THE LANGUAGE OF MANIFEST DESTINY: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF
AMERICAN TRAVELER ACCOUNTS TO CUBA, 1820-1859

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By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to analyze how the language of manifest destiny was used by Americans travel writers visiting Cuba from 1820 to 1859 and focus on what American travelers to Cuba were reflecting upon during this decade. Travel accounts from this period helped to perpetuate the language of manifest destiny through use of metaphor and display a budding American empire as the United States sought to expand trade and enhance national security through the acquisition of Cuba. By perpetuating this rhetoric, travel accounts stoked American ambition for continued commercial expansion and possession of the island. In examining themes of commentary—namely exotic and romantic depictions of Cuba as land ripe for democracy, economic or social improvement, annexation, and American values—it is clear that knowingly or not, travelers wrote in the language of manifest destiny. These accounts reflected the ideas of expansionism, American cultural identity, and economic imperialism. Travel writers used the rhetoric of manifest destiny to portray Cuba as an exotic, naturally abundant island, in need of improvement and American values. The accounts contributed to the cultural milieu regarding attitudes on American intervention in Cuba, which existed since the days of President Jefferson. This literary style was easily understandable for educated Americans, and eminently appealing to the capitalist vanguard. In addition, these accounts helped to give voice to an evolving planetary consciousness, as the United States redefined its relationship with European rivals and the role the nation would play on the global stage.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of exponential territorial growth for the United States with the Louisiana Purchase from France, cession of the Florida territory from the Spanish, annexation of the Republic of Texas, accumulation of the Oregon Territory from the British, and the Mexican Cession after the Mexican-American War. During this period, Latin America was not immune to the territorial aspirations of the United States. In particular, Cuba was held in high value from the earliest beginnings of the republic. The strategic, political, and economic importance of the island was trumpeted, as Americans argued throughout the nineteenth century, that Cuba was destined to fall into the control of the United States and was indispensable to the security of the nation. Situated along the sea lanes of the Caribbean and guarding the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico, Cuba figured prominently in the minds and imaginations of presidents, politicians, diplomats, journalists, and American travelers during the nineteenth century. The economic relationship between Cuba and America started early in the eighteenth century, as traders established irregular commercial contacts and smuggled goods between the colonies. As North America inched toward independence, the economic connection and reliance deepened. As the nineteenth century wore on, North American capital investment increased and thousands of Americans moved to Cuba as skilled laborers, bringing with them engineering skills used to construct the railroad and operate steamships. During the westward expansion marked by this period, a unique American nationalism was forged. Settling North America for cultivation, speculation, and creation of new markets had a profound effect on the historical consciousness of the nation.
The rapid march west was achieved through a combination of force, policy goals, political savvy, rivalry with Great Britain, and public support helped by effective rhetoric from politicians and observers. What journalist, publisher, and editor John L. O’Sullivan would later term in 1845 as “manifest destiny”—God’s providential design for Americans (the Anglo-Saxon race) to expand westward in the name of liberty and democracy—was really an extended metaphor for American imperialism. ¹ Some historians point to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Transcendentalism, and the “Young America” movement as the ideological basis for manifest destiny, “by popularizing geographical determinism, the active role of Divine Providence in the nation’s destiny, the natural progress of the human race, and the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race in promoting that progress.”² In 1845, writing for the United States Magazine and Democratic Review (one of the two publications he founded) O’Sullivan used manifest destiny to explain American expansion across the Great Plains to the Pacific coast. However, he and other expansionists considered Cuba to fall into the orbit of influence for the United States—the Cubans referred American policy as la fruta Madura (ripe fruit).³ The best opportunity to pluck Cuba would not present itself until the Spanish-American War; however, the intention existed since the early nineteenth century.

Easy to understand and apply, the clever phrase simply summed up an ideology that had existed since the early stages of the American Republic. Indeed, manifest

¹ Metaphor as defined in Merriam-Webster online dictionary: a rhetorical device in which a word or phrase denoting an object or idea is deliberately used in place of another to draw an analogy or comparison between them.
The language of manifest destiny, the way the themes of the genre are appropriated, follows a predictable rhetorical trajectory in political speech, as well as, in travel accounts about Cuba. At home, politicians used themes like democracy, liberty, assertiveness, economic opportunities, and progress in their speeches while discussing matters of expansion and annexation. While away, Americans visiting Cuba in the 1820s to 1859 discussed topics like climate, soil, the institution of slavery, observations about the Cuban and Spanish population, and natural resources. Travelers also wrote about the “Cuba Question”, the need for agricultural and economics progress there, American presence on the island, and illustrated the global competition with Great Britain as a major reason why Cuba needed to become part of the Union. In essence the accounts presented a parallel between domestic discourse about Cuba and American foreign policy.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the language of manifest destiny was used by Americans travel writers visiting Cuba from 1820 to 1859. More specifically, the language of manifest destiny was persuasive because the presentation of this extended metaphor sought to draw the comparison between spreading the divinely inspired, guiding light of democracy throughout the Americas, and later around the world, but in practice dominated natural resources and controlled the indigenous population. As a metaphor, manifest destiny helped explain why the United States felt a moral responsibility to exert power over underdeveloped territory for beneficent reasons. Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States actively sought to acquire Cuba away from Spain. Even before the Florida territory was consolidated pre-1821,
Americans gazed southward to Cuba, and presumed the time would come when the island would become part of American territory. It is important to keep in mind that the concept of manifest destiny did not cause the United States to expand, but “like all ideological power, worked in practical ways and was always institutionally embedded . . .it appeared in the guise of common sense.”⁴ At its core, manifest destiny was a meme, or a cultural characteristic that was transmitted from one generation of Americans to the next.

Michael H. Hunt defines ideology as “an interrelated set of convictions or assumptions that reduces the complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality.”⁵ The nineteenth century was a time of great flux in American identity and the United States rapidly expanded across North America and immersed as the dominant power in the Western Hemisphere. The cultural legacy of manifest destiny is exhibited in travel accounts about Cuba. The rhetoric used in travel journals, helped shape public opinion and national character, but also helped articulate how Americans defined themselves against others. The preoccupation of acquiring Cuba was a powerful allure for the United States. The belief in manifest destiny reflected the cultural mores of the time, even before O’Sullivan articulated the phrase. Simply, travel accounts contributed to the national conversation regarding the “Cuba Question” and, at times, they overtly speak the language of manifest destiny.

Spanning the decades of the nineteenth century, travel literature contributed to American cultural attitudes regarding Cuba. Taken alongside official attempts to

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purchase Cuba by several presidential administrations, and the illegal filibustering operations in 1850 and 1851, travelogues contributed and reinforced the cultural milieu regarding attitudes on Cuba. The interest in Cuba is reflected in the amount of accounts Americans published before 1900. There were seven accounts published from 1820-1849, there are fourteen accounts published from 1850-1859. Travel accounts to Cuba were popular with American readers, given the propinquity of the island. In order to understand how travel accounts utilized the language of manifest destiny, this thesis seeks to address the following questions: What were American travelers looking at when they visited Cuba? How do these accounts reflect the ideas of manifest destiny—that is, expansionism, American cultural identity, and economic imperialism? How do travel writers use the language of manifest destiny to justify American expansionist ideas? Taken together, their travel accounts perpetuate the language of manifest destiny and display a burgeoning planetary consciousness of American empire as the United States sought to expand territory and trade, open new markets, enhance national security, and compete with the imperial powers like Great Britain. By perpetuating this rhetoric, travel accounts reinforced the metaphor of manifest destiny and stoked American interest and ambition for commercial expansion and possession of the island. In examining themes of commentary—namely exotic and romantic depictions of Cuba as land “ripe” for democracy, economic or social improvement, annexation, and American values—it is clear that knowingly or not, travelers demonstrated cultural assumptions, which helped guide public discourse. This literary style was familiar to Americans, having been reinforced in newspapers and the publications of expansionists and the Young America.

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movement. Manifest destiny provided expansionist justification and a sense of inevitability, without the pretext of common sense or reason. Using a metaphor to rationalize expansion was the genius of US imperialism, as Americans "embarked upon empire by way of self-deception and self-delusion, through an idiom of denial as a means of disavowal."7 Cuba’s landscape and political situation was described to frame the argument for US action there as a moral imperative. In a sense, travelers portrayed the island as a Garden of Eden, spoiled by the corruption and despotism of Spanish colonial rule. Ever the good neighbor, it was therefore America’s role to eventually bring progress and salvation to Cuba.

In many ways, the accounts are as much about American culture and dreams of expansion, as they are about the descriptions travelers sought to depict. Travelers were not the typical, workaday Americans of the nineteenth century. Instead, they were privileged, educated, and politically engaged individuals. Most traveled to Cuba without the ability to speak Spanish, or read the native language newspapers. Thus, their accounts are skewed with a sense of American nationalism. Throughout these travel journals, the authors describes discuss the need to improve Cuba, expand economic markets, secure a strategic position against European rivals, spread American values, and fulfill the goal of territorial ambition. Depictions of geography, economics, slavery, and landscape from travel accounts of the 1820s and 1840s, are virtually indistinguishable from the accounts in the late 1840s and 1850s. What is the reason for these similarities? One reason is that Cuba never exited from the imaginations of Americans. Another was the commonly held notion that attaining the island was viewed as inseparable from the

security of the United States. Louis Pérez argues, “almost all who contemplated the future well-being of the nation were persuaded that the possession of Cuba was a matter of national necessity.”

Still another reason was the influence early travel writing had on subsequently published work. Travelers would often read other accounts in preparation for their own. Therefore, many journals have similar elements of observation and serve as a feedback loop in disseminating information about Cuba. The most important reason was the impact the imbued spirit of manifest destiny had on travel writers, as they explored and described the landscape, even before it was articulated by O’Sullivan.

By the 1850s, thousands of Americans journeyed to the island for a number of reasons. The explosion in travel writing in Cuba coincided with the victory in the Mexican-American War (1848) and all the land that came with the treaty, and Narisco López’s failed filibustering expeditions to Cuba (1850 and 1851). In other examples, travelers came to escape the cold winters of the East coast, pursue business interests, enjoy the health benefits of mineral springs, or simply investigate the natural beauty of the island. The popularity of this genre of writing increased throughout mid-century. Indeed, the 1850s were a great decade in historical writing. . . .Nearly everybody wrote about what he had seen after he got home. There was scarcely a periodical, which did not print travel sketches, review travel books and describe foreign and domestic journeys. The pictorials had an advantage in this kind, for they could make their travel articles doubly attractive.9

By Harold F. Smith’s count, there were seven travel books Americans published on Cuba prior 1850, but at least seventy published from that point on through the end of the

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8 Ibid.
To be sure, the filibustering expeditions into Latin America and the spirit expressed by manifest destiny help explain the explosion of travel literature from 1850-1859. In real terms, Americans were excited by victory in the Mexican-American War of 1848, and the ever-growing interest in Cuba as a possible territorial addition. By the end of the 1850s, more and more Americans were travelling abroad and recording their impressions. Taken together, these accounts are helpful in determining how Americans viewed themselves, how they defined themselves against the rest of the world, and the specific values Americans held in esteem.

Beyond political machinations and commercial connections to Cuba, Americans who travelled there wrote a wide array of accounts that were published in journals, books, and periodicals. This thesis has relied on primary sources identified in travelers Harold F. Smith’s, *A Bibliography of American Travellers’ Books about Cuba Published Before 1900*, was consulted. While the list provided by Smith “does not purport to be complete”, nonetheless it helps point out viable sources and gives a strong foundation for inquiry. To that point, it seems this source is unique in the compilation of personal narrative travel accounts published before 1900 by Americans who had traveled to Cuba. The accounts reviewed in this thesis were published between 1824 and 1859. The beginning date was chosen because the first published account occurred in 1824, while the ending date was chosen in advance of the election of 1860—the result of which ultimately sent the Union cascading into the Civil War. The authors of the travelogues represent a spectrum of professions: clergyman Reverend Abiel Abbot; American diplomat Joel Robert Poinsett; an author identified as “Invalid”, likely Albert E. Foote;

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physician John George F. Wurdemann; writers and newspaper men like Benjamin Moore Norman, William Cullen Bryant, Maturin Murray Ballou, William Henry Hurlbert, and, Richard Henry Dana; lawyer Richard Burleigh Kimball; filibuster Lt. Richardson Hardy; and, businessman Joseph J. Dimock. 12

In writing this thesis, a number of secondary sources have been consulted. The theoretical framework for this thesis is a result of synthesis from the work of other historians. American travelers most assuredly viewed Cubans and Spaniards as “the other”, and their encounters defined the contact zone. As Mary Louise Pratt defines it, the contact zone is the “space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.”13 While Pratt was writing specifically about the “colonial frontier” of European expansionism, the term can be applied to US-Cuban relations. However, for the purpose of this analysis, it is interesting to view that relationship through the lens of what Lora Romero called the “home front” of imperial culture. That is, the “home front” denotes the area sealed off from the front line, but nonetheless provides a “formidable line of attack and engagement.”14 Indeed, travelers accounts were published for domestic consumption and as the nineteenth century wore on, more accounts were published, coinciding with American interest in Cuba. The popularity of the accounts varied, however, many were reprinted in multiple editions throughout the nineteenth century. The dominant representations of Cuba are embedded in elements of nationalism and also

reflect upon American cultural assumptions. Travel accounts reflected a new planetary
consciousness, as American influence grew in Latin America. Pratt defines planetary
consciousness as, “A shift that coincides with many others including. . . the inauguration
of a new territorial phase of capitalism propelled by searches for new materials, the
attempt to extend coastal trade inland, and national imperatives to seize overseas territory
in order to prevent its being seized by rival European powers.” 15 Certainly, this was the
case with the relationship between the United States and Cuba, as capital flowed in and
measures were taken to keep the French and British out.

The genre of travel literature helped frame the complexities of Cuban geography,
society, political, and economic conditions for the reading public, albeit through a narrow
lens. In, Cuba in the American Imagination, Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos, Louis
Pérez argues, “the US experience with Cuba had a defining impact on the sense of
purpose with which Americans would project their power abroad.” 16 Intervention in
Cuba was the early laboratory of American empire. As a metaphor, manifest destiny
served “as a mode of discourse in the service of power” to dominate and submit
territory. 17 The pathway to “imperialism was inscribed within cultural forms as sources
of usable modes of knowledge and deployed by way of metaphorical constructs as usable
modes of conduct.” 18 Manifest destiny insinuated itself into the culture. The meaning of
manifest destiny changed, as the US expanded and became more powerful. Pérez says,
“metaphor creates new knowledge by way of old information and thereby shapes

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15 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 9.
16 Pérez, Cuba in the American Imagination, 17.
17 Ibid, 29.
18 Ibid, 17.
Certainly, the way in which Cuba was portrayed helped influence American imagination about the island. What made Cuba unique in the minds of Americans was “the prominence of metaphor in the production of knowledge”, as well as, reinforcing “formulations of cultural models” and shaping “the moral logic of power as a normative phenomenon.” Figurative language has the power to “represent the exercise of North American power as a matter of moral purpose.” Applying this type of analysis to travel accounts, unveils the cultural perception that Cuba was intricately linked to the grander moral mission of manifest destiny, as well as economic and political security of the United States. Amy Kaplan argues “that domestic metaphors of national identity are ultimately intertwined with the renderings of the foreign and the alien, and that the notions of the domestic and the foreign mutually constitute one another in an imperial context.” In other words, as a new planetary consciousness took hold Americans defined themselves against “the other”, and a unique national culture was built. Manifest destiny was part of a larger national spirit that assumed superiority, and justified expansion.

The way in which American travelers described Cuban society, geography, politics, and culture tells the reader a great deal about the values and cultural assumptions of the nineteenth century. As Alice R. Wexler points out, “the ways in which an observer selected and emphasized information, the categories, into which this information was organized, the value judgments, explicit or implicit, accorded various types of behavior, and the imagery and language in which such judgments were communicated all may tell

19 Ibid, 29.
20 Ibid, 17.
21 Ibid, 20.
22 Kaplan, The Anarchy of Empire, 4.
us something of the consciousness of the observer.” 23 The accounts also express interest and concern for the economic and social affairs of Cuba—particularly the fear of a slave revolt—and, cast a critical eye toward Spanish colonial administration. Robert W. Johannsen has argued for a broader understanding of manifest destiny, and says, “The mission of democracy was also the mission of the Democracy.” 24 By connecting “little-d”, democracy to the expansion of “big-D” Democracy, he argues in the mid-nineteenth century manifest destiny was an inescapable component within the broader American cultural milieu.

The difficulty in pinpointing manifest destiny to a certain ideological appeal is notable, since not all uses and working definitions were compatible with one another. Manifest destiny represented the belief that Americans would, take on an increasingly expansive role in the world; establish communities throughout the continent; help with reforms that would complete a utopian vision of the world 25; and, bring democracy, religion, and salvation. 26 The motivation for manifest destiny was also varied, as visionaries were not necessarily inspired by partisan or sectional lines, but justified expansion based on racial superiority. Even abolitionists, like clergyman and coeditor of the Massachusetts Quarterly Review Theodore Parker, favored territorial expansion as a way of celebrating the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race. 27 The term quickly became a catchall for all things resembling expansion, though, not in the democratic, nonviolent romantic way O’Sullivan imagined it—he only created the idiom, but could not control

24 Ibid, 11.
25 This is particularly the case when manifest destiny is viewed against the backdrop of the Second Great Awakening.
27 Ibid.
how the term was appropriated and manipulated. Even still, O’Sullivan along with other members of the capitalist vanguard, those who sought to evaluate, speculate and profit from the landscape of Cuba.

The work is divided into three main chapters, Chapter Two, “Answering the Cuba Question”, explores the history of manifest destiny as applied to Cuba during the early to mid-nineteenth century. This section examines the United States diplomatic view of Cuba and explores how political actors, John L. O’Sullivan, and filibusters viewed the island. The main argument is that while the metaphor of manifest destiny was not created until 1845, the sentiment to occupy and control Cuba predated to early 1800. This is significant because travel accounts echoed American foreign policy goals, and along with filibustering expeditions, helped to shape public opinion on the “Cuba Question”—the question of annexation. Chapter Three, “A Date with Destiny, Travel Accounts from 1820 to 1845” and Chapter Four, “Spirit of the Times, Travel Accounts from 1845 to 1859”, analyzes the consistency in describing the landscape of Cuba and the presence of the language of manifest destiny in these accounts. The annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American war justify the choice of the break point between Chapter Three and Chapter Four. As a result of those forces, America was forced to confront an expanding frontier and the looming sectional crisis that was brought about by territorial growth. The conclusion makes sense of the larger themes of expansion, rhetoric, and global competition.
 CHAPTER 2: ANSWERING THE “CUBA QUESTION”

The so-called “Cuba Question”, about how Cuba could become part of the United States, persisted in the minds of Americans throughout the nineteenth century. This question was part of the larger national conversation about expansionism and manifest destiny that ran through this century, as a young America quickly expanded beyond the original thirteen colonies. American culture was unique in the world, marked by capitalism, territorial openness, and republicanism. This brand of nationalism was unlike the European model, which stressed homogeneity. Given the amount of spatial openness in North America, the overall orientation was geared toward westward expansion for cultivation and speculation. In the nineteenth century, manifest destiny was viewed as the divinely ordained right for the United States to expand from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, in order to occupy territory for the growing population, spread the excellence of American republicanism, and exert economic control over the entire continent. John L. O’Sullivan supported this movement by arguing, the “claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.” Finally enunciated, this idiom gave nomenclature to an idea that had nonetheless existed since the early days of the republic. The ideology of manifest destiny rationalized western expansionism, defined national glory, expressed transnational rivalries, codified culture, and thereby helping to entrench these sentiments into national character. Manifest Destiny also contrasted the American style of expansion with that of Great Britain, concluding that the United States

did so democratically, while the British did so violently. In fact, Americans argued, the
democratic values within the Constitution attracted colonies by virtue of magnetic
attraction. The manifest destiny espoused on paper and in speeches was a non-violent
approach, where new people would clamor to be a part of the United States, in order to be
part of a republican institution, ruled by law and equality. Practically speaking, achieving
manifest destiny would require a more aggressive and nationalistic approach, and in the
case of Cuba, culminated with deposing Spanish rule.

Well before the travelers made their respective voyages, but shortly after the call
for American Independence in November 1776, the Spanish opened Cuban ports to
American trade. In the near term, this move was meant to antagonize Great Britain and
give Cuba unfettered access to the North American market. In the long term, the
relationship between the United States and Cuba would lead down a path of economic
imperialism and exploitations. In January of 1784, Spain resumed a policy of “peninsular
commercial exclusivity” and stopped trading with the Americans.²⁹ While this episode
was short lived, this sort of inconsistent reopening and closing of ports to the United
States usually coincided as tension between Spain, France, and England verged on
hostilities. Again in 1796 through 1801 Cuban ports were reopened to the American
markets. Indeed the economic connection between North America and Cuba was a
function of geographic location, but also the confluence of many other factors. In Cuba
and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy, Louis A. Pérez points out the nature of
“Spanish colonial administration and commercial policies to world market forces and
regional political conditions to unanticipated opportunity and calculated opportunity to

²⁹ Louis A. Pérez, Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy (Athens: University of Georgia
Cuban economic needs and the capacity of the United States to meet those needs and vice versa” created a unique and multifaceted relationship.30 The Cuban economy increasingly became specialized in exporting tobacco, hides, and sugar. In a short time, the Spanish government could not accommodate the changing nature of the Cuban economy and inefficiencies in the colonial administration created a push factor to trade with North America. Intermittently, Spanish policy sought to repress the economic interdependence and sever the illicit trade in hides, tobacco, and sugar. Whenever the Spanish cut-off North American trade networks, the metropolis could not fulfill Cuban demands and smuggling and piracy resumed. Cuba exported sugar, molasses, rum, and coffee, while the United States exported food, clothing, furniture, manufactured goods, and most importantly, slaves. The need for enslaved Africans would top the list for plantation owners in Cuba and the US was an ideal trading partner, because of her potent merchant marine, growing demand for Cuban goods, and an expanding population and economy. Both countries were shaped by these interactions, but the character of Cuba’s socio-economic class structure was impacted, as wealth and land were concentrated into the hands of elite Cuban planters and American capitalists.

As Rodrigo Lazo points out in, Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States, Cuba presented an interesting array of conditions for American foreign policy. In addition to physical proximity to the Gulf Coast, unlike many other formerly controlled Latin American countries, Cuba did not liberate itself from Spain in the 1820s, nor was slavery abolished.31 This increased the appeal, particularly in the eyes of Southern slaveholders and pro-slavery Northerners, for those who wanted Cuba to be

30 Pérez, Cuba and the United States, xv.
an extension of the Southern plantation system. In addition to economic benefits, adding
Cuba to the Union would give Southern states increased Congressional representation.
While the commercial transactions were beneficial to both places, these benefits were not
enjoyed equally. To be sure, this relationship would continue to evolve economically,
socially, and politically throughout the nineteenth century.

Since the presidency of Thomas Jefferson in the early nineteenth century, Cuba
factored into the imagination of expansionists as an extension of this orientation.
President Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, thereby
doubling the size of the country at that time. He also wanted to claim Florida from Spain
as compensation from Spanish attacks on American shipping interests during the
European wars—American control of Florida was not realized until 1819 to 1821. 32  For
Jefferson and ensuing presidents, the calculus involving Cuba and national security was
simple. United States territorial sovereignty would never be “inviolable to European
aggressions as long as the Floridas belonged to a transoceanic power” and it was
Jefferson’s view that, “Cuba [was] an extension of Florida that belonged within the
defense perimeter of the United States.” 33  According to Charles H. Brown, in Agents of
Manifest Destiny: the Lives and Times of the Filibusters, President Jefferson “considered
the island a necessary appendage of the United States.” 34  The use of metaphor here is
striking—without the island, the US would be short a limb. Therefore, Jefferson and his
successors continued a policy position that essentially towed the line at Spanish

33 Charles Henry Brown, Agents of Manifest Destiny: the Lives and times of the Filibusters (Chapel Hill:
34 Ibid.
occupation of Cuba—that is, the United States would be unwilling to see a stronger European power, like England or France, encroach on the island.

Subsequent to Jefferson, American presidential administrations viewed a stable Cuba as essential to the security of the nation. In 1810, President James Madison ordered the annexation of the Florida territory under the terms of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, against desperate British protests. Ever fearful of the British encroachment in North America, in 1811 Madison and Congress secretly enacted the “No Transfer” bill which would guide American foreign policy for the entire century. The foreign policy approach to Cuba was relatively simple; Spain could maintain control of the island, so long as American commercial interests were protected. In addition, politicians and commentators thought Cuba should only remain a colony of Spain, never to become the territory of another European nation, particularly Great Britain. This approach was further articulated in the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. In practical terms, this meant that Cuba was going to remain under American influence and Spanish control, rather than as an independent state or under the control of another European power. As Pérez writes, the acquisition of the island represented a logical progression of existing “boundaries manifestly destined to expand a way of defending territorial gains of past expansion and the means of future ones.”

In a letter to President James Monroe on October 24th, 1823 Jefferson made clear the appeal of Cuba, “I candidly confess that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States. The control which, with Florida Point, this island would give us over the Gulf of Mexico, and the countries and isthmus bordering on it, would fill up the measure of our political

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well-being.”36 Again, the security of the United States is intimately connected to a mollified Cuba.

Strategic thinking dictated that control over Cuba meant the United States could project more power across the region. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams echoed the strategic importance of Cuba, in a letter dated April 28, 1823 to Hugh Nelson, the American minister in Madrid. In this letter Adams refers to Cuba as, “an object of transcendent importance to the political and commercial interests of our Union. [Which]...it is scarcely possible to resist the conviction that the annexation of Cuba to our federal republic will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself.”37 He predicted Cuba would fall into the orbit of the US, given the “laws of political as well as physical gravitation.”38 Newtonian’s law aside, Cuba looked like it was preordained to come under the influence of the United States. Using metaphor to explain the destinarian logic of the US-Cuba relationship, Adams reasons, “if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree, cannot chose but fall to the ground” and “can gravitate only” to the United States.39 The metaphor can mean only one thing, as Adams evokes a sense of Eden and providence—American democracy is the most magnetic force in the Western Hemisphere. Despite the significance Adams attributes to the annexation of Cuba, in this same letter he also disqualifies the feasibility of taking control of the island. Citing a number of obstacles, the least of which being a relative lack of national preparedness for this endeavor, one thing is certain, “the transfer of Cuba to

37 Ibid. 3.
Great Britain would be an event unpropitious to the interests of this Union."\textsuperscript{40} Former colonies of Spain were newly independent and could be manipulated by a stronger nation, but the United States was not yet there.

In effect, the sentiments expressed by Jefferson and Adams, helped form the backbone of the policy expressed by President James Monroe in December 1823, during his annual address to Congress. Earlier in 1822, Spain seemed likely to lose Cuba to France or England. To help protect an increasing American sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere, the Monroe Doctrine stipulated to European Powers that the United States, “should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.”\textsuperscript{41} Again, the United States would accept status quo colonialism or an independence movement, but not the transfer of territory to European rivals. The Monroe Doctrine explicitly staked out America’s area of concern and designated a foreign policy approach that would guide Presidents, through the Cuban Missile Crisis, albeit symbolically.\textsuperscript{42} Meanwhile, in December 1824 Spain suffered defeat at the hands of Simón Bolivar. This left Spain, the ailing empire, with only Cuba and Puerto Rico as her colonial possessions. Over the next several decades, Cuban slave owners, fearful of a slave revolt in Haiti sided with American slave owners in favor of annexation.\textsuperscript{43} Jane Franklin estimates over 600,000 Africans were imported as slaves during the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} The Reports of the Committees of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session on the Thirty-fifth Congress. 3.
\textsuperscript{41} James Monroe, "Transcript of Monroe Doctrine (1823)," Welcome to OurDocuments.gov, accessed April 29, 2011.
\textsuperscript{42} James Monroe, "Transcript of Monroe Doctrine (1823).
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
In November 1839 the *Democratic Review* published an article titled, “The Great Nation of Futurity”, penned by O’Sullivan. Journals like the *Democratic Review* did not circulate to a grand audience, but was read widely by important decision makers. Indeed, the paper was the mouth piece for the Democrats—an administration paper. The rhetoric reflected the republican virtues of Jacksonian ideology. Namely, that individualism reigned supreme, and opportunity and expansion for everyone should continue without government regulation. While the phrase manifest destiny is not used in this article, nonetheless, the building blocks of that ideology are contained therein. O’Sullivan points out predestined greatness and American exceptionalism, when he expounds,

. . . we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity. . . America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battle fields, but in deference of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. . . In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High. . . governed by God’s natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood—of ‘peace and good will amongst men.’

His voice is confident and presumptive, his rhetoric soaring and reverential—this is the future. However, O’Sullivan issues a warning to America about falling into the trap of imitating European powers, calling such action “absurd and injurious.” When Americans look abroad for “the highest standards of law, judicial wisdom, and literary excellence” it is paramount to subjugating the native sense “to a most obsequious idolatry of the tastes, sentiments, and prejudices of Europe.” The Jacksonian sentiment of individuality and freedom rings clear, as O’Sullivan seeks to project a future where

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46 Ibid, 428.
47 Ibid.
America is not influenced or compelled by Europe. He argues that despite similarities in laws, judges, colleges, and literature America will progress, “compelled to follow the mighty impulse of the age.” 48 A movement of the masses, another popular ideological component of Jacksonianism, was inevitable, as was their rejection of “the rubbish, the prejudices, the superstitions” of theocratic clergy, aristocratic control, and divinely righted monarchs.49 All that needs to happen, O’Sullivan argues, is that the people need to inform the professional, literary, and commercial ranks of their views against “a strong government irresponsible to the popular majority, to the will of the masses.”50 Finally, America will fulfill her destiny, and set the high example that will “smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, oligarchs, and carry the tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field.”51 The rhetoric sets the bar of manifest destiny incredibly high, eschewing European traditions for those uniquely American—equality of rights and the equality of individuals. All done peacefully and as a reflection of the choice of those living in areas destined to be controlled by America. Obviously, the historical record shows these qualities were in relatively short supply for women, slaves, and immigrants, but nonetheless, these ideas were what helped propel Jacksonian Democracy.

In part, threat of British colonization drove the desire to annex territory in the Americas. Jacksonians feared the threat of an imperialist Great Britain, violently and brutally expanding through North America, as it had in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Therefore, geopolitical rivalry increased the tension and competition between Great

48 Ibid, 429.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid, 430.
Britain and the United States in the region. Stanford historian Sohui Lee argues, “the emergent rhetoric of US manifest destiny carried an oblique challenge to Great Britain’s” control of North America.⁵² Lee continues, manifest destiny was not just a clever term, but was used by O’Sullivan and other Jacksonian authors like William Cullen Bryant, to express a nascent American nationalism, which defined itself through rivalry with Great Britain for control as the dominant power in North America. O’Sullivan’s July-August 1845 article, “Annexation”, expresses a strong nationalistic urge to annex Texas, in order to stymie hostility from European powers. This essay shows multiple elements of the rhetoric of manifest destiny, employing thematic elements like nationalism, geopolitical rivalry, democratic principles, and prowess of American technical advancements. He accuses Britain and France of engaging “in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”⁵³

In addition to delineating the rivalry, O’Sullivan also clearly calls for California to become independent from Mexico. Mexico is “imbecile and distracted” from the “remote province”, O’Sullivan explains, so much so that “the impotence of the one and the distance of the other” have created “virtual independence.”⁵⁴ This is a gender based critique, calling into question the masculinity of the government. Name calling aside, O’Sullivan urgently notes a threat to American interests. Mexico is not strong enough to

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⁵⁴ Ibid.
maintain possession over her territory, beyond using tyranny. Therefore, the government is illegitimate and independence is inevitable. The danger, he tells, is “already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon”, gaining a foothold along and within California’s border. While it was the right of inhabitants to establish self-government, this process would be free from American influence. The possibility also exists, O’Sullivan purports, that a future California might not wish to be a part of the Union, “unless the projected railroad across the continent to the Pacific be carried into effect, perhaps they may not.” To conclude, he dismisses “idle” talk of a balance of power “on the American continent” with France, and exclaims, “there is no growth in Spanish America!” The only competition for population growth comes from British controlled Canada, but they are nothing more than a “colonial relation to the little island three thousand miles away across the Atlantic.”

Representing the “colonizing practices” of rival Great Britain served the political purpose of the Democratic Review, as did the comparison of British imperialism versus American “‘democratic’ empire building.” The Democratic Review published articles, poetry, and speeches, which argued that America was destined to be a grander empire than Great Britain. The United States practiced a peaceful and virtuous policy of territorial expansion, O’Sullivan and other Jacksonians argued, a departure from the abusive policies of Great Britain. The Democratic Review published propaganda that defined American expansion in opposition to the violent British model. In doing so, American’s would bring the guiding light of democracy to new territory annexed into the Union.

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55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Lee, "Chapter 14: Manifest Empire", 186.
Andrew Jackson’s policy of western expansion and territorial aggrandizement continued through the Van Buren administration, but accelerated aggressively under James K. Polk. On December 4, 1845, President Polk delivered his annual message to Congress. Polk’s comments echo those of O’Sullivan’s piece “Annexation”, as he speaks enthusiastically about manifest destiny and also about keeping European powers out of American affairs. In speaking about annexing Texas, Polk said, “We have not sought to extend our territorial possessions by conquest, or our republican institutions over a reluctant people. It was the deliberate homage of each people to the great principle of our federative union.” His choice of words reflect the prevailing sentiment expressed by many Jacksonians that territory would be drawn into the United States by virtue of alluring of democratic institutions and desire for peace. Polk continues,

We may rejoice that the tranquil and pervading influence of the American principle of self-government was sufficient to defeat the purposes of British and French interference, and that the almost unanimous voice of the people of Texas has given to that interference a peaceful and effective rebuke. From this example European governments may learn how vain diplomatic arts and intrigues must ever prove upon this continent against that system of self-government which seems natural to our soil, and which will ever resist foreign interference.

It is clear that his statements are meant as a proclamation against encroachment by Great Britain and France, as he was keenly sensitive to enforcing the Monroe Doctrine. President Polk successfully steered Texas (1845), the Oregon Territory (1846), and the spoils of the US-Mexico War (1848). The new territory was administered by the federal government, until vast tracts were handed over to private interests who cultivated and developed the land, a process which would continue throughout the nineteenth and

61 Ibid.
twentieth centuries. Therefore, in the minds of expansionists, growth and progress existed in concert. The rapid expansion from the early 1800s through the 1850s not only made the country rich, but helped define an aspect of American nationalism marked by spatial openness and the freedom to move wherever, free from government intrusion.  

Acquisition of new territory brought about an array of growing pains. The issue of expanding slavery into the new territory deepened the virulent political sectionalism between “free-soilers” and slavocrats. Once the rhetoric of manifest destiny was expressed in an ideology, the language of destinarianism was conveniently used to justify either the support or opposition of aggressive annexation. It is important to note that while a certain segment of society opposed the expansion of slavery into new territory, it did not mean they favored an egalitarian society. As new states and territory were admitted to the Union, the debate in Congress grew more sharply delineated along sectional lines. The Compromise of 1850 helped stave off disaster, but only temporarily. The irony has always been that the vast natural resources and tracts of land, which make the United States unique, gave rise to the argument that nearly broke her asunder in the 1860s.

By the 1850’s, the United States would be the largest market for Cuban goods and would provide Cuban planters access to capital, slaves, skilled workers, and technology. Louis Pérez’s research shows that 1,702 North American ships sailed to Cuba between the years of 1846-1850. The increase in shipping ties coincided with the amount of Americans travelling to Cuba and consequently number of journals they published. Despite being offshore, Cuba was not immune to the destiny of expansion.

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Until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, there was strong support among the Creole elite to join America, in order to protect land ownership and guarantee the continuance of the slave system. If anything, interest in the island increased during mid-century, particularly among those who wanted to invade Cuba and foment rebellion against the Spanish Empire. Annexation was the answer to the “Cuba Question” and throughout the nineteenth century it was considered a forgone conclusion in the United States and among the property owning Creole elite. Among this element of Cuban society, it was held that annexation would help stabilize their control over land and establish socioeconomic control over the modes of production. Of course there was Cuban resistance to annexation in the Cuba libre movement and among the governing Spanish, but this did not keep the notion out of the minds of North Americans. To a large degree, the explanation is the increase in maritime traffic, both commercial and passenger. However, it was also a byproduct of expanding economic, cultural, and political forces shaping this American-Cuban relationship.

As the “Cuba Question” persisted throughout the 1840s and 1850s, the nation doubled in size in less than five years. While travelers like Richard B. Kimball and William Cullen Bryant were writing about their trips to Cuba in the 1850s, others in the United States were busy making preparations. Brown describes these

Self-appointed agents of Manifest Destiny, the filibusters, often deceived by vainglorious and self-seeking foreign revolutionists, carried on elaborate intrigues to organize their expeditions, resorted to ruses to escape the vigilance of officials directed to prevent their departure, landed on foreign soil with only a few armed men to conquer a country, and fought against defending forces, invariably losing sooner rather than later, only to return to the United States to try again—and again, and again.64

64 Brown, Agents of Manifest Destiny, 18.
In typical “adventure capital” fashion, investors, looking to profit on taking over Cuba, supported filibusters. The “agents of Manifest Destiny” were actual practitioners of the divinely inspired mission to take over the North America. These men put time, energy, blood, and money into fulfilling this destiny. As Robert E. May points out in, Manifest Destiny’s Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America the ranks of these men were drawn transcended class, ethnic, and regional lines.65 This is important to note, since the rhetoric of manifest destiny crossed regional and class lines, even as plots in Cuba intended to continue and expand slavery. The forces of adventure, wealth, and promise of land coalesced around would-be filibusters more so than any other dominant ideology. Filibustering expeditions were romanticized by participants and the media—raise a private army, subvert international law, conquer a foreign land with an intrepid band of soldiers, and share the spoils and glory of war. Undoubtedly, travel literature helped encourage these expeditions by providing descriptions of abundant natural resources, depicting the land as ripe for the taking, and by documenting fortifications and indicating places to land insurrectionary forces.

Men looking for adventure and personal enrichment hatched plans to annex Cuba through purchase or force, but filibustering was not an isolated phenomenon of the 1850s. Expeditions only reached a high water mark during this decade. Taken from the Dutch word for “freebooter”, the term “filibuster” was not originally used in the pejorative. Prior to the Civil War the term described American adventurers who planned or raised private armies to invade foreign countries with whom the United States was at peace. Only later would Americans join Spanish and Latin American authorities in

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classifying these men as pirates. Like manifest destiny, filibustering existed before the phrase was coined. Take for instance Vermonter Ira Allen, who sought help from the French in a plot to takeover Canada in 1796, and turn it into an independent republic called United Columbia. Filibustering escapades to New Spain’s territory in the Floridas, Louisiana, Texas, and Venezuela, occurred as early as 1808. Immediately after the Mexican-American War and leading into the Civil War, filibustering in the United States reached its zenith in both active participation and material support. These expeditions violated the terms of international law, and specifically the US Neutrality Act of 1818—even though the United States had a mixed record for suppressing the filibusters. Despite the legal prohibitions against filibustering, thousands of Americans supported missions abroad either materially or martially, to invade countries in Latin American. John L. O’Sullivan was lucky enough to only lose money and face prosecution for scheming to attain Cuba. Others, like Narisco López were executed—an occupational hazard for filibusters. These expeditions damaged American diplomatic relations with foreign nations, particularly Spain, and brought to the fore sectional difficulties prior to the Civil War. Mainly, the tension revolved around the issue of expanding slavery into new territories, where it was not already present.

Estimating participation in these illegal endeavors depends on how filibusterism is defined. If one counts those who actual took up arms and invaded foreign lands, the number is probably around five thousand, a marginal number in relation to more than

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66 May, Manifest Destiny's Underworld, 4.
67 Ibid.
68 For more on Sullivan’s role in filibustering Cuba, please see Robert Sampson, John L. O'Sullivan and His Times (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), Google Books, 212-242.
thirty-one million Americans in the 1860 Census. However, if the definition of filibusters is expanded to those who helped aid, finance, advocate, and equip those who planned and those who invaded Latin American countries, the number is much higher.

This point is stressed by Harold F. Smith when he argues,

> The filibustering expeditions of the 1850’s and the spirit of expansion in America embodied in Manifest Destiny is evidenced by the burst of literature which appeared from 1850 to 1865. This in part reflects the expansionist spirit following the War with Mexico, the interest in Cuba as possible slave-holding territory, and the ferment in American life as the nation boomed during the 1850’s.

The reasons behind filibustering activities are varied and oftentimes existed in concert. Spain gradually constricted control over Cuba throughout the nineteenth century. Cuban legislative assemblies were terminated and Creoles (native born Cubans of Spanish descent) were removed from government postings, only to be replaced by Peninsulares (Spanish born). The Spanish also threatened to abolish slavery. Wealthy Creoles, advocated for annexation in order to maintain the labor system.

Despite the illegality of filibuster expeditions, there was active recruitment in port cities like New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Mobile. Newspaper ads referred applicants to storefront recruiting stations. Big cities had plenty of unemployed men who gladly volunteered for pay commensurate to service in the US Army. For example, in New York 200,000 to 400,000 immigrants arrived annually from the late 1840s to early 1850s. In part, this helps explain why immigrants joined expeditions. The Mexican-American War proved a boon for future filibustering ventures. The United States government raised a volunteer army for the invasion of Mexico. This provided an

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69 May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 52.
71 May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 94.
escape valve for would-be adventurers and it also provided opportunity after the war. Thousands of soldiers had been trained, only to be discharged or assigned to peacetime posts. It was not uncommon to see men from volunteer fire departments and militia companies joining the ranks.\textsuperscript{72} One byproduct of the end of war in 1848, was a large contingent of veterans were mustered out of service. Now unemployed, some of these men longed for a sense of camaraderie. For men already in the military, filibustering presented them with opportunities for career advancement. Since battlefield exposure was virtually nonexistent since 1848, officers in the US Army were compelled to join expeditions. The pragmatic reason men were attracted to filibustering is because of the wages and promised bonuses of higher rank, providing mission success.

In addition to immigrants from Europe and returning soldiers, Americans were migrating to these cities as well. For some newcomers, the city was a challenging environment. The socio-economic changes brought about during this period of urbanization left men suffering from a crisis of masculinity. Working men were increasingly anonymous and experienced a loss of autonomy working in mills, mines, and factories. In an increasing mechanized society there was a loss of manly arts, and therefore the need to prove oneself to his peers. In Antebellum America, many young men were trying to live out their own historical romance like those of Sir Walter Scott. Tales like, \textit{Ivanhoe} and \textit{Rob Roy}, imbued the notions of chivalry, travel, heroism, and adventure onto the younger generation. Young men saw filibustering as a way of living out the romantic fantasy, helping an oppressed people throw off the chains of tyranny, establish their manhood, and if all else fails, die a glorious death on the battlefield.

\textsuperscript{72} May, \textit{Manifest Destiny's Underworld}, 102.
Toward the end of 1847, the Club de la Habana (Cuba’s Havana Club) began to enlist soldiers of fortune to invade the island. The Havana Club was made up of “Creole merchants, planters, and professionals who favored the annexation of their island to the United States.” In 1848, US consul in Havana, Robert B. Campbell wrote to inform the US State Department that Cuban rebels were actively looking to enlist a “few of the volunteer regiments now in Mexico” to join in overthrowing Spanish rule. Shortly after, the Havana Club sent a business agent to Mexico in order to proposition US General William Jenkins Worth, to take command of a private expeditionary force. General Worth and his troops successfully fought in the attack upon the Casa Mata, one of the bloodiest battles of the war. It is unclear how seriously Worth considered leading the filibusters, but a pattern was established. Organizations like the Havana Club and it’s affiliate, Consejo de Organización y Gobierno Cubano (Cuban Council), would attempt to hire battle tested American commanders, in order to more easily raise money, attract recruits, and gain annexation to the United States.

For his part, O’ Sullivan was actively engaged in lobbying for the annexation of Cuba, and when that failed, trying to conquer the island. He was personally and financially connected to these endeavors. For him, claiming Cuba was a personal quest of manifest destiny, while his role in the schemes were multifaceted between his writing, political maneuvering, and role as filibuster sympathizer. There is no coincidence that the Democratic Review published travel literature and had articles that promoted manifest destiny, while O’Sullivan actively pursued taking over Cuba. Mary Louise Pratt makes

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73 May, Manifest Destiny's Underworld, 14.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid, 22.
this essential argument, as she credits the travel literature genre with motivating the capitalist vanguard to come and speculate in foreign, exotic places.

In this case, O’Sullivan created a term of art and then attempted to cash in on acquiring Cuba by any means necessary. Familiar with the island, he honeymooned there in 1846, staying in the home of one of his sisters and Cristóbal Madan, his wealthy brother-in-law. Madan is notable because he was one of the heads of the Cuban Council. Ever the romantic, O’Sullivan was easily convinced of the need to liberate and annex Cuba and worked efficiently to do so, even running afoul of the law. As early as January 1847, O’Sullivan approached then Secretary of State James Buchanan about the idea.76 O’Sullivan travelled to Cuba to “foment an uprising to make the island independent.”77 In May 1848, together with Senator Stephen A. Douglas, O’Sullivan travelled to Washington to urge President Polk to take “measures” to purchase Cuba from Spain.78 Understanding that Spain would not let Cuba go if it meant wounding “national pride”, O’Sullivan counseled a secret mission to negotiate a purchase price of one hundred million dollars.79 President Polk was supportive of this idea and at a meeting on May 30, 1848 he sought input from his cabinet members. He received a mixed response, and Secretary of State Buchanan warned that purchasing Cuba might push the US into war with Great Britain or France—just the same Buchanan was supportive of the move.80 These negotiations commenced in June 1848, when Polk authorized the American minister in Spain to buy Cuba for the recommended amount of one hundred million dollars.

76 As President, Buchanan (1857-1861) tried to purchase Cuba from Spain, but Congress was too divided and preoccupied with sectional disputes to give the matter real consideration. As a Democrat, he was an ardent expansionist.
77 Ibid, 25.
78 Sampson, John L. O’Sullivan, 217.
79 Ibid, 218.
80 Ibid, 218.
dollars and also inform the Spaniards that the US “would not let it [Cuba] fall into the hands of another power.”81

While the negotiations were underway, tipped off by Campbell, O’Sullivan, and others, word reached the White House of the plan to invade Cuba that summer. With the Mexican-American War over, the Polk administration was inundated with reports of filibuster plots into Northern Mexico, Venezuela, and as Campbell put it, “armed invasions” into Havana by Americans.82 The diplomat’s report portended filibustering campaigns to come. To be sure, these machinations frustrated the ongoing negotiations by the Polk’s administration to purchase Cuba. In order to convey good faith to Spain, Polk ordered his cabinet to take preventative measures. Secretary of War William L. Marcy warned military officials in Mexico of the plot and ordered troop transports to steer away from Cuban ports.83 In a diplomatic attempt to repair the damage that the appearance of colluding with Cuban rebels may have caused, Secretary of State Buchanan warned the Spanish of the pending rebellion. Neither course resulted in the desired outcome; Spain stubbornly held onto the prized island and punished the perpetrators. Foiled diplomatically, a bold new approach was needed.

Narisco López was just the filibuster for this campaign. Having barely escaped to New York with his life for his role in the spoiled Cuban revolution, he was born in Venezuela and had served in the Spanish army reaching the rank of colonel. When Bolivar drove the Spanish government out of South America, López and the rest of the army relocated to Cuba and he married into a wealthy noble family.84 While his motives

81 Ibid, 16.
82 Ibid, 17.
83 May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld*, 16.
are unclear, López became embroiled in several plots to remove the Spanish government from Cuba. However, López’s attempts at invading Cuba, as Robert Sampson articulates, “read like the script of a Keystone Cops comedy, complete with leaky boats, missed rendezvous, abrupt and illogical changes in plans, mutinies, and promised rebellions that failed to materialize.”85 O’Sullivan helped secure money, political access, and material support for these expeditions, serving as a “business agent” in New York and Washington, DC.86 The López expeditions into Cuba were widely covered in the press during May 1850 and August 1851. Particularly, the 1850 López expedition drew national attention, even as the Compromise of 1850 was being negotiated, with the Union in the balance. Americans were enthralled by the expeditions and the “Cuban matter.” The unfolding sectional crisis was overshadowed in the media with reports on the filibusters. Ralph Waldo Emerson reported in his journal that President Millard Fillmore devoted, “twice as much attention to the Cuban invasions as to the North-South crisis over slavery.”87 The filibuster force was comprised mainly of men from Kentucky and Louisiana, who departed in from New Orleans in May 1850, amidst cheers of support from onlookers. Many reports grossly exaggerated the success of López’s expedition, and he returned in defeat. In fact, the exercise was a debacle for López and he narrowly escaped to Key West, leaving men behind. He had hoped to liberate Cuba by fomenting a popular rebellion, but the masses did not rally to his flag.88 Refusing to taste the regret of defeat, López was undeterred and set out to raise a new army. Meanwhile, López and O’Sullivan, along with others, were indicted in June 1851 by the Millard Fillmore

86 May, Manifest Destiny’s Underworld, 48.
87 May, Manifest Destiny’s Underworld, 2.
88 The flag the López expedition used is the flag of Cuba. The triangle is based on Freemason symbology, representing freedom from tyranny and helping people in distress.
administration for violating the Neutrality Act. With O’Sullivan arrested and awaiting trial, López continued to prepare when in July 1851 he read erroneous news reports of a full scale revolt occurring across Cuba. He fatuously moved his operational timetable up to advantage of the phantom revolution, despite not being prepared with enough men or supplies. López believed, again incorrectly, that he would land in Cuba and the masses would rally to his standard. Having failed to capture Havana or foment a popular uprising on the island, López was caught by the Spanish authorities, tried and put to death, by garrote, in September 1851 in front of thousands of spectators. Americans were also horrified to learn that the Spanish authorities had executed fifty men of their countrymen, including the son of Kentucky Senator John Crittenden.89

The fascination over López gave cause for Americans to popularize the term filibuster, as more plots were unleashed against Latin America.90 The use of the phrase became so widely used, that Harpers New Monthly magazine declared in January 1853, that filibuster was to “occupy an important place in our vocabulary.”91 The truth is, in dating the etymology of the term to 1850 is incorrect, as filibustering expeditions occurred since the beginning days of the American republic. Much in the same way that the ideology behind manifest destiny existed before the phrase was coined, filibustering was also part of the American consciousness before the word became widespread. Even though these invasions caused complications for American relations with Spain and López was put to death, interest in Cuban filibustering was not deterred. For example,

89 Sampson, John L. O'Sullivan, 221.
90 For fine-grained studies of the various filibustering machinations into Cuba and Latin America in the 1850s, Charles H. Brown’s Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters, Rodrigo Lazo’s Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States, Robert E. May, Manifest Destiny’s Underworld and are recommended.
91 May, Manifest Destiny's Underworld, 4.
Mississippi Governor John A. Quitman and the Order of the Lone Star each planned expeditions to “free” Cuba, presumably so the slave system would continue, but the operations were never carried out.

There were many expeditions during the administrations of Presidents Taylor, Fillmore, and Pierce, all of which failed. As such, official negotiations between the United States and Spain to sell Cuba were frustrated “amidst conspiracy and betrayal” between the two countries.\(^92\) Meanwhile in 1852, pro-expansionist and anti-abolitionist Democratic President Franklin Pierce engaged in his “pet cause—the annexation of Cuba.”\(^93\) By 1854, this project was in full swing as Pierce dispatched ministers Pierre Soulé, J.Y.Mason, and James Buchanan to Ostend, Belgium in order to draw up an agreement to purchase Cuba.\(^94\) The so-called Ostend Manifesto did not blaze any new trails in the direction of buying Cuba, especially given the fact that prior Presidential administrations had embarked down this path. The authors of this document reasoned Spain would sell out to the United States, because of the poor state of the Spanish economy, “the failure of Cuba to supply more than a million and a half dollars to the exchequer, and the threat of a revolution on the island.”\(^95\) However, what eventually caused an international commotion was that the Ostend Manifesto made it clear that Cuba was essential to the security of the Union, and that if Spain did not sell the island, the US was justified in invading.\(^96\) Here, upon the bedrock of economic gain, improvement of global trade, dire threat of a slave revolt, and national security concern appointees from

\(^{92}\) Franklin, *Cuba and the United States*, 5.


\(^{94}\) Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 140.

\(^{95}\) Ibid.

the President of the United States openly advocated making war on Spain should that
country rebuff their overtures. While eventually repudiated by Secretary of State
William L. Marcy, because of the stir it caused in Spain, this document demonstrates that
even into mid-century, political actors were fascinated by the allure of Cuba.

To a large degree, the aggressive push to acquire Cuba reflected the success of
economic imperialism, couched in the metaphor of manifest destiny. The economies of
United States and Cuba intermingled and developed throughout the 1850s. Members of
the capitalist vanguard profited, as “between 1841 and 1859 the value of Cuban imports
from the United States increased from $27.8 million to $40.4 million.”97 Moreover, by
mid-century trade with America represented 39 percent of Cuba’s total trade, compared
with “England (34 percent) and Spain (27 percent).”98 Clearly, these numbers reflect the
diminishing importance of Spanish trade to island. In fact, by the conclusion of the Civil
War, Cuba “exported 65 percent of its sugar to the United States and 3 percent to
Spain.”99 American investment in coffee and sugar plantations in Matanzas, and copper
and iron mines in El Cobre and Daiquirí, caused Cuba to be “increasingly dependent on
the United States for technology and technicians as well as for its markets, imports,
capital, and credit.”100 Taken together with the close proximity of Cuba and the United
States, this ever-growing American economic presence served to diminish further the
importance of Spanish involvement on the island. In addition to the economic ties,
roughly 2,500 Americans lived in Havana, along with other smaller communities in

97 Joseph Judson Dimock, Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: the Travel Diary of Joseph J. Dimock, ed.
Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Cárdenas, and Santiago de Cuba. While many of these expatriates worked as merchants, planters, and shopkeepers, another contingent operated the industrial machines and railroads, imported from North America. Moreover, Americans travelled to Cuba in increasing numbers throughout mid-century, as “improved transportation encouraged journeys to the island, and the inauguration of scheduled steamship service between Cuba and points north, principally to New Orleans, New York, and New England, played an important part in the expansion of travel.” By mid-century Americans interests controlled the economy and transportation infrastructure of Cuba. Even though the United States did not control Cuba politically, American business entities were able exert considerable influence on the island.

During the Buchanan presidential administration (1857-1861) continued with attempts to purchase Cuba. Possession of Cuba had long loomed in President Buchanan’s imagination. His efforts to purchase the island were stymied by Congress, who was preoccupied with sectional interests. A long standing, ardent supporter of annexing Cuba, Buchanan used his, 2nd Annual Message, December 6, 1858, as a platform to further articulate his position. Referencing past slights, Buchanan claims the “Spanish officials, under the direct control of the captain general of Cuba, have insulted our national flag, and in repeated instances have, from time to time, inflicted injuries on the persons and property of our citizens.” This is particularly reproachful as he cites the proximity of Cuba to the coast of the US and the amount of trade done between the

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101 Ibid.
102 Ibid, xiv.
two, as occupying “a different position from the powers of Europe.”104 It is because of
such closeness of ties, that Buchanan writes the “existing colonial condition, is a constant
source of injury and annoyance to the American people”, since it is the “only spot in the
civilized world where the African slave trade is tolerated.”105 Ever an advocate for trying
to “acquire Cuba from Spain by honorable negotiation”, Buchanan claims that by
transferring the island to America, the “last relic of the African slave trade would
instantly disappear.”106 This seems a dubious claim, given his pro-slavery views. Prior
territory acquired from Spain and France, Buchanan says, “has been by fair purchase. . .
or by the free and voluntary act of the independent State of Texas blending her destinies
with our own.”107 The same should be true with regard to Cuba, since American
“national character” does not allow the country to act in “any other manner.”108
Throughout his term in office, Buchanan urged Congress to appropriate money for a
down payment of buying Cuba. It is notable for Buchanan does not touch upon what
would happen if Spain continued to postpone what seemed the inevitable. However, one
must remember his role in drafting the Ostend Manifesto with hostile intention toward
Spain. Responding to the president’s suggestion, US Senator from New York John
Slidell attempted to appropriate thirty million dollars for the purchase of Cuba. The
intention of purchasing Cuba was to expand the power of the slave states. While this
measure eventually failed when Congress went out of session in March 1859, it
nevertheless made a stir in Cuba.109

104 Ibid, 251.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 John Osborne, "Senator Slidell of Louisiana Introduces a Bill to Appropriate Funds for the Purchase of
CHAPTER 3: A DATE WITH DESTINY, TRAVELER ACCOUNTS FROM 1820-1845

In *A Bibliography of American Traveler’s Books about Cuba Published before 1900*, Harold F. Smith charts the uptick in published accounts during the nineteenth century.\(^{110}\) Though he contends his study is incomplete, nonetheless the trend is clear. More Americans were visiting and publishing their experiences about Cuba and by extension more Americans were reading these accounts. Five traveler’s accounts were published from 1820 to 1844. From 1845 to 1859, the number increased to sixteen published accounts. In large part, curiosity in Cuba stimulated demand. The technological advancement in steam rotary presses, which enabled publishers to print journals, newspapers, and travel accounts for the highly literate American public, is what helped satisfy this market. Travel accounts were among the most widely read literary forms of the time, and helped stateside Americans “experience the world vicariously and to draw their own conclusions concerning their national identity and destiny.”\(^{111}\) Prior to the 1850s, very few sources about Cuban history and society existed for an English-speaking audience. Most of the resource materials available were written about the Spanish, not Cuba. Resources were limited for Americans looking to prepare for a trip to Cuba. For the most part, the early works on Cuba drew on existing knowledge, which is why there are great similarities in the portrayal of Cuba and Cubans. With the exception of J.G.F Wurdemann, Americans who wrote about their journey did not speak Spanish and instead relied on English speaking translators and tour guides. The limited ability to communicate with non-English speaking people or to read the Spanish language

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\(^{111}\) Ibid.
newspapers filtered the ways in which American travelers experienced Cuba. The writers parallel each other in the way they describe certain elements of the landscape.

The first in-depth study on Cuba was written by the Prussian naturalist, Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt departed Spain in 1799 and returned to Europe in 1804, after touring Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico. His work, *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent*, was published in multiple volumes in English between 1814 and 1829. Accordingly, the later editions are edited, reflecting the span of time between Humboldt’s trip and printing and the demise of the Spanish empire. All together this work has been published in 431 editions in ten languages from 1805 to 2011.112 According to Wexler, early editions were edited to fit the pro-slavery views of American editor J.T. Thrasher.113 Changes since the original publication, as is indicated in the 1851 edition translated from the French by Thomasina Ross Preface, have rendered “obsolete some facts...and consequently it has been deemed advisable to omit it.”114 Humboldt’s travels led him to spend ten weeks in Cuba, over two trips, collecting plants and other samples, and also observing the landscape.

Humboldt is considered the first scientific adventurer. *Personal Narrative* was not only a great story, but a discussion of scientific and anthropological information. His work inspired others, like Charles Darwin and John Muir, to get out and explore the world. Undoubtedly his work influenced the scope of observation later American  

113 Wexler, "Sex, Race and Character," 117.
travelers used in Cuba. Humboldt set the standard for a narrative travelogue, by providing readers with a trove of information on subjects like climate, ethnography, geology, and mineralogy. Early travel writers, like Joel R. Poinsett, Reverend Abiel Abbot, and Benjamin Moore Norman, paid homage, the “great Humboldt” in their respective journals.115 Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, educated minds read Humboldt. It was from his work that general knowledge about Cuba, as well as other Latin American countries, was drawn.

Joel Roberts Poinsett, United States Congressman from South Carolina and future Secretary of War, served as a special envoy to Mexico from 1822 to 1823.116 He recorded this journey as letters and a journal, and then published this account in 1824. Cuba is briefly discussed in his book, Notes on Mexico, and it is among the earliest accounts by an America. This work has been published in ten editions from 1824 to 1969.117 As any diplomat would, Poinsett pays special attention in noting the defenses of Havana harbor, the quality of roads, economic, census, and agricultural data, and offers a fullthroated screed against the freedom pirates have in roaming the coast. To illustrate the importance of Humboldt’s work, Poinsett includes in his acknowledgement the admission that he has referenced Humboldt’s work liberally. Indeed, a key term search returns over forty instances of the use of “Humboldt.” During this trip, Poinsett visited Havana and Regla in early January 1823. While not exclusively about Cuba, his account represents one of a handful of American travel accounts written from 1820 to 1839, about

115 Benjamin Moore Norman, Rambles by Land and Water, Or, Notes of Travel in Cuba and Mexico; including a Canoe Voyage up the River Panuco, and Researches among the Ruins of Tamaulipas. (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845), Google Books, 59.
Cuba. With respect to Cuba, *Notes on Mexico* offers one chapter out of fourteen, to describe the region—Poinsett spent only six days in there. Poinsett’s journal is also interesting for the fact that it was written before and published shortly after the issuance of the Monroe Doctrine in December 1823. While he did not advocate for annexation, a view that would become increasingly louder during the mid-1840s, Poinsett does analyze the complicated relationship between the United States and Cuba. He points to the size, population, but particularly to the position of the island, as reasons why Cuba holds great political importance—the language of manifest destiny. These tropes will be revisited by authors who would later travel to Cuba. Nearly every account deals in some way with the question of Cuba joining the United States and discusses the physical bounty Cuba possess.

With the memory of the Haitian Revolution in 1803 in mind, Poinsett acknowledges that Spanish administration over Cuba serves as a bulwark against “the black population from gaining an ascendency” there.118 This fear was only second to the threat Cuba would fall into the hands of another European power. In particular, Poinsett frets, “in case of war with that nation. . . would give her a military position, from whence she might annihilate all our commerce in these seas—might invade our defenceless southern maritime frontier, whenever she thought proper—and might effectually blockade all the ports, and shut up the outlets of our great western waters.”119 Protecting Cuba from becoming a possession of the British was foremost in his mind. While his


119 Ibid.
view was likely more political than other travelers, given his official capacity, subsequent writers similarly acknowledged the importance of Cuba to the United States.

As Poinsett and other travelers after him pointed out, Cuba was delightfully verdant and the harbors were well defended. Recording his first impression upon entering the harbor of Havana in 1822, “the land is gently undulating, the hill sides covered with fresh verdure, and the valleys present the dark foliage and luxuriant vegetation of the topics.”120 After intoning the blessings of nature in Havana, he describes the entrance to the harbor as “narrow and strongly fortified”, deep enough “to float line of battle ships.”121 Commonly, travelers to Cuba describe the imposing fortifications along Havana harbor. Poinsett also points out the extent to which “the heights that command the port” are heavily defended.122 It is not without good reason that the port of Havana was strongly defended, given the amount of shipping that occurred there. Bustling maritime activity attracted pirates and privateers, as well as traders. Poinsett claims to never have seen the amount of activity “in any port in the United States, except New York, and there it is not as here, concentrated in one spot.”123 Trade and commercial contacts linked Cuba and North America during the early nineteenth century. However, inconsistent and ineffective Spanish economic policy created high taxes, limited infrastructure development, fomented a trade deficit, and caused a shortage of slave labor in Cuba. Even as failed colonial policies tied down the economy of Cuba during the early nineteenth century, the black market boomed as the

121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
Spanish captain general refused to help combat the privateers who looted English, French, and American vessels.

Given the amount of trade with America Poinsett is outraged by the openness with which pirates operate along the coast. As part of his diplomatic mission to Puerto Rico, Poinsett was to “remonstrate with the governor against these depredations” even though “the dominion exercised by the mother country [Spain]. . . is too remote and inconsiderable to enable her to control the lawless banditti that inhabit the coast of Puerto Rico and Cuba.” He describes how pirates, “fitted out in different ports” on Cuba, harass American trade. Critical commentary on the efficacy of Spanish administration would reappear in travel accounts throughout the century—often portraying the Spanish as hapless and unable to efficiently administer Cuba. There are undertones of this criticism in Poinsett’s journal. He depicts a colonial administration that was unwilling to stop piracy; in return Spanish vessels were not attacked. In fact, an American Naval squadron was called to the Caribbean to patrol the waters in the 1820s. In Regla for a day trip, he remarks that he is in a “city of pirates”, who have organized themselves into a society called the Mussulmen and trade openly in plunder. This commercial activity proceeds unimpeded by the Spanish authorities, who Poinsett claims are too, “afraid to meddle with them” that even when arrests are made, it costs the Mussulmen, “only, a small part of their ill-gotten wealth, and a few days confinement.” During the 1820s, the pirates of Regla and those harbored elsewhere had ample opportunity to attack commercial vessels.

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124 Ibid, 4.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid 211.
127 Ibid, 212.
According to Poinsett’s data, 1,269 ships entered Havana Harbor in 1822 and of these vessels, 669 were American ships. By comparison, the same year 382 vessels sailed from Spain. This emphasizes the importance of the maritime connection between the United States and Cuba. It also underscores the importance of commercial interaction and expansion; as a weak Spanish colony, Cuban labor and natural resources were easily exploited with American capital investment. According to the Pérez’s findings, North American ships traveling to Cuba numbered 150 in 1796 and by 1826, the number of ships increased to 783. The increase was even more drastic from 1851 to 1856 as the US sent more than 2,088 ships. Poinsett argues that the pirates operate with immunity, and that the “subaltern magistrates alone profit by the sale if temporal indulgences, and by conniving at this system of villainy.” Through a system of bribery, the local government allowed plundered goods to be sold openly and rarely prosecuted pirates.

The colonial administrators on the island were also to blame for the pirate problem, as they failed to police the issue. Poinsett retells a story of the Spanish captain general of the island turning down the commander of a British squadron, despite an order from the Spanish government “directing him to co-operate with the commander in suppressing piracy.” The captain general cited a deficit in available troops even though, as Poinsett cites, “there were nearly five thousand men in Havana, and a fleet lying in the harbour of three corvettes, of twenty-six guns each, a brig of war, and four

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128 Ibid 216.
130 Poinsett, Notes on Mexico, 221.
131 Ibid
Keeping true to his diplomatic mission, Poinsett argues that since the authorities in Cuba cannot stamp out piracy, then commercial nations of the world should pressure Spain to expel all who lend support to the pirates. The United States should aid the Spanish in this endeavor. In order to underscore the importance of eradicating piracy, Poinsett strikes a nationalistic tone, commenting on “the cruel outrages and indignities inflicted upon our fellow-citizens by the vile rabble of Havana.” The United States Navy is better suited to command the high seas. While not as extreme, Poinsett’s portrayal of the abuse of American merchantmen (e.g. being put into stocks and exposed to “scoffs and ribaldry of a licentious soldiery”) was foreshadowing for similar stories run by the yellow press of the 1890s with tales of Spanish authorities insulting Americans abroad. Specifically, Poinsett ends his account with a call to protect the lives and property of American citizens from violent pirates. The call to civilize the waters around Cuba is also a common theme expressed travel accounts of the early nineteenth century, and given the nationalism, one that would resonate with American audiences. The United States Navy deployed the West Indies Squadron to Cuba in the early late 1823 to combat piracy—and won.

The first full-length study on Cuba, *Letters Written in the Interior of Cuba*, was generated posthumously by the friends of Reverend Abiel Abbot in 1829 and was published in sixteen editions. Reverend Abbot traveled to Cuba to regain his health from February through May 1828. He died shortly upon his return to the United States, in May 1828. In this book, Abbot reflects on a four month tour traveling around

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132 Ibid, 222.
133 Ibid 223.
134 Ibid.
136 Reverend Abbot was the pastor at the First Church of Beverly, Massachusetts.
As with most American travelers, Abbot was not able to speak Spanish. In his preface, he is sure to thank those who have attended him by helping translate the various languages on the island and make arrangements during his stay. Therefore Abbot, as with most travelers after him, examined Cuba with a filter. While spending more time in Cuba than Poinsett, Abbot was busy traveling to plantations and enjoying the climate. Instead, Abbot made the voyage to regain his health, at the advice of friends. His letters are informative and provide specific information about the way plantations operate and Given the increasing American population and the commercial ties between the US and Cuba, this is valuable intelligence for the capitalist vanguard, since it contained detailed information for potential speculators. He concentrated on portraying Cuba as a tropical paradise, with limitless agricultural and commercial possibilities, possessing a climate with palliative properties—an Edenic paradise, in need of salvation. His reason for traveling to Cuba was not for diplomatic or religious reasons, though he was concerned with the “moral condition” of the island and was outraged by the conduct of the Catholic priests against ordinary Cubans.

In addition to his criticism of the Catholic priests, Abbott also pays attention to the fertile landscape, plantations, and slaves. Friendly to slavery, Abbott writes in the language of manifest destiny as he discusses a favorable climate for the plantation economy. Expansion of slavery to new territorial acquisitions was paramount to the survival of the American South. Abbott geared his work toward this audience. A key term search for “soil” returns hits on over forty pages of this work. He also documents the types of soil on the various plantations visited. Abbot details three different types of
soil, “black, red, and mulatto” and indicates in which soil crops grow successfully. In Letter XVI, Abbot visits the sugar and coffee estate of a man from Carolina. The gentleman, identified as Mr. M, lives in a mansion that sits on a hill overlooking his plantation “in a fruitful valley, where the red soil is several yards deep. The cane was about as large on the black soil, and from twelve to fifteen feet high, the first season of grinding.” Abbot also says there are “one hundred and eighty negroes” working on Mr. M’s estate, where steam power grinds the cane, using a horizontal crusher. In using technology, Mr. M has made the working conditions on the estate more humane. Abbot describes the workers as “gratified” toward their master. According to Mr. M, the slaves in Cuba are in a better position than in the United States. On the island, slaves “have a more varied and comfortable fare, and can if they please, easily work out there freedom” by purchasing themselves from their master. Since slaves are allowed to till land and sell their produce or hogs, many buy their freedom. According to Abbot’s research there were 1,000,000 inhabitants, of which one half were free and the other half were slaves. Free blacks made up nearly fifteen percent of the free population, but ninety percent of the enslaved population. Indeed, he provides a favorable portrayal of slavery. Abbot contends he never saw the lash applied and saw no reason for it on an occasion. Continually, he credits the potential for slaves to purchase themselves out of bondage, he though he contends that only one-tenth of the population was free blacks.

Despite the difficult in achieving freedom, Abbot contends this system engenders more

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137 Abbot, Letters Written, 95.
138 Ibid, 55.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid, 57.
142 Ibid, 154.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid, 40.
productivity and happiness among slaves. Therefore, Abbot concludes that Cuba does not pose the same threat to slave rebellion as Haiti. To American Southern plantation owners, this system of slavery might have looked liberal, but security and access to abundant land made Cuba an appealing possibility and Abbot’s descriptions allayed fears. In personalizing Mr. M, Abbot shows that forward thinking Americans are successful in this Edenic frontier.

Abbot predicts that in the future, Cuba will become independent, or attached to a government of greater energy.”\textsuperscript{145} At the time of his visit, there was not much support among the native Spanish or foreign investors for independence. Should the island become independent, Abbot writes, “the fertility of the soil” will lead to rich production and schools will be set up, “by public and private patronage, that they will have wealth, and knowledge, and population, sufficient to render themselves respectable in the family of nations.”\textsuperscript{146} While not directly calling for independence from Spain, Abbot comments on the revolutionary spirit present in former Spanish colonies. By the time Abbot visited the island, only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained as Spanish possessions. If Cuba became an independent country, “it would not be inconsiderable among the nations. The extent and fertility of the island, and its rapidly increasing population”, make Cuba unique in the Caribbean and worthy of American interest.\textsuperscript{147} These factors about Cuba, combined with the presence of the hardy Montero, who Abbot compares to the men of Vermont and New Hampshire, “entitle its individual interests to be consulted either as a colony, or as an independent state.”\textsuperscript{148} He claims that if this race of people were given the same

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, 115.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 131.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
educational and moral opportunities, worked harder, and gave up gambling on cock fights, “they might bear comparison with the yeomanry of the United States.” The potential existed in Cuba; all that was needed was the moralizing and progressive leadership of the United States.

Throughout the nineteenth century, it became increasingly clear to Cubans that their economy did not need Spain; most of their maritime business was with America. This was especially true, as the Spanish colonial administration hampered growth with crushing taxes, duties, tariffs, and controlled the forms of exchange. Taken together, the colonial economic policy made American goods twice as expensive in Cuba. One estimate during mid-century approximates “$15 million worth of North American textiles, agricultural goods, furniture, and tools was sold in Cuba for more than $30 million.” However, the high tariffs and tax rates did not obtrude with the increase in trade or the deepening commercial relationship. American traders pursued the Cuban market, providing slaves and finished goods, while expanding lines credit and access to capital. This capital investment influenced many industries on the island including, mining, sugar, coffee, and coal. Abbot points out that in Havana, “the country makes the town.” He relates the liberal policies of for investing foreign capital and attracting foreign planters and merchants.

Another account published in 1839, A Winter in the West Indies and Florida, written simply by an Invalid, also refers to Cuba as location that held healing properties. In the preface, the author point out that conventional knowledge about the healthfulness of the climate in the Southern states is entirely overwrought. Therefore, it is his purpose

149 Ibid, 160.
150 Pérez, Cuba and the United States, 16.
151 Abbot, Letters Written, 113.
to convince Americans, to correct their ignorance on the subject, and encourage them to travel to the West Indies for a “perfect restoration to health.” Even though this work is a self-professed guide book for sickly people, this does not prevent the author from dealing with the familiar themes of geography, culture, economics, and landscape. He advocates for the United States to control Cuba, in order to control the natural resources more efficiently.

Investment came and with the help of North American capital, steamships ran with frequency between New Orleans, Havana, and Matanzas. With American iron and technical expertise, the first railroad in Latin America was constructed in Cuba in 1837. The invalid author of, *A Winter in the West Indies and Florida*, noted the importance of railroad technology during his 1838 trip to Trinidad de Cuba. His purpose in writing the account was as a guide for those suffering pulmonary ailments, when traveling to the Caribbean during the winter months. However, he also uses his descriptions to remark at the prosperity of the Port of Casilda. He is impressed by the large amount of American ships carrying coffee, tobacco, cigars, wild honey, and beeswax from the harbor. The criticism is that while Trinidad is a bustling city, it does not have access to a railroad, forcing all goods to travel four miles on ox-carts, when a railroad would make the whole operation more efficient. It is noted the attitude of the Spanish is one of indifference to improvement. Simply, Trinidad is “dull” compared to “what it would be in the hands of Americans.”

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152 Invalid and Albert E. Foote, *A Winter in the West Indies and Florida: Containing General Observations upon Modes of Travelling, Manners and Customs, Climates and Productions, with a Particular Description of St. Croix, Trinidad De Cuba, Havana, Key West, and St. Augustine, as Places of Resort for Northern Invalids* (New-York: Wiley and Putnam, 1839), Google Books, xvi.
153 Ibid, 75.
154 Ibid, 76.
embrace new technology, the author is evoking an image of an underdeveloped society, in desperate need of modernization and leadership. Themes of inefficiency, idleness, and little desire for improvement marked the description of the Spanish in Cuba. In, *A Winter in the West Indies and Florida*, the author offers sage advice for any would be entrepreneurs. Open a boarding house for invalids, since Spanish taverns “would not suit an American.” 155 Besides, the proprietor would attract American travelers who want to visit Cuba, but are fearful. Though he warns, travelers should arm themselves “to keep the slaves in awe”, since they outnumber whites by such a large margin. 156

As more North American capital helped to create vital transportation infrastructure, more Americans moved to Cuban port cities. In 1838, the invalid author argued that if “Cuba belonged to our Government, its population would double in two years, and quadruple in less than five.” 157 While the math did not work out quite as imagined, nonetheless, Pérez notes 1,256 Americans living in Cuban port cities in 1846. By 1862, this tally reached over 2,500 Americans. 158 Wherever Americans moved, they established boarding houses, trading companies, and importantly held skilled jobs servicing industrial technology. Thousands of Americans arrived to operate and maintain the imported equipment, like steam mill machinery, locomotives, and the railroad lines. Early on, Cuban producers “developed both a dependence on North American machines and reliance on North American technicians to service them.” 159 The presence of machines by necessity created the need for American “maquinistas.” The invalid author expresses no shortage of pride and nationalism, when he tells of feeling like he was

155 Ibid, 102.
156 Ibid, 104.
157 Ibid, 105.
159 Ibid, 22.
home, while spending time in the railroad depot near Havana. He is exuberant to finally “come in contact with an improvement that might be called *our own*” since the railroad was “planned and constructed so far by American skill, the superintendents, engineers” and others. Cuban prosperity developed with American influence, which in turn deepened the connection between the two. On the other hand, the US viewed Cuba as a valuable strategic and economic commodity and a tropical paradise to develop and exploit.

In many ways the accounts of Poinsett, Abbot, and the Invalid served as part reference and part advertisement for Americans to come and invest in Cuba. Accounts like Poinsett’s which stressed a favorable commercial climate, Abbot’s which detailed the natural bounty of Cuba along with enticing descriptions of plantations, and the Invalid’s which stressed the need for American inspired improvements on the island would have been eminently appealing to the capitalist vanguard in the United States. These accounts also enumerated, in specific detail, the rhetoric politicians had been using since Jefferson. Namely, Cuba was a prize possession; the anecdotal evidence is that Poinsett’s book was published in Philadelphia, considered the center of publishing in America during the early nineteenth century. The firm, H.C. Carey and I. Lea, was a prominent publishing house at the time. Additionally, the journal written by the Invalid was published in New York by Wiley and Putnam, also a reputable publishing firm from that era. Later travel accounts were also published by large and well established firms. What is clear is that into the 1840s, there was an increasing market for travelogues about Cuba.

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162 Ibid.
Undoubtedly, these accounts helped to frame the way Americans looked at Cuba. The accounts of the 1820s to 1845 stop short of calling for annexation and direct intervention, as later accounts would. While the United States embarked on aggressive western expansion throughout the 1840s and 1850s, politicians, investors, and filibusters tried their chances to make wrestle Cuba away. Travelers of the 1840s would continue to note the features of landscape, natural resources, economic, and labor system in the same language. These accounts take a more assertive tone about the American role in Cuba.

In 1844, Wurdermann published, Notes on Cuba, containing an account of its discovery and early history, as a guide for traveling invalids and as a reference manual about Cuban slavery, culture, commerce, and agriculture. This text was published in six editions between 1844 and 1989.163 He opens with the section “Directions to the Traveller [sic]”, which details the journey one should make in order to alleviate the “afflictions exacerbated by the cold of winter, especially . . . pulmonary disease” since Cuba offers a superior climate.164 Among the various tips Wurdemann gives, are wardrobe choices, specific boarding house recommendations with pricing, and transportation information for Havana, Guines, Matanzas, Cardenas, and other destinations. The best part of travelling in Cuba, he says, is that it is possible to get around without speaking Spanish—meaning the country is accessible to anyone with the funds to travel there. The book describes three winters (1841, 1842, and 1843) spent travelling around Cuba. The account is divided into chapters that address the customs

and manners of the inhabitants, and also discusses the wealth of natural resources, in various regions. Dr. Wurdemann consistently describes the timelines of travel to maximize the good weather—inpiring those looking for a recuperative vacation.

A closer reading reveals deeper elements of manifest destiny and sectionalism. Wurdemann was born in South Carolina, but was educated abroad, where he “imbibed prejudices against the institution of slavery, that have only been removed by a long observance if the habits of the negro. . .Compared with the manufacturing and mining classes of England, they labor less, and so far as physical enjoyment goes, are better off.”165 His book was published in Boston, but he is addressing readers in the South, as well as, the North, as he describes how obnoxious it is to see a “colored man” aspire to be on “equal footing with the white man”, though blacks are nonetheless “driven back by public opinion and. . .mob violence” in “our free Northern States.”166 Consistently, Wurdemann relates the condition of slaves and “negroes” on the island. His view of the Cuban system of slavery is favorable and is remarked upon throughout his journal—he dutifully records his view of the lives and treatment of slaves, despite never speaking to one directly. He claims accounts of Spanish cruelty to slaves is “greatly exaggerated”, particularly since “Southern States” could follow the “example” and establish “institutions for the relief of sick negroes.”167 He argues that if an “unprejudiced person” compared a slave in Cuba with a slave in Africa, “he will acknowledge that his state has been much bettered by his transportation across the Atlantic.”168 Aside from this supposedly humanitarian line of reason, Wurdemann makes the point to compare an

165 Ibid, 263.
166 Ibid, 266.
167 Ibid, 59.
168 Ibid, 263.
emancipated Cuba to “the fate of Hayti [sic]”, which would lead to pirates swarming around the Gulf of Mexico—a vision which would greatly dismay any planter.  

His comments also reflect the ever present competitiveness with England, as well as the growing divide between supporters of free soil or slavery and also. For example, Wurdermann writes “everywhere on the island will be found the Anglo-Saxon emigrant with his restless spirit, forcing upon his adopted country the improvements he has brought from his native land.” The theme of Anglo-Saxon men bringing progress with them to uncultivated land was a common element in the language of manifest destiny. He also discuss that Cuba will become separated “from the mother country” over time. He then seduces his reader with sectionalistic remarks about the positive accomplishments of slavery and acknowledges the lurking British policy of emancipation. His point of view is decidedly favorable to slaveholding, encouraging the status quo to remain “indeed linked” to Cuba “by strong ties of interest.” Especially since, “England looks with a jealous eye on Cuba” and the value of the islands exports to the United States “is not regarded with a careless eye.” While not a possession of the United States, trade with Cuba is no small affair. This is why Cuba must never become a possession of England. However, the main goal of England, Wurdermann contends, is “to ruin the prosperity of Cuba by the emancipation of its slaves.” Gaining Cuba as an extension of the Gulf Coast plantation system was a fantasy for Southerners. He cautions, “the present policy of England” is to emancipate the slaves of Cuba to form a “cordon of free negroes” along the southern shore of the United States so that she may

169 Ibid, 265.  
170 Ibid, 252.  
171 Ibid, 252.  
173 Ibid, 252.
“take possession of that island”. Rhetorically, this argument was a popular refrain of Southern slave owners and resonated within those circles. Wurdemann attacks the British and compares American slavery against the violence used in building Her Majesty, Queen Victoria’s empire. He explains, “that nation [England], whose grasping ambition and blood-stained conquests. . . should not prate about freedom to the southern slave-holder, whose black subjects fare far better that her own oppressed white laborers at home; work less, and are better cared for.” So too, was the rationalization in keeping the “present state of slavery as the only means to civilize and evangelize Africa.”

No travel account is complete with a detailed portrait of Cuba’s natural resources and economic data. Wurdemann discuss the rich, abundantly productive soil of Cuba over forty-five times throughout his account. Given the importance agriculture played in Cuba, it is no small wonder he takes pains to point out the various types of earth, for example, comparing the “exhausted” red soil of Matanzas, with that of the high yielding “black lands of Guines.” He paints a romantic vision of his surroundings in an area of Guines, “a beautiful valley. . .with gently undulating surface, covered by sugar and coffee estates with cottages and mansions, and large sugar-houses, scattered over it, and alleys of orange and mangoes, and of the graceful, tall palm intersecting various portions.”

The island is truly remarkable for its beauty and lushness. While visiting the San Patricio coffee estate, he comments about “a quadruple alley of palms, cocolis, and oranges, interspersed with the tamarind, the pomegranate, the mango, and the rose-apple, with the background of coffee and plantains covering every portion of the soil with their luxuriant

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174 Ibid, 265.
175 Ibid, 266.
176 Ibid, 266.
177 Ibid, 122.
178 Ibid, 102.
verdure.”

He compares a coffee estate to the “perfect garden”, with “air laden with mingled perfume from the coffee, and orange, and the tube-rose.” The vividness of his description creates intense visuals and captures the imagination. However, Cuba is not just a place of beauty, but is also an important “consumer to the United States.”

Wurdemann includes a general overview of the imports and exports in Havana, for his readership to mull over. In 1841, he claims, the importation into Cuba was “valued at $18,584,877, and its exportations at $12,203,292, of the latter $6,113,460 were for sugar, $1,112,854 for coffee, and $1,757,430 for tobacco.” Given the amount of exports, to the United States, Cuba’s most valuable trading partner, the reader might be surprised to learn that the “agricultural resources of the island, although not half developed, are unquestionably very great, as well as the small part of its mineral wealth that has been explored.”

In the minds of Anglo-Saxon expansionists, land must not go underdeveloped. As far as opportunity for American investment in the island, Wurdemann specifies, “the mineral wealth of Cuba has been but little explored, but its copper mines are acknowledged to be the richest in the world.” There is enough information and direction, to inspire investors with insight to consider a capital venture in order to expand American economic imperialism on the island.

The accounts published between 1824 and 1844 express a subtle tone of manifest destiny. They describe Cuba’s landscape, natural resources, wealth, importance to the US, slavery, and the desire to keep England away from influencing Cuba affairs.

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179 Ibid, 139.  
180 Ibid.  
181 Ibid, 64.  
182 Ibid.  
183 Ibid, 349.  
184 Ibid.
In what and how writers depicted certain elements, they are devising a power structure that reinforces the backwardness of the island culture. The writers were a product of their times, and were influenced by the debate over expansion and the undercurrent of manifest destiny in American society. While they might have disagreed over the morality of slavery, these travelers all demonstrated that Cuba was a sacrosanct commodity necessary for the well-being of the United States. Stopping short of calling for annexation, the early travelers identified information valuable to the capitalist vanguard and further propagated the desire to possess Cuba.
Accounts from 1824 to 1845 are foundational in structure and content for the later accounts. However, from 1845 onward, the tone toward American intervention and annexation grew more aggressive, assertive, and nationalistic—mirroring the rapid Western expansion. As the US rapidly accumulated Western territory, interest in Cuba intensified. Pro-expansion sentiments mirrored government policy and cultural attitudes toward territorial growth. Importantly, these travel accounts coincided with the diplomatic maneuvers to convince Spain to sell Cuba. Travelers from 1845 forward discussed the overwhelming desire to purchase Cuba. Their language reflects the sense that America was operating on behalf of the best interest of Cuba, as opposed to the desire to possess the island. In describing the Cuban landscape in the language of manifest destiny, travelers took old knowledge and reinforced perceptions about America’s role on the island.

Benjamin Moore Norman’s, *Rambles by land and water* (1845), is an account written with advice for the more adventurous traveler. This account was published in six editions during 1845. He was an accomplished traveler, publishing his journals on trips to New Orleans and Yucatan. He set out to Havana at the end of January 1844, from New Orleans. The purpose of this account, as he writes in his preface, was to present an ethnographical survey of Cuba and Mexico, and encourage “the numerous and respectable Historical and Antiquity societies” to sponsor research there, in order to “awaken the attention, and stimulate the interest of those who have the means, the

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influence, and the capacity to do it ample justice.”186 The majority of the book is dedicated to his travels in Mexico, but there are several chapters that describe his journey in Havana.

In the third chapter, “The Suburbs of Havana, and the Interior of the Island”, Norman describes the luxuriance of the soil, in poetic terms. He sings the praises of the surrounding area, as he tours the landscape, there is “nothing more enchantingly more wonderful to the eye than this perpetual blending of flower and fruit. . . and mature ripe manhood, laden with the golden treasures of hopes realized, and promises fulfilled.”187 Echoing the sentiments of travelers before him, Norman comments, “how rich must be the resources of the soil, that can sustain, without exhaustions, this lavish and unceasing expenditure of its nutritious elements! How vigorous and thrifty the vegetation, that never falters nor grows old, under this incessant and prodigal demand upon its vital energies!”188 The vitality of the resources, blended with the climate cannot match “the grasping avarice of man [which] alone exceeds the unbounded liberality of nature’s free gifts.”189 But of course, nothing is free, even from nature. Sometimes, bounty needs to be taken and appropriated by others more willing to coax the uninterrupted prolific abundance of the island.

In this text, Norman describes the relationship between the US and Cuba in an aggressive and nationalistic manner. Building off his former descriptions of the luxuriant soil and all the verdure the landscape has to offer, Norman discusses annexing Cuba in

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186 Benjamin Moore Norman, Rambles by Land and Water, Or, Notes of Travel in Cuba and Mexico; including a Canoe Voyage up the River Panuco, and Researches among the Ruins of Tamaulipas. (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845), Google Books, viii.
187 Ibid, 52.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
chapter four, “General View of the Island of Cuba, its Cities, Towns, Resources, Government, etc.” This is the first use of the term in the travel accounts reviewed, and it is interesting given the proximity to contemporary discussions about annexing Texas.

Norman’s lays out his introductory remarks along a familiar premise: Cuba is large, rich, impregnable, and most importantly, is in superior position to control the Gulf of Mexico.\textsuperscript{190} However, despite the natural wealth and strategic significance to the US, the island is controlled by a weak Spanish empire. Thus, the “ambitious thrones of Europe” and the United States covet control of the island—since it is “an anomaly in the political history of the world” that a weak power like Spain, “should be allowed to hold so important a post.”\textsuperscript{191} Norman muses about “how conveniently might Cuba be annexed! How nicely it would hook on to the spoon-bill of Florida, and protect the passage to our southern metropolis, and the trade of the Gulf.”\textsuperscript{192} The island, he argues, can be claimed by America using the “excellent logic” that Spain “had no more right to separate” Cuba from the “sale and cession Florida”, than Texas could be separated from Louisiana—referring to the Adams-Onis Treaty.\textsuperscript{193} Especially since he abides by the “principle in national politics, to take an ell where an inch is given, especially when the giver is too weak to resist the encroachment. . .The annexation fever us up now, and I suggest the propriety of taking all we intend to, or all we want at a sweep—lest the people should grow conscientious, and conclude to respect the rights of their weaker neighbors.”\textsuperscript{194}

In the next paragraph, he warns his reader to be satisfied and happy, to take heed from past republics of antiquity who collapsed under their own bigness. This short

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid, 59.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid, 60.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid, 59-60.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid, 60.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 61.
disclaimer does not dissuade the reader, given the familiar commentary that follows about the beauty and abundance of Cuba’s copper mines, and the profitability of the sugar and coffee plantations. He says, “the commerce of Cuba is with the world; yet its importance as a trading mart is chiefly realized” by the United States.\textsuperscript{195} Norman would like to see Cuba establish an independent government to “promote her own happiness, and benefit us [United States] and the world”, especially since the island has the capacity to “sustain a population ten times.”\textsuperscript{196} The meaning is unmistakably in the language of manifest destiny Cuba is an undeveloped, sparsely populated land that needs to be controlled by the United States. In language that predates that of O’Sullivan, Norman argues for a government and free institutions for the poor of Cuba, in order for them to receive education and “make men of them.”\textsuperscript{197}

Norman concludes this chapter by offering advice on invading Cuba. He begins with a short analogy about the Moro Castle, guardian of Havana, as “The Gibraltar of America.”\textsuperscript{198} While this immediately conjures images of impregnable strength, Norman reminds the reader that the real “Gibraltar was successfully attacked, and is now in possession of the conquerors”, the British.\textsuperscript{199} As in earlier travel accounts, Norman details the fortifications of the Moro, the Cabañas, and other fortifications. Given this analysis, he cautions the island is safe from attack by the sea, but “it could be assailed with effect, by the landing of efficient forces in the rear. . .as the French have recently succeeded in capturing Algiers.”\textsuperscript{200} This commentary serves two purposes, to remind the

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid, 70.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid, 71.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, 72.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid, 77.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid, 78.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid, 78.
reader of history and to warn the reader of what is possible should the British have an opportunity to seize the island. As politicians before him noted, the security of the United States is inseparable from the fate of Cuba.

Published in 1850, but likely written in 1848 or 1849, travel writer Richard Kimball authored an account of his journey, *Cuba and the Cubans, Comprising a History of the Island of Cuba, Its Present Social, Political, and Domestic Condition; Also, Its Relation to England and the United States.* Twelve editions were published in 1850. Kimball tries to attempt an answer to the “Cuba Question,” that is whether or not Cuba would be annexed by the United States. Undoubtedly, Kimball’s view of annexation was shaped by his relationship with Cristóbal Madan, who coauthored this account. This account is helpful in reinforcing the already long held belief that passing Cuba into the hands of Great Britain power was unacceptable to American interests—competition with the British is evident. It also seeks to justify the United States taking possession of the island. To make this point, Kimball rehashes the history of the island, analyzes Cuban tax revenue, comments on the economics of the island and argues conclusively that the United States must occupy Cuba outright, so to ensure the strategic and financial benefits the island has to offer. Kimball prefaces his account with the opinion that, “with or without the United States of America, she [Cuba] will soon be free from Spanish dominion.”

According to him, this pending freedom asks the question of, “How will the United States relish the possession by [Great Britain] of a point which commands the

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Gulf of Mexico and the mouth of the Mississippi?

His main argument mimics the thinking of the time—if Cuba falls into the hands of British rivals, it would be disastrous for the United States. After using his travel account to substantiate his argument by virtue of economic, political, and social observations of the island, Kimball concludes in the last chapter, that it is the “solemn duty” for the United States to “watch over the interests of Cuba” and purchase the island from Spain. He argues for annexation “to the United States, would equally ask for an asylum in her as an independent and free state.” This is the only way for Cuba to be free and a part of the United States, Spain content, England left with no causes to for complaint, and a bloody revolution avoided.

Kimball writes as a pro-expansionist, using chapter six of his journal to equate the declining “condition of religious and moral degradation of the island”, as the chief desire of Cubans to advocate annexation. Thinly disguising his argument in terms of religious necessity, Kimball uses the language of manifest destiny to explain that,

With annexation to the United States, [to Cuba] will come the free Bible, the free Pulpit, and the free Press; the healthful and stimulating influence of Protestant competition in the labors of the spiritual harvest; the infusion of a new spirit, a renovated vitality, into the moral being of the population of Cuba, now corrupt with disease and palsied well nigh beyond recovery.

According to him, corruption by the Catholic Church and priests has brought about a moral and repressive drought to Cuba. The implications of framing the political and social goals in terms of religious change, is the line of reasoning would apply to Protestant Americans, most of whom were deeply distrustful of Catholicism. The theme
of religious superiority is unmistakable, and only the golden beacon of American culture can bring forth salvation to the spiritually neglected Cubans. Catholicism is a substandard faith, so cultural expansion would be a positive benefit for the Cubans.

Salvation is not the only aspect missing in Cuba, progress is desperately needed. In chapter nine of this work, Kimball discusses the prevailing “Cuba Question”. He opens this chapter by describing the island as, “a region possessing every variety of climate, capable of yielding every variety of vegetable product, abounding in mineral treasure, remarkable for the richness of its virgin soil, and promising inexhaustible wealth. . .” However, after three hundred years of occupation, the hapless Spaniards have failed to develop the fertile island to its fullest potential. For destinarians, failing to reach efficiencies is tantamount to neglect. Moreover, Kimball launches into a discussion on the concept of manifest destiny. He writes, that although there has been much made of the notions of manifest destiny as,

A sort of watchword in the mouths of patriotic orators and political speech-makers. It is, however, a poor excuse for the unlawful seizure of the territory of a friendly power. . .But, for all that, there is a sense in which ‘manifest destiny’ becomes no longer a byword; for when the reflective observer of events endeavors to form an opinion as to the future, and from past examination, and from all that he can see in the present, a result presents itself which is not to be mistaken. . .he is content to say that it is the manifest destiny of a nation to do, to become, or to achieve this or that.

Clearly, it is not only America’s destiny to control Cuba, but her duty to intervene in this area. In particular, he says, the United States, “would never consent” to any other European nation, besides Spain, control of the island. Importantly, he argues that it is beyond the pale in the “civilized world, that no nation shall, at this period, oppress by any

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210 Ibid 188.
211 Ibid.
arbitrary or tyrannical despotism, a dependent country or colony. . . [and therefore.] Cuba has a right to attempt her freedom.”212 Again, the language of manifest destiny appears as Kimball muses about freedom. This theme was of particular interest to expansionists, since they could broadly equate America’s early beginnings to Cuba. This rhetorical approach creates a double meaning of freedom—freedom from Spain, only to join the United States is not self-determination. To Kimball, Spain has oppressed Cuba and it is Cuba’s right to engage in an act of revolution. Presumably, the United States would avoid neutrality and immerge sympathetic to the cause of Cuba. Especially since, 

Cuba has the power, as well as the will and wisdom to be free. She cannot be kept forever in bonds, endowed as she is with a population of 1,200,000; with a revenue of $20,000,000; with the intercourse and light attending $60,000,000 of outward and inward trade; with a territory equal to that of the larger states; with soil teeming with the choicest productions; with forests of the most precious woods; with magnificent and commanding harbors; with an unmatched position as the warder of the Mexican Gulf, and the guardian of the communication with the Pacific; Cuba, the queen of the American islands, will not consent to remain a manacled slave. . .213

Given this impassioned plea, it is not hard to imagine the hearts of expansionists beat faster at the notion of the endless commercial possibilities available if the United States could only possess this Pearl of the Antilles. It is particularly instructive that Kimball included a complete description of the natural resources and the monetary value of revenue and trade. This makes the case louder, beyond the foreign policy position of the Monroe Doctrine, as to why Cuba must never become the possession of England.

Aside from commerce, there are military reasons why Cuba cannot be permitted to fall to any European power. In short, Kimball argues that Cuba stands, “like a warder in the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico. . . and seal hermetically to every aggressive

212 Ibid, 189.
213 Ibid, 190.
stranger the entire coast of the American Mediterranean. This simple geographical fact constitutes Cuba the key to the Gulf, and it would be felt if it passed into the grasp if a strong and jealous rival."\textsuperscript{214} Kimball punctuates his argument, stating simply that England might as well give up control over the “entrance to the English Channel and the Irish Sea” before the United States allow that country to occupy Cuba.\textsuperscript{215} After his lengthy discussion of geography and military importance, Kimball moves to a line of rhetoric even more compelling for the annexation of Cuba. In order to end the repression felt by Cubans, as a member of the United States,

the island would enter at once into the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty; and with her ports open to the commerce of the world—her inhabitants educated and religiously impressed—her soil cultivated to its full capability—her products sent to an unrestricted market—and under the influence of the moral and political force which are the vital elements of the American Constitution—she would become the most prosperous of the states.\textsuperscript{216}

This stirring call for freedom of religion, liberty, free markets, and national security undoubtedly resonated in the minds of his readers. The language of manifest destiny is passionate and when employed correctly, influential to the minds of democratic and expansion loving Americans. As a byproduct to bringing civilization and American values to an oppressed people, Kimball claims that should the island become a part of the United States, it would become “as valuable to this confederacy as New York itself. As an outpost, vital to American trade and defence [sic], and as a centre of transit and exchange, Cuba. . .lies exactly in the track of the golden current” and would serve the purpose of defending every port along the coast.\textsuperscript{217} There exists an inherent contradiction

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid, 192.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid, 193.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid, 194.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid, 195.
\end{itemize}
in Kimball’s rhetoric between his emphasis on freedom and the reality that the United States sought economic and strategic domination over Cuba.

Even if Cuba was annexed or purchased by the United States, the likelihood of self-determination and self-government was limited to the point of absurdity. Two major reasons were the agricultural and economic connection between the neighbors. Once rose colored glasses of expansion were removed, Cuba was an island where a plantation economy flourished and slavery remained an integral part of society. Cuba would produce all the sugar the Union could want, giving America a strong boost in trade of that precious commodity. In regard to sectional differences brewing between the states, Kimball posits that even if “Cuba may suffer from the dispute between free and slave cultivated states. . .In bringing to the commonwealth a class of luxuries which every state largely demands and consumes, and which are not produced by any, she also brings to the Union fresh elements of mediation, harmony, and stable equipoise.”218 This marks a departure from advocacy in the interests of Cubans, to a clear statement in favor of American economic interests. He argues, while newly gained territory has brought trouble to the balance of Congress, Cuba would rise above sectional strife because of the economic advantage the island would bring to the Union. In Kimball’s estimation, the question of expanding slavery into new territory is easily mediated and neutralized by the vast economic gains the United States stands to make by inclusion of Cuba into the Union. At the core, Kimball’s argument is a form of economic nationalism, to do what is best for the economic interests of the United States. Despite all the evidence he provides to demonstrate the enormous benefit Cuba and the United States stand to gain by coalescing, Kimball makes a point in saying that he does not advocate annexation,

218 Ibid,196.
“without regard to the rights of Spain, merely because it would be advantageous on both sides.”\textsuperscript{219} According to Kimball, the United States should wait patiently on the sidelines until “the island shall become free from Spanish dominion”, for it is America’s “solemn duty...to watch over the interests of Cuba.”\textsuperscript{220} Members of the filibustering expeditions and politicians in the 1850s had different ideas, as both groups proactively attempted to control Cuba. As in the Southern states of the Union, the threat of a slave rebellion was enough to make the blood run ice-cold in the veins of plantation owners, given the lopsided population ration between free and enslaved people. Therefore, the threat made by the Spanish Captain-General of the island was most alarming, as her promised to “arm the African slaves in case of the least [revolutionary] movement on the part of the Cubans.”\textsuperscript{221} In conclusion, Kimball makes one final plea for the United States to negotiate the purchase of the island, in order to stave off revolution, protect Spain from losing a colony without compensation, and enrich the American capitalist vanguard. Under this arrangement political freedom for Cubans would be subverted to the economic concerns of the United States. In short, buying the island would not benefit the Cubans with freedom, but would benefit the United States for a host of economic, social, and strategic reasons.

The 31\textsuperscript{st} Congress convened in early December 1849, amidst a great degree of tumult over sectional issues. From the beginning of the session, Congress debated over whether or not the territory gained from the Mexican Cession should allow slavery and if slavery should continue in the District of Columbia, along with a boundary issue between

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid, 198.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
Texas and New Mexico, and Southern insistence on a firmer fugitive slave law. Fiercely proslavery, for the Havana Club, Madan, and the rest of the Cuban Council, the sectional differences over expansion of slavery caused hesitancy in enacting a clear plan of annexation. Even while John L. O’Sullivan lobbied on behalf of Narisco López, Madan worried that without the full help from the South any mission into Cuba was doomed to turn into a slave insurrection. López, however, was determined to force his way onto the island in 1850, despite the Cuban Council’s concern that he was putting ambition over the best interest of Cuba. Perhaps it was this hubris that led to the botched invasion.

Lieutenant Richardson Hardy recalled the fated expedition when he published, The History and Adventure of the Cuban Expedition. This journal was published in six editions in 1850. This account is particularly interesting, as it gives an inside view to the mindset of an agent of manifest destiny. The narrative gives a history of the short operation, along with a chapter of Official Reports written by soldiers under the command of López. Hardy and other young men were compelled by the rhetoric of the age, and attracted by the promise of adventure. Initially, Hardy was excited about the prospect of the mission, though as the plan unraveled, his opinion changed. His “desire and expectation” in writing the journal was to provide the reader with a history to help them form an opinion of the expedition and account “for its failure.” A former soldier from the Mexican-American War, Hardy was not a stranger to combat. The reason he

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222 May, Manifest Destiny's Underworld, 24.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
226 Richardson Hardy, The History and Adventures of the Cuban Expedition, from the First Movements down to the Dispersion of the Army at Key West, and the Arrest of General Lopez, Also: An Account of the Ten Deserters at Isla De Mugeres. (Cincinnati: L. Stratton, 1850), Google Books, 33.
joined the Liberating Expedition to Cuba, was to have, “a chance to carve out fame and fortune with the sword of Liberty. . .not been offered since the Age of Chivalry.”227 The other young men who have joined López, Hardy writes, are “gallant and gifted. . .ready to be soldiers of fortune—willing to respond to the simultaneous calls of the oppressed for sympathy and assistance; of ambition to glory or the grave; and the allurements of ease in the ‘Garden of the World’.”228 His journal is full of romantic allusions, as he justifies his involvement in the expedition. The young veterans, Hardy praises, who made up the “chivalric body of soldiers” set forth to risk death and destruction to “laugh at the barbarian threats of Spanish despots.”229 In this short work, Hardy reprints speeches and correspondence. In one example, López had a written address distributed to his men before they landed on the coast of Cuba. Hardy reprinted the text, in which López calls on the Soldiers of the Liberating Expedition of Cuba to, “strike from the beautiful limbs of the Queen of the Antilles the chains which have too long degraded her, in subjection to a foreign tyranny. . .add another glorious Star to the banner which already waves, to the admiration of the whole world, over.”230 The speech promises the “first act on arrival shall be the establishment of a Provisional Constitution, founded on American principles”, in order to unite Cuba.231 While this text is devoid of description of Cuba’s landscape, it demonstrates the practical application of manifest destiny.

Authored in 1849 and published the year later, poet, political satirist, and journalist William Cullen Bryant, Letters of A Traveler, Or, Notes on Things Seen in Europe and America, documents his travels throughout Cuba. Bryant was a contributor

227 Ibid, 6.
228 Ibid, 3.
229 Ibid, 57
230 Ibid, 33.
231 Ibid, 34.
to the Democratic Review, as both a poet and essayist, and a mouthpiece for expansion. Written as letters, he takes a slightly different tack than Kimball in recalling his journey. This journal was published in thirty editions between 1850 and 1871—the most widely printed of the accounts reviewed.\(^{232}\) Familiar themes of commentary are present as he: mentions of the tropical climate and the drowsy effect it has on the inhabitants; analyzes the process of production on sugar plantations; discourses on the condition of the slave trade; and, muses about the probability of annexation to the United States. It is well written, but with little personal interpretation and analysis, like that of Kimball. His account comes from the perspective of someone looking at a place and reporting dispassionately and without a political agenda about agriculture, society, and racial conditions. As Bryant reports, the climate makes a “temptation to sit idly” as there is “something in a tropical climate which indisposes one to vigorous exertion.”\(^{233}\) The people of Cuba live in open air, because of the climate. Indeed, Bryant compares the way Americans and Cubans sit in chairs. According to him, the Cubans have invented a chair that puts a person in a posture, as if he were reclining in a chair leaning against a wall. He comments, “it is a luxurious attitude, I must own, and I do not wonder that it is a favorite with lazy people, for it relieves one of all the trouble of keeping the body upright.”\(^{234}\) The comparison between industrious, workaday Americans and indolent Cubans cannot be starker. Notably, Bryant describes the women as lazy, who “take the least exercise” and have “plump figures, placid, unwrinkled countenances, a well-developed bust, and eyes, and the brilliant languor of which is not the languor or

\(^{233}\) William C. Bryant, Letters of A Traveller, Or, Notes on Things Seen in Europe and America (London: Richard Bentley, 1850), Google Books, 358.
\(^{234}\) Ibid, 360.
illness.”235 Throughout his account, there is little discussion on the people who inhabit the island, compared to the vividly detailed descriptions of the land and the abundant natural bounty. Rhetorically, this leaves the reader with the impression, that perhaps this land is vacant and without owner. The descriptions of the natural beauty and richness of Cuba connect to Pratt’s ideas about how travelogues were written for the consumption of the capitalist vanguard. When Bryant depicts his journey from Havana to San Antonio de los Baños, to a sugar plantation to the southeast of Matanzas, he takes pains to describe the “rich soil, and in their perpetually genial climate” and the overwhelming agricultural prowess of the island.236 Surrounded by an abundance of trees, of all varieties from palms to fruit trees, he explains that “it is impossible to avoid an expression of impatience that these trees have not been formed into groups, embowering the dwellings, and into groves, through which the beams of the sun, have so fierce at noonday, could not reach the ground beneath.”237 To be sure, Bryant relates that this ripe and fertile land could benefit from improvement and orderly cultivation—a familiar message of progress.

While in San Antonio de los Baños, Bryant also describes the coffee estates of Cuba. He notes, “the lands of Cuba fit for cultivation, are divided into red and black; we were in the midst of the red lands, consisting of a fine earth of a deep brick color, resting on a bed of soft, porous, chalky limestone.”238 However, when questioning a mayoral (the steward of the estate) at a coffee plantation Bryant discovers that coffee plantations are ruined, and “the planters are abandoning them as fast as they can; in four years more there will not be a single coffee plantation on the island, they cannot afford to raise coffee

235 Ibid, 358.
236 Ibid, 370.
237 Ibid, 372.
238 Ibid, 376.
for the prices they get in the market.” All this is because, according to the *mayoral*,
the land has become “exhausted-tired out.” Thus, Bryant’s description is presented as
an opportunity to the capitalist vanguard to come and purchase land, rehabilitate it, and
make the ground profitable again with another crop—sugar. Bryant travelled to San
Antonio de los Baños in a railcar built in “Nowack, drawn by an engine made in New
York, and worked by an American engineer.” Further, while travelling around the
Matanzas Valley of Yumuri, Bryant notes the dark green fields, the “dark earth” and the
“streams of clear water” which keeps the soil in “perpetual freshness.” Along with the
great climate in the area of Yumuri and Cumbre, the verdant soil lends itself to the
growth of plantains, cane, maize, yucca, and bamboo. While there, he stays at a “sugar
estate at the hospitable mansion of a planter from the United States”, fifteen miles from
Matanzas. It is clear from his account, the presence of Americans and American made
technology is commonplace on the island. Within these descriptions, is a note of proud
nationalism for the technical ingenuity which helps the productivity of the plantation
economy. He describes the process of work going on at the sugar mill. Indeed, he is
intrigued by the process which the plantation “negroes” turn cane juice into sugar,
muscovado, and clayed sugar. Continuing to describe the economic prospects of the area,
he comments that one-half of the land has never been tilled, “immense tracts. . .are
waiting the hand of the planter to be converted into profitable sugar estates.” Even
though, “the policy of the [Spanish] government favors emancipation” the demand for

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239 Ibid, 377.
240 Ibid, 378.
241 Ibid, 373.
242 Ibid, 382.
243 Ibid, 385.
244 Ibid, 397.
labor on the part of those who want to be planters is considerable.\textsuperscript{245} The presence of Creoles, Indians, Chinese, and Africans allow for a deep labor pool. One can imagine how the descriptions of rich soil, a culture permitting manumission, and underdeveloped land close to the tip of Florida would excite the minds of American planters.

Simultaneously, Bryant is writing to Southern plantation owners and northern investors—since capital investment is without ideology. Regarding the possibility of adding Cuba to the United States, Bryant relates, “You hear something said now and then in the United States concerning the annexation of Cuba to our confederacy; you may be curious, perhaps, to know what they say of it here.”\textsuperscript{246} Rather than wade into these waters with his own opinion, Bryant chooses to quote from an unnamed European about the pros and cons of annexation. According to the source, a long standing resident of the island

The Creoles, no doubt, would be very glad to see Cuba annexed to the United States, and many of them ardently desire it. It would relieve them from many of the great burdens they now bear, open their commerce to the world, rid them of a tyrannical government, and allow them to manage their own affairs in their own way. But Spain derives from the possession of Cuba advantages too great to be relinquished. She extracts from Cuba a revenue of twelve millions of dollars. . . The Spanish government dares not give up Cuba if it were inclined. Nor will the people of Cuba make any effort to emancipate themselves by taking up arms. The struggle with the power of Spain would be bloody and uncertain, even if the white population were united.. . At present it would not be safe for a Cuba planter to speak publicly of annexation to the United States. He would run the risk of being imprisoned or exiled.\textsuperscript{247}

Bryant concludes, with the analysis that should the island become part of the United States, “Negroes would be imported in large numbers from the United States, and planters would emigrate with them.”\textsuperscript{248} Clearly, this statement echoes the desire of the Southern aristocracy to have the option of expanding slavery, and the plantation system

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid, 398.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid, 399.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid, 400.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid, 401.
into Cuba. However, Bryant also makes the case in terms of bringing American foundations there, as well. He states, “Institutions of education would be introduced, commerce and religion would both be made free, and the character of the islanders would be elevated by the responsibilities which a free government would throw upon them.”

In other words, the inhabitants of the island would develop beyond their current level of laziness and enhance their own moral character with the accountability that democratic civic virtue requires. Despite being anti-slavery personally, Bryant’s rhetoric speaks loudly in favor of expansion, manifest destiny, and all the attendant developments that would come with a stronger American presence in Cuba.

Writer, publisher, and future editor of the *Boston Daily Globe*, Maturin Murray Ballou published, *History of Cuba; or, Notes of a Traveller in the Tropics*, in 1850. Widely read, eighteen editions were published between 1854 and 2010. The travelogue begins with an early history of Cuba dating back to the early colonists, discusses the geopolitical importance of the island, and describes the climate, landscape, sugar plantations, and slave system. This text also treats the 1851 López expedition. These elements are described to act as evidence for annexation. He credits the “remarkable degree of interest”, on all sides, “relative to the island of Cuba” as his purpose behind publishing this work. This work was written to be consumed by the masses and is organized with subheadings to make for easy reading with a chapter that argues for the annexation of Cuba to the United States. In the Preface, he claims while “preparing the volume for the press, the author has felt the want of books of reference,

249 Ibid.
bearing a late date. Indeed, there are none; and the only very modern records are those written in the desultory manner of hurried travellers [sic].”252 Not your ordinary traveler, Humboldt’s work is referenced in this journal. Instead of writing a book about “figures and statistics”, Ballou has offered “the fresh memories of a pleasant trip. . . and trusts that this summer book of a summer clime may float lightly upon the sea of public favor.”253

Travel accounts published shortly after the filibustering expeditions into Cuba, invariably touch upon the subject. Speaking to the infamy of the López expedition, which he contests, is “already well known”, Ballou devotes chapter three to discussing the “disastrous results” of the expedition.254 He rails against the expedition, saying. “no amount of sympathy with the sufferings of an oppressed people. . . can excuse the fitting out of warlike expedition” into the ports of a “friendly nation.”255 Ballou praises the federal government’s efforts “to suppress that species of reckless adventure in which the filibustiers [sic] engaged.”256 The belief that America would expand peacefully, without the need for coercion, is repeated by Ballou. He claims, “while, individually, we should rejoice to see Cuba free, and an integral portion of the Union, nothing will ever induce us to adopt the atrocious doctrine that the ends justify the means.”257 Correct action in Cuba is essential, as “the hopes of every free heart in the world are centered on our banner, and we must see to it that no speck dims the dazzling lustre of its stars.”258 Here, Ballou reinforces the duty of the United States to possess Cuba in a peaceable manner, even

252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
254 Ibid, 39.
255 Ibid, 40.
257 Ibid, 40.
258 Ibid.
though “the best-informed Creoles” do not regard such a purchase as plausible.259 Those who share this view, say that Spain has not rejected offers made to buy Cuba out of hand, as a result of a “diplomatic trick—a temporizing policy.”260 The island is too precious to let go, which is why the Spanish have made “military and naval preparations on a grand and costly scale.”261

Like other writers before him, discusses the prospect that Spain will abolish slavery on the island. The Creoles fear this threat; the terror of a slave revolt is worse “than that which darkened the annals of St. Domingo.”262 These fears are not unfounded, as he unveils a “secret treaty” between Great Britain, France, and Spain. The tripartite agreement gives Spain, “perpetual possession of the island, on condition of her carrying out the favorite abolition scheme of the British Government, and Africanizing the island.”263 Since there is a treaty in action, he quotes from an “intelligent Creole, thoroughly conversant” in the affairs of state, “the whites tremble for their existence and property.”264 If the island is “Africanized”, there will be “vast carnage. . . to punish the African victors.”265 Without assistance from the United States, “what can be done today without great sacrifices to help the Cubans, tomorrow cannot be achieved without the effusion of rivers of blood.”266 The underlying sentiment here is that the United States should act, not out of self-interest, but out of protection for the rights of the Creoles. In describing the situation in Cuba in this manner, Ballou has placed the onus on the US to

259 Ibid, 55.
260 Ibid, 56.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid, 54.
263 Ibid.
264 Ibid, 62.
265 Ibid, 64.
266 Ibid.
act as a moral force to stop the destruction of Cuba. This course of action absolves the United States from the criticism of gaining empire by the barrel of a gun.

Another common feature found in Ballou’s journal is the noting of the climate and landscape—though his depictions serve to support his argument for American control of Cuba. Like travelers before him, Ballou claims, “no place on earth has a finer or more desirable climate,” especially for “those laboring under pulmonary affections.” As he explored inland, Ballou remarked on the “strange narcotic influence in the atmosphere of the island.” The flora scent in the air combined with the “natural effect of Cuba’s soft climate” evoked a “delightful sense of ease”, along with an “indolent luxuriance of feeling.” Transitioning from languid descriptions, his tone changes to a serious note. Ballou acknowledges that “Cuba has been justly styled the garden of the world. . . its natural wealth almost baffling the capacity of estimation.” He proceeds to recall “a variety of fish” and enumerates a multitude of birds found around the island. Cuba has abundance of sugar, coffee, and tobacco plantations, as well as fruit trees. However, the soil is underutilized and “the vegetable wealth of this island [is] . . poorly developed.” Man has done little to help Cuba, “the virgin soil of Cuba is so rich that a touch of the hoe prepares it for the plant.” Ballou longs “to see it peopled by men who appreciate the gifts of nature” and who are willing to work for the “reward of her bounty.” The proof of the potential productivity of the soil is found in the profitability of sugar plantations. American steam engines, engineers, and machinists are depended on to help

267 Ibid, 67-68.
268 Ibid, 121.
269 Ibid, 121-122.
270 Ibid, 125.
271 Ibid, 125-126.
272 Ibid, 127.
273 Ibid, 195.
274 Ibid, 128.
the manufacturing season run efficiently, since a “Spaniard or Creole would as soon as
attempt to fly as he would endeavor to learn how to properly run a steam engine.”275
This “land of enchantment” needs the guiding hand “of a sterner, more self-denying and
tenterprising race to fully test its capabilities, and to astonish the world with its
productiveness.”276 In case there was any doubt, the Anglo-Saxon and the Anglo-
Norman races should dominate in Cuba, for the sake of output.

However much travelers marveled at the prospect of Cuba, few discuss how one
might successfully takeover the island. During his visit, Ballou offered insight into the
military readiness of the Spanish troops, along with the advice for invading Havana. This
particular theme is reminiscent of Joel R. Poinsett in the early 1820s. Ballou describes
the Spanish troops as “in a state of rigid discipline, and. . . efficiency.”277 The worth of
these troops, “may be estimated by their behavior in the López invasion.”278 Which is to
say, the troops fared poorly when they were brought to cope not “with a well-apportioned
and equal force, but with an irregular, undisciplined band” of soldiers “ignorant of the
simplest tactics.”279 The only thing the Spanish troops are “capable of [is] overawing an
unarmed population.”280 Along with this assessment of “degraded” troops, Ballou sees
an opening into defenses of the “impregnable harbor of Havana.”281 Otherwise known as
the “Gibraltar of America”, he claims there are “a thousand chances might happen which
would give the place to an invading force; besides which it has been already twice

275 Ibid, 146.
276 Ibid, 128-129.
277 Ibid, 97.
278 Ibid, 98.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
281 Ibid, 197.
taken.” 282 Besides, he writes, with the exception of Moro Castle and the Cabensas, “the island is very poorly defended” and could be “easily taken by a resolute enemy.” 283 In short, he contests “Cuba’s boasted strength is chimerical.” 284

Expressing a resolute confidence in the destinarian relationship between Cuba and the United States, “the writer believes that Cuba will ere long be politically ours.” 285

The people of the United States, Ballou posits, are conscious that Cuba, the source of all this trouble, is in unwilling vassalage to Spain, and longing for annexation to the United States, that under our flag the prosperity of her people would be secured, a vast addition made to our commercial resources, an invaluable safeguard given to our southern frontier, and the key to the Mississippi and the great west made secure forever, we can no longer wonder at the spread of the conviction that Cuba should belong to this country, and this too as soon as can be honorably brought about. 286

Ballou expresses confidently, “once a part of this great confederacy the old Castillian state of dormancy would give way to Yankee enterprise, her length and breadth would be made to smile like a New England landscape.” 287 The present political condition in Cuba could not contrast more with that of the United States. Traveling from the “freest institutions the earth ever knew. . . to go hence to Cuba is not merely passing over a few degrees of latitude. . . it is a step from the nineteenth century back into the dark ages.” 288

The proximity between “a republic and despotism” makes for difficult “neighborly terms.” 289 Ballou concludes, “Cuba will be free.” 290 However, given his analysis of the profitability of the island, slavery, and the potential of the natural resources it is curious

282 Ibid, 197.
283 Ibid, 198.
284 Ibid.
285 Ibid, 199.
286 Ibid, 226.
287 Ibid, 199.
288 Ibid, 216.
289 Ibid, 225.
290 Ibid, 230.
to consider what sort of freedom he imagined. In this context, manifest destiny is accomplished through economic domination.

William Henry Hurlbert, writer and newspaper man, published, *Gan-Eden: or, Pictures of Cuba*, the same year as Ballou. This book has been published in 14 editions from 1854 to 2000.\footnote{“Hurlbert, William Henry 1827-1895,” [WorldCat Identities], accessed August 14, 2012.} The title of the book is telling about the perspective he takes on Cuba, referring to the island as the Garden of Eden or a “Garden of Delight.”\footnote{William Henry Hurlbert, *Gan-Eden, Or, Pictures of Cuba*. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854), Google Books, 135.} Though the purpose of this book, he states, is not “to write a history, or a gazetteer of Cuba.”\footnote{Ibid, vii.} Instead, he seeks to “express the sum of bright memories” and “reproduce the sights and thoughts” from his visit to the tropics.\footnote{Ibid.} Hurlbert’s recollections encounter well known thematic elements. He touches upon familiar topics like Havana Harbor and Morro Castle, Spanish despotism, Cuban slavery, sugar plantations, and American plans to purchase the island.

In keeping with the tenets of peaceful manifest destiny, Hurlbert advocates for the purchase of Cuba. He rationalizes this predestined feat in simple terms, arguing, “Spain is tyrannical, Cuba is rich, America is ravenously republican. From these propositions it has been deduced that Cuba must soon become a member of our great and glorious confederacy.”\footnote{Ibid, 226-227.} However, Cuba remains in Spain’s clutches, even though the Spanish rule “is undoubtedly hateful” and the Creoles “undoubtedly hate it.”\footnote{Ibid, 226-227.} By the mid-1850s, the sectional debate in Congress had grown increasingly fierce. The Compromise of 1850 had maintained a certain measure of balance between North and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{“Hurlbert, William Henry 1827-1895,” [WorldCat Identities], accessed August 14, 2012.}
\footnote{William Henry Hurlbert, *Gan-Eden, Or, Pictures of Cuba*. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854), Google Books, 135.}
\footnote{Ibid, vii.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid, 226-227.}
\footnote{Ibid, 227.}
\end{footnotes}
South, but by no means was the relationship harmonious. He explains the desire on the part of “slavery, despairing of her northern frontiers, has long been looking to Spain and Portuguese America as her future domain.” 297 The slaveocracy was frustrated by “the accidental defeat of her designs upon California, has naturally stimulated the zeal in other directions.” 298 However, he contends there are “explosive forces sleeping in the bosom of Cuba.” 299 Hurlbert acknowledges the fear of the island becoming independent like Santa Domingo keeps a slave-holding Cuba from attempting her freedom. 300 In a word of caution, he warns “to rear in that fair island a slave-holding republic is only to postpone, not to avert her ruin.” 301 Given that Cuba has not experienced a successful rebellion from within, he posits, “may she not be revolutionized from without.” 302 Hurlbert ponders of the possibility of “armies of deliverance”, along with the “strong arm of the American government... to aid the oppressed islanders” in intervening against the despotic Spanish rule. While a popular sentiment, Hurlbert counters with a reality check on American naval might. He writes, “our own country is, at this time, most lamentably weak upon the water”, while the Spanish coasts “swarm” with “sailors ready for the service of speculative adventures in the old world and the new.” 303 The threat of the Spanish launching an attack on the Gulf Coast was a disastrous scenario for the United States. Thus, he cautions against “a violent transfer of Cuba”, advocating for a sale, even though “the antecedents and the temper of Spain make such a transaction in the last

297 Ibid, 231.
298 Ibid, 232.
299 Ibid.
300 Ibid, 228.
301 Ibid, 233.
302 Ibid, 228.
303 Ibid, 230.
degree unlikely.” Hurlbert’s real concern is not for political stability, as much as the threat of a slave revolt damaging the economic output of commodities and disrupting trade.

Also in 1859, Joseph J. Dimock, travelled to Cuba to inspect elements of his family’s business and reflected on these economic realities. His work went unpublished until the twentieth century, yet it still reflects familiar thematic elements of published accounts during this era. Including the journal in this study is advantageous because it shows that even diaries, never meant for public consumption, embrace the form and structure of the language of manifest destiny. Written as a personal diary during February and March of 1859, it reflects the desire to develop Cuban resources for American commercial benefit. This is not coincidental, as editor Louis A. Pérez mentions in his introduction, since Dimock traveled to Cuba with Maturin M. Ballou’s 1854 publication of History of Cuba; or Notes of a Traveler in the Tropics in hand. Dimock’s diary includes significant reference to this, and other previously published accounts on Cuba. This fact reinforces the importance that popularly consumed travel accounts had on the mindset of Americans, as both “a source of information and a means of orientation”, while travelling abroad. Dimock’s account includes attacks on the Spanish presence and the lackluster military readiness. While he is impressed with beauty of the island, the “drill of some of the Spanish soldiers” does not incline him favorably. He portrays the Spanish in a stereotypical light, depicting weakly disciplined Spanish force to the American volunteer militia, critiquing the Spanish forces.

305 Dimock, Impressions of Cuba, xvi.
306 Ibid.
as “below par.” Although, he contends that the Spanish soldier “is said to be capable of great endurance which... must be true, as they are able to endure so much filth, etc. on their uniforms and faces.” Clearly, Dimock does not hold the Spanish regulars in high regard and makes light of their inability to drill professionally. Regarding the political landscape, he describes a “grand serenade” held in a large plaza in order to send Captain-General Concha back to the Iberian Peninsula. As Dimock explains, “the soldiers ‘vivas’ and ‘long live Isabel and Spain’ were coldly received by the masses and the soldiers only cheered while the spectators quietly laughed at the demonstration.” The Captain-General was so embarrassed by the lackluster support shown he, “refused to show himself on the balcony.” Such is the level of discontent against Spanish rule. Along the lines of dissension, Dimock claims that he has heard Creoles say that if the General was caught without his armed guards, he would be assassinated in the streets. Moreover, Dimock claims that in the course of conversation with some Cubans, the feeling toward Spanish rule is one of open contempt and hatred. While this commentary might be a generalized overstatement, nonetheless this sort of talk gives way to discussion of annexation. Compared to the Spanish, Dimock says that Americans are treated with unusual respect [and] Americans can and do talk here openly of buying Cuba, of annexation, and of manifest destiny. Certain it is, that the idea of annexation to the States is getting to be very popular here, not only among the Creoles, but among young Spaniards who have had an opportunity to become acquainted with American ways and means. Cuba is a garden of the world, and essential to the growth and prosperity of our union and must eventually be with us and of us.
This line of reasoning resonates with the “spirit of the time”: Cuba is a land of great natural bounty and essential to American security and prosperity. Furthermore, when exposed to American values, those living on the island are inclined to choose democracy above all other. In the language of manifest destiny, Americans will be saviors, who bring with them the light of civilization. For good measure, Dimock approximates the strength of the Spanish navy in Havana harbor. Again, he is unimpressed. While the “steamers are fine models. . .their big frigates, and line of battleships appear to be relics of a former age. . . [they serve] no use except as a receptacle for sailors and soldiers, and to be peppered and shot at by fast sailing Yankee clippers.”

Of course, when Spain and the United States do finally go to war in 1898, Commodore Dewey’s fleet destroyed Spain’s aging vessels in Manila Bay in one of the most celebrated naval victories in American history.

At any rate, Dimock comments on the fine harbors of Havana and Cardenas as hubs of commerce for the sugar and molasses trade. Reflecting the economic ties between Cuba and the United States, he mentions, “Cardenas Harbor is full of vessels of which more than one-half are Americans, and one sees so many Yankees in the streets that it seems quite homelike here.” Like Bryant, Dimock notices the railway “cars and locomotives are all of American manufacture and the engineers are Yankees”, because, “he has yet to see a Spaniard competent to take charge of a steam engine.” As propitious as the economic ties are, he acknowledges that Cuba would be even better, if the island belonged to America. If this was the case, products could flow more openly

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312 Ibid, 24.
314 Ibid, 29 and 32.
between the two countries, without the added cost of Spanish tariffs on American goods. It is obvious that trade networks are on his mind.

Along with the other journals studied, Dimock depicts Cuba as an Edenic paradise, ripe for cultivation. To punctuate this sentiment, he quotes from Tennyson, “Droops the heavy blossom’d tower, hangs the heavy fruited tree—Summer isle of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea.”\textsuperscript{315} Dimock remarks on the amount of produce available “finding on the table green peas, plantains, beans, lettuce, yams, tomatoes. . . oranges, bananas, and coconuts fresh from the trees.”\textsuperscript{316} On this island, especially in red soil, “everything grows rapidly.”\textsuperscript{317} He makes the belabored point of describing the different varieties of trees. . .mahogany, palm, cedar, copaiba, India rubber ceiba, bamboo, pimento, pepper, mango, breadfruit, coconut, orange, lemon, tamarind, caininto (a species of plum), aguacate (or alligator pear), and many others. . .Of fruits, there are an endless variety, many of which are never seen in the northern states, such as mango, sapota, sweet lemon, guanabana, citron, bananas, maranox, pineapple, toronja (or orange), guava, etc. Cotton also grows here wild, and a fine quality is being cultivated which is called the green seed of Chinese cotton. . . Coffee, indigo, vanilla, and tonquin beans grow wild. . .but it is evident to anyone that the resources of the island are not half developed. With proper culture it would be the tropical market of the world.\textsuperscript{318}

As if this litany was not enough, he is doubly impressed by the profitability of the sugar plantations, which yield in upwards of twenty percent during good years. With the help of the capitalist vanguard, the island will reach its full, cultivated potential. This dawns on Dimock, as he is riding throughout the country. He realizes, “In the hands of an industrious, thrifty, and go-ahead population, Cuba would blossom like the rose; now it is a garden growing wild, cultivated here and there in patches, but capable at least of

\textsuperscript{315} Ibid, 86.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid, 8.
\textsuperscript{317} Ibid, 37.
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid, 37-38.
supporting in ease a population of ten times its present number.”

Presumably, this population increase would consist of hardworking American Protestants, capable of the sort of development Dimock advocates. At the very least, Dimock concludes, “What is needed here is an infusion of blood and nerve of a more enterprising and sterner race of men, and when its capabilities are fairly tested it will astonish the world with its productivity. . . . May I live to see this favored island represented by one of the galaxy of stars which glisten in the blue field of the flag of the free.”

With this cornucopia of natural bounty, it is no small wonder American business interests coveted this island paradise.

Amidst machinations to purchase the island, lawyer and writer, Richard Henry Dana published his account, To Cuba and Back: A Vacation Voyage, shortly upon his return. Dana traveled there during February and March 1859. This work has been published in twenty-seven editions between 1859 and 2003. A well-known author, Dana was a free-soiler, though not an abolitionist. Like other travelers before him, he noted the political condition of Cuba and the luxuriant interior. Upon entering Havana harbor, he recognizes the impressive figure of Morro Castle. Above the looming fortifications the “red and yellow stripped flag of Spain—blood and gold—floats over it.” Dana spent a short period of time traveling around Havana, and Matanzas. Within the interior of Cuba he describes the wealth and bounty the tropical island has to offer: royal palm trees, Indian corn, bananas, plantains, cocoa. The Cuban landscape was

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319 Ibid, 85.
320 Ibid, 140.
323 Ibid, 87-88.
verdant and it was because of the “famous red earth” and the “climate which. . . gave her marked superiority in the cultivation of sugar.”

Touring a sugar plantation, Dana reflects, “I now begin to feel I am in Cuba; in the tropical rich, sugar-growing slave-tilled Cuba. . . the plantation life I am seeing and about to see, tells the story of Cuba, the Cuba that has been and that is.”

The labor system, as well as the help of insourcing skilled foreign labors, was required for sugar production. In short, the sugar-culture enslaved Africans and attracted Americans. Upon entering the sugar-house of the plantation, Dana notes, “a man with an unmistakably New England face in charge of the engine, with that look of intelligence and independence so different form the intelligence and independence of all other persons.”

Attracted by high pay and the lure of the tropics, Americans were working as engineers and machinists. According to Dana, the engineer is in high demand, “their position independent, and their pay large.”

Having a first person perspective on plantation life, one Yankee tells Dana, “that in the long run this liberal system of treatment to hours and duties, yields a better return than a more stringent rule.”

While away, Dana references receiving current information brought by an American steamer. “What an impression is made,” he writes, “on all classes in this country by the pending ‘Thirty Millions Bill’ of Mr. Slidell.”

Despite the slim possibility the bill would pass, the legislation was considered by the Cubans with whom he spoke “to be the first step in a series” which would conclude with an attempt by...

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324 Ibid, 92, 99.
325 Ibid, 90.
327 Ibid, 110.
328 Ibid, 111.
329 Ibid, 3.
America “to seize the island.” Such was the overt nature of American interest in the island. In Chapter twenty-three, Dana observes the “Condition of Cuba”. He writes, “to an American from the free states, Cuba presents an object of singular interest. His mind is occupied and almost oppressed by the thought of the strange problems that are in process of solution around him. He is constantly a critic, and a philosophizer if not a philosopher.”

There are three classes in Cuba who Dana identifies—each class with a conflicting viewpoint on the condition of Cuba and what to do with regard to annexation. The first are the Spaniards, who, for obvious reasons are “opponents of the independence of Cuba and especially of her annexation to the United States.” The second class is “comprised of the Americans, English, French, German, and all other foreigners, except Spaniards.” This class is large and wealthy, made up of primarily “merchants, bankers, and other traders.” These foreigners do not intend on becoming citizens of Cuba. Instead, they are primarily involved in “commerce, banking, or trade. . . for purposes of money making only.” This commercial class supports the status quo, even though Dana asserts that in the long run a regime change would be more beneficial to them. However, most agree “the island is rich, production is large, commerce flourishes, life and property are well-protected, and if a man does not concern himself with political or religious questions, he has nothing to fear.” Of this set, Americans are most favorable toward annexation, but the other nationalities are opposed. The third class is

330 Ibid, 64.
331 Ibid, 198.
332 Ibid.
333 Ibid, 199.
334 Ibid.
335 Ibid, 200.
336 Ibid, 201.
the Cubans, or Creoles. This group is “disaffected. . . and they desire something approximating self-government.” Dana argues, if Spain cannot provide this, the Creoles need to be annexed. However, the Creoles are divided, since many are emancipationists, “and fear that if they come in at the southern end of our union, that question is closed forever.” Still there are others who fear the “Anglo-Saxon race would swallow up the power and property of the island”, as done in California and Texas.

Cuba is a combustible place, due to the high slave and free black population—similar to Jamaica and Haiti. It is for this reason that the notion that Cuba will embrace democratic institutions is folly. Dana points out that one “cannot reason from Massachusetts to Cuba”, meaning the parallel between the American Revolution and a popular uprising in Cuba, is misapplied. In comparing the Cuban state of readiness for self-government to a naval ship, Dana uses an extended metaphor. On the subject of self-rule, he posits, “but Cuba has neither offices trained to the quarter-deck, nor sailors trained to the helm, the yard, or the gun. Nay, the ship is not built, nor the keel laid, nor is the timber grown, from which the keel is to be cut.” He concludes with the warning that while Cuba is considered to be the “key to the Gulf of Mexico” more likely what will happen is that “whoever takes her is more likely to find in her a key to Pandora’s box.”

338 Ibid.
339 Ibid.
340 Ibid, 238.
341 Ibid, 237.
342 Ibid, 238.
343 Ibid.
Conclusion

Economic, societal, and geopolitical forces influenced the ways Americans of the nineteenth century saw themselves, arousing a planetary consciousness and competition with European powers. Since the days of the Revolution, American culture was defined by a blend of Enlightenment idealism and romantic nationalism that promoted progress. Territorial expansion was the practical application of this nationalism. That America was destined to expand and become, as Stephen A. Douglas intoned, an “ocean bound republic”, was a foregone conclusion. What this republic looked like, was different in the minds of Democrats, Whigs, Republicans, Unitarians, filibusters, abolitionists, and slave owners. On the face, there was widespread agreement among Americans; divine providence had given the green light to America to expand her influence throughout the world, one way or the other.

Manifest destiny was a piece of the larger historical consciousness, the collective memory of American culture. Popular culture, but particularly travel literature played an indispensable role in promoting expansionist ideals. The increase in shipping ties coincided with the increased amount of Americans travelling to Cuba, and consequently the number of travelogues published about those journeys. The American mission was energetically fueled by the rejection of limited national and individual development.\footnote{Johannsen, “The Meaning of Manifest Destiny,” 10.} Complicating the matter were the many strains of manifest destiny, not all nonviolent as O’Sullivan had prophesied. With the benefit of hindsight, historians have argued that as the issue of slavery figured more prominently when territory was acquired, fanatical manifest destiny actually delegitimized the concept of democratic expansion. In order to truly understand the impact and significance of manifest destiny, it must be explored in
cultural context. Regardless of which of the varied voices of manifest destiny one
listened to, nearly all agreed that territory was to be had by United States. The process by
which territory was acquired was a matter of preference; some attempts were martial, and
others political. The genius of manifest destiny was that one could rationalize the
argument to many different territorial priorities—Texas, Oregon, the Southwest, Latin
America, the Sandwich Islands, Cuba, and beyond.

Nearly all of the accounts describe the physical landscape, and ponder the
importance of Cuba to the security and well-being of the United States. As the nation
rapidly expanded in the 1840s, amidst the metaphor of manifest destiny, the journals
increasingly called for American intervention to help free the island from Spanish
despotism. Pérez writes, “metaphor has been central to the premise of empire” and
conceals “the ideological content of language.”³⁴⁵ Using a broad interpretation of
manifest destiny reveals a complex concept, one that at once both complicated and
defined American nationalism during the nineteenth century. Rivalry against France, and
particularly, Great Britain helped focus American attention to settle the continent, protect
a sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere, and keep former Spanish colonies from
transferring to European rivals. Cuba, the “Pearl of the Antilles” was Spain’s oldest
colonial possession, carrying not only significant economic benefit, but also sentimental
value—Spain would never let Cuba go without a fight. Nonetheless, before Spain and
America exchanged blows in 1898, the desire to possess Cuba through force or financial
inducement loomed in the imaginations of Presidents Thomas Jefferson through
Theodore Roosevelt. However, it was not just Presidents who looked southward, but

³⁴⁵ Pérez, Cuba in the American Imagination, 30.
American travelers, filibustering soldiers, and adherents to the Jacksonian ideals of manifest destiny expansionism.

Although few accounts were published during the 1860s, as the United States was engulfed in the Civil War, nonetheless by the 1870s Americans were back to Cuba and relating their adventures to the audience back home. More wealthy Americans were traveling the world during the 1870s and 1880s. Back at home, the public read the books about these travels. Historians generally point to Mark Twain’s travel account *Innocence Abroad*, published in 1869 about his sea voyage to Egypt and the Holy Land, as the best representation of this literature.\(^{346}\) During the First War of Independence in Cuba, or the Ten Years War (1868 to 1878), Americans published over nine accounts. By the 1880s, “the travel book” had become embedded as a form of “entertainment and information”, consumed by readers in serially published national magazines and shelf-copies.\(^{347}\) The 1890’s marked a high point in American interest in Cuba, as the Second War for Independence broke out in 1895. The last decade of the century, saw thirty-one published accounts and concluded with American control of the island in late 1898.\(^{348}\)

Across the decades, these American writers noted many of the same economic, political, social, and geographic themes. They wrote in the language of manifest destiny describing, underdeveloped landscape, slavery, soil conditions, defenses, plantations, and economics. Americans wanted Cuba for many reasons: commercial networks, to extend slavery, fulfill manifest destiny, and to check European ambitions to steal the island from Spain. In totality, these accounts represent American aspirations in the nineteenth


\(^{348}\) This figure does not take into account the “literally dozens” of accounts published by war journalists and soldiers that were published after 1900 (Smith, 406).
century to seize Cuba, develop the island beyond its primal state, exploit the copious natural resources, and increase trade to the US. When applying different levels of analysis to these accounts, at face value they are empirical descriptions of the island—bountiful, exotic, and uncultivated. Though, Pratt would argue there is nothing innocent about these simple descriptions; there is always a motivation on behalf of the author. The use of familiar literary devices and reoccurring themes within these travel accounts show these men explaining themselves in a consistent language of manifest destiny. To be sure, travel accounts use the “eye that sees” to inspire the “I that possess” and to impart a motivated yearning to make Cuba a prosperous, and permanent part of the Union.\textsuperscript{349}

\textsuperscript{349} Professor Patricia Juarez-Dappe, class lecture, California State University, Northridge, January 28, 2011.


Dimock, Joseph Judson. *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: The Travel Diary of Joseph J. Dimock*


