women could scarcely be found walking the streets of Havana.<sup>47</sup> The sudden increase in the population of African descent only exacerbated the fears of illegitimate liaisons and the perceived need to control white female sexuality. Such practices in the social sphere took on more imagined, utopic dimensions in heritage, where the past as a resource for the present also projected on the future community of the island's cities. Vermay's figural groupings of white men, women, and children resonate within the larger narrative of whiteness, reason, and progress

to cast the maintenance of blood purity as a fundamental requirement for building a new society.

#### EL LIBERTO, LOYALTY, AND SOCIAL ORDER

The *liberto* figure standing faithfully alongside the captain general in the inauguration painting does so while wearing the uniform suggestive of his status as a member, or commander, in a colonial militia. While his clothing reflects distinction, Vermay positions the man's feet just to the left of the carpet occupied by the captain general's family in a gesture of the limits of inclusivity and power. The *liberto*'s clothing appears to be a mixture of various militia and civic uniform styles for people of African descent that served the city and his Spanish majesty in officially sanctioned ways.<sup>48</sup> The combination of white trousers and navy coat visually integrates the *liberto* into the larger group of white officials, perhaps only distinguished by his light brown skin tone, red epaulettes, and relatively smaller physical size, which temper his importance. I suggest that this figure functions as a metonym for colonial desire<sup>49</sup> in general—the disciplined desire of the militiaman to achieve civic recognition—as well as being metonymic of a larger population, likely that of the *liberto* community of Havana in general that served his majesty through militia or civic duties. The figure thus becomes both a civic role model for people of African descent and a means of alleviating white concerns about the violent and insurrectionist nature of blacks.

Free black populations could acquire considerable prestige from military service in Cuba, including the *fuero militar*, an exemption from prosecution in civilian courts and juridical status equal to white militiamen.<sup>50</sup> However, military service afforded more than advantages in litigation. It allowed people of African descent in the Spanish colonial world to demonstrate their loyalty to church and state and hence to mitigate white distrust of blacks and mulattos. Lacking the ancestral origins of Amerindians, blacks were viewed as potentially seditious because they had no natural love of country and had a tendency to be disloyal.<sup>51</sup> The noble stance of the *liberto* figure in Vermay's painting works to overcome these colonial stereotypes. His proximity to Vives and to El Templete affirms his discipline and loyalty to militia service, to the king, to the Catholic faith, and to the Christian community. As such, he offers a figure for all *pardo* and *moreno* militiamen to emulate, perhaps a loyalty rehearsed in the process

of viewing the paintings. His example works on the ambivalence of colonial mimicry, solidifying a social niche that male blacks aspired to within the white order.

If the *liberto* constructed a paradigm of free black identity in Havana, for a white audience, this image may have resonated with Cuban apprehensions over the very existence of the colored militia. Established by the military reforms of Charles III in the late eighteenth century, the decision in Madrid to arm people of African descent in colonial militias overseas generated anxieties in Cuba that must have only intensified following the Haitian Revolution. José Antonio Aponte's example, as a *liberto* and former captain of free black militias who spearheaded a widespread and foiled conspiracy in 1812, provided another reason for white elites to despise the black militias. The Vermay image of a compliant, loyal, and dutiful militiaman in the framework of natural order works against the negative image of potential black insurrection as emanating from the *liberto* militia. The figure may indeed be a reworking of the white memory of Aponte, attempting to overcome fears left over from the memory of the rebel leader.

While these two figures of African descent in the inauguration scene functioned to validate the socioracial hierarchy as a product of nature, they likewise worked to actively construct social ideology. The vignettes of both the slave woman and the militiaman provided stable social lines and ideal scenarios in a society where whites and blacks interacted daily. In the fictional world of El Temple, white women successfully kept domestic blacks in their place, and colored militiamen followed the noble example of white officials and elites without signs of insurrection. Unequal social relations are justified and social tensions reconciled. Heritage thus becomes a gaze, a way of looking at the present based on an ontological reorientation afforded by an imagined and constructed past.

## THE PLURALIZING OF HERITAGE

The ceiba tree, real and represented, commands a central place in the symbolic program of El Temple. It creates a structuring device for two history paintings, and its 1754 memorial appears in the third. The tree is represented in the 1754 pillar itself, and various ceibas have stood in for the "original" tree on the site since 1828. The idea of the tree as metaphor of nature underpinned the cultural authenticity of the neoclassical temple

structure, and the tree has long served as a genealogical symbol for many world cultures. As already discussed, it could also serve as a potent sign of place and local ancestry. Yet what remains to be addressed at length is the contribution of Africans and their Creole descendants to the significance of the tree, particularly the ceiba, in Cuba and elsewhere in the Americas. These populations could make their own meanings of the ceiba and configure the tree within their own symbolic economies.<sup>52</sup>

In spite of the fact that known records have not come forward for when and how often El Templete would have been open to the public in the nineteenth century, the work before and after the scaling back of the memorial's enclosure has long possessed resolute iron gates. These gates mediated access not only to the prized history paintings within the monument but also to the site itself. Once an open domain to the public, the historic site after March of 1828 could be locked and access restricted. The twentieth-century photograph of El Templete from the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami reveals a group of Afro-Cuban men standing within and without the walls and railings of the monument, facing a photographer on the Plaza de Armas (see fig. 3.8). A lofty ceiba tree is visible to the left. While this site has housed multiple trees since 1828, the presence of a living ceiba representing the "original" tree forges a symbolic and phenomenological link to the past. Shortly after El Templete was inaugurated, at least one new ceiba tree was planted and thus physically contained within this enclosure of stone and iron.<sup>53</sup> Yet this new tree would also have been contained within the visual and verbal discourses, the "terms of meaning" deployed to commemorate the site. Thus the presence of the ceiba in the paintings and on the site was a form of physical and discursive enclosure, which suggests an effort to reshape the meaning of the tree before multiple audiences who could have made different meanings of the ceiba.

The political and social containment of the tree by the elite patrons of El Templete calls for a reexamination of its discursive role, given the multiple receptions of the ceiba by people of African descent in Cuba who so fully populated colonial urban spaces. In chapter 3, I briefly considered the subaltern meanings of the ceiba tree in the Cuban cultural landscape. To consider more specifically the ceiba's African and transcultural religious and social significance involves the challenges of dealing with a historically suppressed cultural voice. Sources that record African views of the ceiba in

Cuba and the Caribbean are scarce from the colonial period. We can, however, examine the parallels between scant colonial accounts of the tree's meaning to Africans and the more extensive research conducted in the twentieth century. Such considerations must, of course, be placed within the context of the social and institutional life of slaves in colonial Cuba.

The Scottish botanist James Macfadyen (1800–1850), a member of the Linnaean society of London, wrote in *The Flora of Jamaica*, published in 1837, of his observations about the ceiba tree on the neighboring Caribbean island:

Perhaps no tree in the world has a more lofty and imposing appearance. . . . Even the untutored children of Africa are so struck with the majesty of its appearance that they designate it the *God-tree*, and account it sacrilege to injure it with the axe; so that, not unfrequently, not even fear of punishment will induce them to cut it down. Even in a state of decay, it is an object of their superstitious fears: they regard it as consecrated to evil spirits, whose favour they seek to conciliate by offerings placed at its base.<sup>54</sup>

The significance of Macfadyen's observation to scholarship on the African Diaspora cannot be overestimated. In this account, he records Afro-Jamaican understandings of the ceiba and ritual practices involving the tree that strike compelling chords with observations made in twentieth-century Cuba by the Cuban ethnographer Lydia Cabrera (1899–1991). Cabrera's book *El monte* (1954), a work on Afro-Cuban ritual and sacred narrative, contains an entire chapter on the ceiba tree.<sup>55</sup> This work, supplemented by more contemporary scholarship on Afro-Cuban religious beliefs and practices, reveals three areas that resonate with Macfadyen's account: the idea that ceibas possess supernatural force, or *aché*; that they are feared for their power; and that they are employed in ritualized religious practices.

The notion that the ceiba tree possesses a supernatural force can be found in a wide array of sources on the African Diaspora. Similar patterns of African American ceiba tree veneration in Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and Brazil—all former sites of plantation slavery—indicate a pan-Diasporic transcultural process. The ceiba tree and the American landscape were apparently interpreted through West African memory by incoming slaves and their descendants and recast to meet the spiritual needs of their communities.<sup>56</sup> In her fieldwork, Cabrera consulted various Afro-Cuban “informants” and found that numerous practitioners of

Santería and Palo Monte associate the ceiba with the divine.<sup>57</sup> In one particularly revealing statement, she recorded, “The ceiba is a saint: iroko.”<sup>58</sup> The West African Yoruba *iroko* is considered not only a sacred tree but also an *òrìsà*, a deity that mediates between humans and the Yoruba Supreme Trinity.<sup>59</sup> The tree considered the *iroko* is a large hardwood varietal in tropical West Africa that resembles ceiba morphology in its buttressed trunk and great canopy. Thus if the ceiba was identified by incoming Africans in the early modern period as the *iroko*, it would have been elevated to a sacred status. Practitioners of Palo Monte in Cuba, a religious system heavily inflected by Diasporic memories of the Bantu-speaking region of the Congo, referred to the tree as *nkunia casa Sambi* (tree house of God).<sup>60</sup>

While it is unclear if the ceiba is considered an *oricha* (a Cuban word for the Yoruba deity known as an *òrìsà*), Cabrera recorded that Afro-Cubans regard the tree as a powerful repository of *aché* (known to the West African Yoruba as *asé*), an invisible force engaged with all divinities, humans, and things. Practitioners of Santería (the way of the saints), a transcultural religion in which Catholic saints become essentially interchangeable with select Yoruba *òrìsàs*, also associate the ceiba with an important *oricha* in the Afro-Cuban “pantheon” known as Changó. Identified by his fiery temperament, Changó is equated with lightning and syncretized with Santa Barbara. The ceiba tree, seldom struck by lightning due to its outward-spreading canopy, is believed to be a powerful source of *aché* in Cuba, sometimes inhabited by the intermediary *orichas*. In the 1930s, the Afro-Cuban intellectual Rómulo Lachatañeré (1909–1952), a contemporary of Lydia Cabrera and Fernando Ortiz, collected oral narratives on the ceiba tree that recounted it as having provided Obatalá, a creator deity that birthed the *orichas*, with wood to create a primordial *tablero*, an essential implement in divination. Others in Cuba associated the base of the ceiba tree with Olofin, an aspect of the Supreme Trinity residing above all *orichas*.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to regarding the ceiba tree as possessing supernatural power, Afro-Cuban religious devotees maintained a certain apprehension of the tree, according to Cabrera. Possessing the power to create and destroy, the ceiba spawned fear in some of Cabrera’s informants, who claimed they would rather abandon their children to starve than fell and destroy a ceiba. Others believed that felling the tree would result in the deaths of loved ones.<sup>62</sup> These findings by Cabrera reveal continuity between the beliefs of twentieth-century Afro-Cubans in the vengeful power of the ceiba and



those of people of African descent in early-nineteenth-century Jamaica, as recorded by the Scottish botanist.

The third point from Macfadyen's 1837 account was that "the untutored children of Africa" in Jamaica used the tree in ritual practice, seeking to conciliate the tree's favor "by offerings placed at its base."<sup>63</sup> Twentieth-century research has recorded how Santería devotees would place offerings, or *ebbós*, at the base of the ceiba to persuade the tree to grant them favors. In Palo Monte, priests and priestesses, known as *paleros/as*, consider the ceiba a powerful ritual space, an *axis mundi* that channels spiritual energy downward and concentrates it in the terrestrial realm. These practitioners use the ceiba as a site for casting *ngangas*, spells meant to harm the intended victim. *Paleros/as* consummate the spell by leaving coins, rum, or other offerings at the tree's base, stabbing the ceiba with a knife on each side of the cardinal directions, and chanting the victim's name three times.<sup>64</sup> The ritual planting of a ceiba tree is considered a profound act of creation and blessing. Devotees often claim November 16 to be the optimal day to plant a ceiba, which is the day of Aggayú, the *oricha* syncretized with St. Christopher, who shares the same saint's day. Considered the father of Changó, Aggayú is the *oricha* of volcanoes who owns the Earth. The fact that November 16 also marks the birthday of the city, today celebrated at El Temple, and that St. Christopher is the patron saint of Havana, suggests the ceiba tree as a product of the "intermeshed transculturations" defined by Fernando Ortiz. The tree is the product of Cuban colonial and national society, informed by the converging of African, Amerindian, European, and Creole memories and cultural values. It is thus an early modern American cultural formation that has continued to possess relevance for contemporary audiences who use it to produce meanings in the present.

This continuity of the ceiba tree's significance in Cuba through time to people of African descent, and indeed to colonial and national societies, points to the negotiation and reconfiguration of the American landscape for African purposes within the context of slavery and colonialism. The American land was modified by incoming Africans not only in terms of practice but also in the invention of sacred narrative stories known as *pwataki*.<sup>65</sup> The scholar of Afro-Cuban culture Miguel Barnet describes these narratives as functional means by which practitioners of African Diaspora religions explain their American environments.<sup>66</sup> Santería devo-

tees understand most happenings in nature and society in relation to *pwat-aki*, a process in which, as Barnet argues, stories are molded to explain and “to suit changing conditions in society.”<sup>67</sup> He states: “This is one of the most unusual and remarkable features of Afro-Cuban mythology. It demonstrates perfectly the force of the popular imagination and its capacity for substituting elements and even adapting philosophical values to suit new social situations.”<sup>68</sup>

The fluid adaptability of Afro-Cuban sacred narrative allowed for a wide range of interpretive strategies for decoding, narrating, and contesting the objects and spatial practices of the city, as well as the opportunity for the colonial authorities and social elites to exploit Afro-Cuban understandings of urban objects. Based on the significance of the ceiba tree for populations of African descent in Cuba and the ability of these populations to reconfigure the meaning of the city for their own purposes and to define their modernities in their own terms, I propose that white authorities memorialized the ceiba tree in 1828 to communicate power and authority to these populations. Manipulating a presumed but perhaps not rigorously identified ambivalence toward the tree on the part of colonial audiences, royal officials, senior clergy, and urban elites in Havana generated a multivocal sign even more capable of carrying a resonance of sovereignty. African agency and awareness subjected imposed narrative frameworks to negotiation and contestation, substituted new meanings, and thus produced alternative significations out of such forms as *El Templete*. For example, what could a viewer of African descent make of the figure of Velázquez standing next to the ceiba tree and holding a wooden staff in the Vermay painting of the city’s first *cabildo*? In Cuban Santería, the wooden staff is an important implement of a *babalawo*, a ritual diviner who communes with the *oricha* Orunla.<sup>69</sup>

These conditions would suggest that Spanish civil and ecclesiastical authorities likely knew of the significance of the ceiba tree for populations of African descent in late colonial Cuba and incorporated this knowledge into colonial governmentality. Bishop Espada seems to have observed African performances during his pastoral visit to the island in 1804.<sup>70</sup> Royal officials surely sent police and spies to monitor African and Afro-Cuban communities, and the whole of the city could see the annual performances of the *cabildos de naciones*. Archival research has not yielded lucid observations of African religious practices in

nineteenth-century Cuba, such as those recorded by Macfadyen in Jamaica. However, we must consider that authorities and elites could have taken the opportunity in El Temple to co-opt an object of symbolic and sacred significance for these populations even if whites did not understand what they were seeing. Furthermore, we must consider the extent to which African practices in Havana shaped those of whites by centuries of proximity and the cultural intertwinement suggested by the theory of transculturation.

The closest accounts we have are the array of textual and visual records of *cabildos de naciones* processions.<sup>71</sup> These mutual-aid associations and religious fraternities of Africans, Creoles, and other groups provided a framework for people of African descent to engage in civic rituals. As described in chapter 1, such *cabildos* held celebrations on Sundays and important church feast days, the most elaborate and public of which was the January 6 celebration of Epiphany in Havana, also called El Día de Reyes, “the Day of Kings.” *Cabildo* processions began in Havana’s *barrios extramuros* and wound their way through the streets, eventually arriving at the Plaza de Armas. Here, the *cabildo* king would meet with the Spanish captain general to receive *aguinaldo* (an annual donation or gift) and an implied acknowledgment of the *cabildo* king’s authority. Given the existence of the Plaza de Armas in Havana as a social and political center, the attention afforded the foundational ceiba tree in the late colonial period must also have been directed at these audiences. The conflation of the tree’s supernatural power and *orichas* like Changó, who was thought to be a deified king, with the colonial governor’s presence as the Spanish king’s representative, as embodied by the plaza and eventually the royal palaces, could have generated a potent conflation of power to populations of African descent in the *cabildos*.

The appropriation of Afro-Cuban visual culture for political ends becomes more explicit or easily traced in the twentieth century. The anthropologist Ivor L. Miller has studied the pattern by which politicians in Cuba have appropriated symbols of Afro-Cuban religions and used them to their advantage in political rituals. As Miller argues, “Coded performances in the Caribbean political arena often have dual implications.”<sup>72</sup> He cites Fidel Castro’s January 1959 televised address to the Cuban nation, watched by millions around the world. During the speech, a white dove landed on Castro’s shoulder and another on his rostrum, and remained



5.6 Secretaría de Obras Públicas. Tree of Brotherhood, dedicated February 24, 1928. Courtesy of the University of Miami Libraries Cuban Heritage Collection, Coral Gables, Florida.

there throughout his oration. While the Roman Catholic world would have associated this occurrence as a gift from the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the white dove, for *santeros/as*, the white dove evoked Obatalá, a deity of purity and justice that created the world and the *orichas*. By staging the spectacle of the white doves, Castro suggested himself to Afro-Cuban audiences as a ruler consecrated by the forces of Obatalá with a sanctioned ability to bring justice, peace, and innovation to the country.

Scholars have argued that in the early twentieth century, the Cuban republican government used the ceiba tree as Castro later used the doves for their multivalence and ability to communicate to populations of African descent. The Cuban ethnographer Rómulo Lachatañeré relates an incident involving Gerardo Machado, president of Cuba from 1925 to 1933. During the Sixth Pan-American Conference in Havana (1928), Machado christened the event with the inauguration of a newly reconstructed park, naming it the Parque de la Fraternidad (Park of Brotherhood). A ceiba tree was planted on inauguration day in the center of the park and surrounded with earth taken from the twenty-one republics represented in the conference (fig. 5.6). Lachatañeré observes:

In the same ornamentation of the park, palm trees had been utilized, which had clear symbolic meaning for Cubans, and especially *santeros*: the palm tree is where Changó found sanctuary for his anger. The Ceiba tree is one of the homes of Changó [...].

What could a *santero* deduce from this ceremony where with so many types of earth a Ceiba was planted, symbol of Changó, and precisely during the government of one of his “sons”? Again the deduction was logical. Changó had ordered the president to make this magic ceremony to protect him from his enemies, because at the time they were increasing in numbers. The truth is that five years later Machado was overthrown; but in the period of collecting this material, a stroller who passed by the Park of Fraternity in the light of dawn could find sacrifices for Changó deposited at the foot of the palms and at the now robust Ceiba.<sup>73</sup>

Machado's deliberate planting of the tree transposed civic and national solidarity and united Pan-American and national ideology with Afro-Cuban worldview, even if the president did not fully understand its implications. His actions raise questions about the history of political appropriations of civic trees in Havana. Machado's ceiba appeared in the Parque de la Fraternidad alongside the recently completed capital building, El Capitolio, finished in 1929. The combination of the temple to republican virtues with the tree of brotherhood recalls El Temple's construction of civic foundations and colonial community via commemorative temple and foundational tree. Machado's tree in 1928 could be said, on the one hand, to disavow El Temple by its position outside the area formerly bounded by colonial city walls that came down in 1863. On the other hand, the Parque ceiba seems likewise to have been part of a heritage process involving El Temple, co-opting the cultural authenticity embodied by the former work to communicate to a wide range of colonial audiences in validation of political figures in the present. Indeed, the 1928 inauguration of the Parque came in the centennial year of the colonial monument.

The plaza ceiba of 1828 and the Parque ceiba of 1928 are joined in Havana's tree history by a third ceiba likewise paired with an architectural structure and urban space. The sanctuary of the Virgin of Regla consists of a single-nave basilica located toward the tip of the peninsula occupied by the town of Regla that extends into Havana harbor. Directly across the bay from the Plaza de Armas, the sanctuary houses a legendary incarna-



5.7 Ceiba tree of Regla, the tree alongside the Church of the Virgin of Regla, seen with the processional pathway leading out to the waterfront. Regla, Cuba. Photograph by the author.

tion of the Virgin Mary, conflated by her Afro-Cuban devotees with the Cuban *oricha* Yemayá, a female deity of the ocean.<sup>74</sup> The blue trim of the doors and windows of the church complements the rich blue of the robes worn by the statue of the Virgin in the sanctuary. A ceiba tree can today be found due south of the east-west orientation of the church, in a park that rises slightly from the road that separates it from the walkway along the seawall. In an annual ritual on September 8, devotees transport the statue of the Virgin of Regla from the sanctuary, out into the streets of Regla, to the ceiba tree alongside the church where she is circumambulated,<sup>75</sup> and finally down to the waters of the harbor before being returned to the church.<sup>76</sup> In this process, the Madonna/Yemayá blesses the inhabitants of the city, receives *aché* from and blesses the ceiba tree, and views her watery domain. In my visit to the site in 2011, a concrete ritual pathway could be found cutting through the park and encircling the ceiba tree, suggesting a recent effort, as early as the mid-1990s, to elevate the tree to the status of a civic ritual object by appropriation of concrete (fig. 5.7).

The town of Regla, a historically African and Afro-Cuban community, dates to the sixteenth century. Research remains to be done to determine



the age of the present structure and how long a ceiba tree has been situated alongside it. However, large influxes of Africans in the late colonial period grew the population of Regla, which had been the home of dockworkers, mariners, and shipwrights, hence the devotion's maritime connection. These incoming Yoruba and other groups likely recharged the Virgin's connection to the Yoruba ocean deity Yemoja. The first *cabildo*, a private Afro-Cuban organization independent of the Catholic Church, was founded toward the later nineteenth century. The African-born freed slave Ño Remigio Herrera, also known by his African name, Adechina, established the *cabildo* of the Virgin of Regla.<sup>77</sup> The history of the ceiba of Regla and its ritual use requires much more investigation. However, if it did exist in 1828, it would have belonged to a powerful devotion that may have actively informed African and Afro-Cuban views of the ceiba in relation to Catholic/*oricha* worship in the vicinity of Havana. Indeed, an image of the Virgin of Regla was among those images found in Aponte's "book of pictures." Such examples speak to the anthropologist Stephan Palmié's points about the mutually constituted and historically constructed nature of Afro-Cuban and Atlantic modernity.<sup>78</sup>

These various cases of making heritage from multiple points of view speak to the plurality of the phenomenon, the existence of plural heritages, and the agency of multiple populations to rework urban spaces, signs, and performances.<sup>79</sup> Heritage occurs, in these cases, within the city and within urban space in different locations to create and manage collective place identities. The ceibas of Havana have, over time, been selected as potent heritage resources based on Cuba's transcultural development, yet they are not the only such resources, as El Templete reveals. Local and imported heritage capital has supplied cultural representations to meet the demands of the present and to formulate paradigmatic expressions that can be passed on to an imagined future. The heritage expression that evolves from the demands of the present can then be reused, its cultural parameters reappropriated by subsequent generations, even if much of its original relevance is lost. Its resources are willed into being modern, as the present generation demonstrates the unquantifiable human ability to use the past as a social, political, and economic resource for the present.

101. Heredia, “La Estación de los Nortes,” in *Poesías completas*, 156–158.
102. “las climas de triste Europa.” Ibid., 157.
103. “cantaré feliz mi amor, mi patria, de tu rostro y de tu alma la hermosura, y tu amor inefable y mi ventura.” Ibid., 158.
104. “Así en los campos de la antigua Persia / resplandeció tu altar; así en el Cuzco / los Incas y su pueblo te acataban. / Los Incas! ¿Quién, al pronunciar su nombre, / si no nació perverso, / podrá el llanto frenar . . . ? Sencillo y puro, / de sus criaturas en la mas sublime / adorando al autor del universo / aquel pueblo de hermanos, / alzaba a ti sus inocentes manos.” Ibid., 163.
105. Martí, *José Martí: Selected Writings*, 288.

#### FIVE ↔ SUGAR, SLAVERY, AND DISINHERITANCE

1. See Bourdieu, *Distinction*; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; and Foucault, *The Order of Things*.
2. See Cummins, “From Lies to Truth.”
3. Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, 133.
4. Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage*, 24.
5. Hazard, *Cuba with Pen and Pencil*, 105.
6. The consulted archival sources and *Diario de La Habana* articles make no mention of what types of people were allowed to view the paintings.
7. This author was unable to search the *Diario de La Habana* of later in 1828 and 1829 for articles on the third inauguration painting because of the prolonged closure of the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana and the lack of availability of these materials in the United States.
8. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 18. For this society in Cuba, see Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*.
9. For primary accounts that give some sense of the social space of slave society in nineteenth-century Cuba, see Gómez de Avellaneda y Arteaga, “*Sab*” and “*Autobiography*”; Manzano, *Autobiography of a Slave*; Hazard, *Cuba with Pen and Pencil*; Abbot, *Letters Written*; Jameson, *Letters from the Havana*; Martínez-Fernández, *Fighting Slavery in the Caribbean*.
10. Romay Chacón, “Informe sobre la necesidad de aumentar la población blanca en esta isla por el Dr. Tomás Romay, 18 de diciembre de 1823. Leído en la Sociedad Económica en Junta General de 20 de diciembre de 1823,” *Obras completas*, 162–164.
11. “. . . de la gravedad y urgencia del encargo . . . procuró desempeñar con la mayor eficacia . . . á saber, lo que podía y debía hacerse de pronto dentro de los límites que permitían nuestras leyes.” Ibid., 162.
12. Ibid., 139–180.
13. For a brief history of the town of Santa María del Rosario, see Gil, *La ciudad diminuta*.

14. Gott, *Cuba*, 54.
15. *Ibid.*, 48.
16. *Ibid.*, 49.
17. For the conspiracy of Aponte, see Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution*; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba*; and Franco, *La conspiración de Aponte*.
18. This royal *cédula* was issued in Spanish, English, and French. This quotation gives the English version. *Real Cédula de 21 de Octubre de 1817, sobre aumentar la población blanca de la isla de Cuba*.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Brito, *El desarrollo urbano de Cienfuegos*, 26–28.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. See Guitar, “Boiling It Down.”
26. For the representation of race in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century New Spain, see Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain*, and Katzew, *Casta Painting*.
27. For contributions to early modern theories of race, see Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea*, 188–189, 205–213.
28. See Eze, “The Color of Reason,” 103–131. For race, art, and aesthetics, see Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*; Kant is addressed on pages 70–78.
29. Eze, “The Color of Reason,” 116. Also see Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.
30. *Ibid.*, 117.
31. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815*, 75.
32. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba*, 56–57.
33. *Ibid.*, 56.
34. Martínez, “The Black Blood of New Spain.”
35. *Ibid.*
36. See Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*.
37. See Castañeda, “The Female Slave in Cuba,” and Mena, “Stretching the Limits of Gendered Spaces.”
38. Castañeda, “The Female Slave in Cuba.”
39. As *sindico* of the Consulado of Havana, Arango was officially appointed to protect the rights of slaves in the city. *Ibid.*, 154.
40. *Ibid.*, 144.
41. *Ibid.*, 144, 153.
42. For an illustrative account of master-slave relations in Havana and on plantations, see the slave narrative of Manzano, *Autobiography of a Slave*. See also Hazard, *Cuba with Pen and Pencil*; Abbot, *Letters Written*; and Jameson, *Letters from the Havana*. Although these travelers’ accounts do not record the situation

- from a Cuban perspective, they nevertheless could be valuable tools in capturing habitual facets of everyday life that Cuban writers might have taken for granted and not written explicitly about.
43. Stolcke, *Marriage, Class and Colour*, 12.
  44. *Ibid.*, 1–26.
  45. For a comparative context in late colonial Mexico, see Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey*.
  46. The image can be found in Fane, *Converging Cultures*, 97, and is the property of the Brooklyn Museum. Another such image associated with the Order of Charles III can be found in the collection of the Archivo Histórico Nacional, Estado—Carlos III, Exp. 1928-8, Num. 8 & 9, from 1825, and apparently validates the noble lineage of Francisco Dionisio Vives.
  47. See Martínez-Fernández, *Fighting Slavery in the Caribbean*.
  48. Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux describes *pardo* battalions dressed in white uniforms with green collars, gold buttons, and short black boots, later to be changed to white trousers, dress coat, waistcoat, green lapel and collar, and black boots. *Moreno* or *negro* units wore a flesh-colored waistcoat with blue lapel and collar, white buttons, flesh-colored tied white pants, black cap, and short black boots. See Chapeaux, *Los batallones de pardos y morenos*, 43–44.
  49. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 129.
  50. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 50.
  51. Martínez, “The Black Blood of New Spain.”
  52. For this multivalent seeing among communities of African descent in the Americas, see the aforementioned scholarship on the African Diaspora in chapter 3, along with Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*. For the subaltern negotiation of hegemonic structures, see J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, and Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.
  53. The historian Antonio Miguel Alcover claims that upon completion of El Templete, the three ceiba trees that surrounded the 1754 pillar were cut down and two ceibas were planted for the new monument. See “La Misa, la Ceiba y el Templete,” 252.
  54. Macfadyen, *The Flora of Jamaica*, 92; cited in Howe, “Some Photographs of the Silk-Cotton Tree,” 221.
  55. Cabrera, *El monte*.
  56. Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods*, 111; Voeks, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé*, 20, 32, 161, 163; and Omari-Tunkara, *Manipulating the Sacred*, 93, 107. The importance of the ceiba tree to the Cuba Abakuá Society is noted in D. H. Brown, *The Light Inside*, 36, 42, 193, and 195.
  57. Cabrera, *El monte*; González-Wippler, *Santería*; and Reid, “The Yoruba in Cuba.”
  58. “La ceiba es un santo: iroko.” Cabrera, *El monte*, 150.

59. The Yoruba Supreme Trinity consists of three deities, Olodumare, Olorun, and Olofin. Cros Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 84.
60. González-Wippler, *Santería*.
61. Cabrera, *El monte*, 150.
62. Ibid., 192–193.
63. Macfadyen, *The Flora of Jamaica*.
64. González-Wippler, *Santería*, 26.
65. For the *pwataki*, see Barnet, *Afro-Cuban Religions*, 3, 32.
66. Ibid., 3–8.
67. Ibid., 7.
68. Ibid., 8.
69. For the *babalawo*, see *ibid.*, 28–30.
70. For Espada's pastoral visit of 1804, see Torres Cuevas, *Obispo de Espada: Papeles*, 178–191.
71. For accounts of the *cabildo* processions on the day of Epiphany, see Ortiz, "The Afro-Cuban Festival."
72. Miller, "Religious Symbolism," 30.
73. Quoted in Miller, "Religious Symbolism," 31–32.
74. See Barnet, *Afro-Cuban Religions*, 50–52; and Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún*.
75. Practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions are known to circumambulate the ceiba tree during religious rituals. See Cabrera, *El monte*.
76. Viarnes, "All Roads Lead to Yemayá."
77. See Brown, *Santería Enthroned*, 64–65.
78. Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 123.
79. Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts*.

## EPILOGUE

1. See Cueto, *Mialhe's Colonial Cuba*.
2. L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 6–7.
3. Ashworth and Graham, *Senses of Place*.

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