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"La relación de sus males, [y] el medio de curarlos". Trans-American Models of Slave Labor Organization in José Antonio Saco's *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil*[*]

"La relación de sus males, [y] el medio de curarlos". Modelos transamericanos de organización del trabajo esclavo en el *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil* de José Antonio Saco

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Abstract: José Antonio Saco's *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil* (1832), the first condemnation of the slave trade published in Cuba, is among the creole statesman and historian's most critically cited texts. Still, it continues to perplex students of the Cuban nineteenth century, who struggle to reconcile Saco's liberal reformist program with his seemingly ambiguous stance on slavery. This study looks to resolve this critical impasse through the analytical tools provided by Dale Tomich. As Tomich perceptively reveals, the logic underpinning nineteenth-century liberalism and pro-slavery thinking were mutually supportive. What is more, in *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*, Tomich maps the contours of the Caribbean's heterogeneous slaveries, which Saco knowingly conflates in his *Análisis*, I wish to argue, to further his liberal political project.

Keywords: Cuba; Slavery; Abolitionism; 19th Century; José Antonio Saco; Liberalism.

Resumen: El *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil* (1832) de José Antonio Saco es la primera condena de la trata de esclavos publicada en Cuba. Este título se encuentra entre los más citados por la crítica de este historiador criollo y hombre de Estado. Sin embargo, sigue dejando perplejos a los estudiosos del siglo XIX cubano, a quienes les cuesta conciliar el programa liberal reformista de Saco y su postura supuestamente ambigua en cuanto a la esclavitud. El presente estudio busca resolver esta disyuntiva crítica con las herramientas analíticas proprcionadas por Dale Tomich. Este revela perceptivamente que la lógica que respaldó el liberalismo decimonónico y el pensamiento esclavista se apoyaron mutuamente. Es más, en *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*, Tomich deslinda los contornos de esclavitudes caribeñas heterogéneas, que Saco combina a sabiendas para promover su proyecto político liberal.

Palabras clave: Cuba; esclavitud; abolicionismo; siglo XIX; José Antonio Saco; liberalismo.

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José Antonio Saco y López-Cisneros (1797-1879) ends his *La supresión del tráfico de esclavos africanos en la isla de Cuba, examinada con relación a su agricultura y a su seguridad* (1844) with a seemingly paradoxical pronouncement: "En conclusión de todo lo dicho se deduce, que, si los habitantes de la isla de Cuba quieren conservar los esclavos que hoy poseen, es preciso que para siempre se abstengan de todo tráfico africano" (2001: 131).[1] He forwards this a priori perplexing determination (how might abandoning the African slave trade possibly bolster African slave labor? Why would an abolitionist offer advice on the preservation of slavery?) after presenting a labyrinthine trans-American analysis of slave labor organization. This essay is an expanded version of his often-mentioned *Análisis por Don José Antonio Saco de una obra sobre el Brasil, intitulada, Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829 by Rev. R. Walsh, author of a journey from Constantinople, etc.* (1832), the first condemnation of the slave trade published in Cuba, and the leading basis for Saco's expulsion from Havana by the island's captain general (Portuondo Zúñiga, 2005: 73; Ghorbal, 2009: 175-176, 540).[2] It was also in this earlier treatise that Saco first demonstrates the innovative methodology of locating Cuban slavery within a much broader economic whole, as well as the ostensible contradictions of the colony's liberal reform movement, notwithstanding its deviation from the latter piece in locus and tempore of enunciation. Yet Saco's deductions are plainly and revealingly warped by his politics, most evidently so in his portrayal of slave systems as spatially and temporally uniform rather than "complex, multiple, and qualitatively different relations within the global processes of accumulation and division of labor", in the words of Dale Tomich (2004: 69). By rereading Saco's *Análisis* through the critical lens offered by Tomich, which emphasizes "both the unity of world-scale processes and the differentiation of particular social spaces within the world economy" (Tomich, 2004: 118) this study endeavors to provide a more capacious understanding of nineteenth-century creole liberalism while reconciling its reputed inconsistencies.

Confronting the Paradoxes of Nineteenth-Century Creole Liberalism

Since at least as far back as Justo Zaragoza's *Las insurrecciones en Cuba* (1872), historians have stumbled over the often-cited contradictions reported to inhere in

[1] For Saco, it was not slavery that was the problem, as this quote reveals, but the slave trade. In *La supresión* he goes to great lengths to dissociate the two: "Todos saben que, en punto a esclavos, hay *dos* especies de *abolición*: una del *tráfico* con la costa de África, y otra de la misma *esclavitud*. Aunque ambas tienen relación entre sí, jamás deben confundirse, y bien puede la primera tratarse, y aún lo que es más, realizarse, con absoluta independencia de la segunda" (2001: 79). And if that weren't clear enough, he succinctly and emphatically restates that "*no se trata de EMANCIPAR LOS ESCLAVOS, SINO SOLO DE ABOLIR EL CONTRABANDO AFRICANO*" (2001: 106).

[2] "Doce años después de publicado en la Habana el artículo anterior, imprimí otro en París, que por el íntimo enlace que tiene con él, lo inserto a continuación, y cuyo título es el siguiente" (Saco, 2001: 77).

nineteenth-century Cuban liberal ideology.[3] Ileana Rodríguez is one of many to argue that true liberalism failed to take root in Cuba because of the racist politics of its would-be proponents ("se encuentran metidos en el mismo dilema de la sacarocracia: desear libertades políticas y económicas para ellos, pero temer las mismas para los esclavos […] una postura política que en la Cuba de principios de siglo mal podíamos llamar liberal" [1980: 50-51, 39]). This incoherence, I would like to suggest, is more to do with our own mode of thinking than with theirs. As Tomich has masterfully argued, Saco's intellectual precursor Francisco Arango y Parreño (1765-1837) demonstrates "the compatibility and interdependence of liberal political economy and pro-slavery thought" in several memorials the creole economist dispatched to the king toward the turn of the century (2003: 5). Tomich elaborates:

> The new discipline of political economy provides Arango with the means to formulate his program for increasing the wealth of Cuba and his justification for slavery. He re-conceptualizes slave labor within the framework of free trade, individual self-interest, efficient management, and systematic technological innovation. Indeed, the *Discurso* [*Sobre la Agricultura de la Habana y Medios de Fomentarla*, 1793] demonstrates not the incompatibility, nor even the simultaneous coexistence of liberal ideas and pro-slavery thought, but the ways these positions derive from the shared conceptual field of political economy (2003: 5).

By the same token, Manuel Moreno Fraginals has argued that our puzzlement at the fact that the slave trade flourished under more liberal imperial governance stems from conflating the distinct ways in which the term *liberal* was understood in nineteenth-century political economy on the one hand and in Romantic thought on the other (2014, I: 336).[4] Indeed, for midnineteenth-century Cuban liberals, "la palabra *libertad*", Moreno instructs, "no tenía otra connotación que la de libre desarrollo industrial por parte de los capitalistas, sin limitación ni intervenciones estatales" (336). And, as Arango's *Discurso* displays, this included the liberty to buy and sell African slaves, who, lacking in property, "remained outside the sphere of liberal political economy" (Tomich, 2003: 23). It was according to such logic that Saco could, without contradiction, demand "instituciones

[3] "Aquellos jóvenes en sus fincas o en las ajenas, se pusieron a predicar ideas perfectamente contrarias a sus intereses" (quoted in Ghorbal, 2009: 20). My discussion is instructed by Tomich: "From this perspective, the coexistence of slavery, the free market, and Enlightenment thought, both internationally and as part of the world view of the Creole elite itself, is regarded as at once a defining feature and a central paradox of the nineteenth-century Cuban slave regime" (2003: 6). Lorna Valerie Williams writes: "In the often-cited comparative study of the Brazilian and Cuban systems of slavery, Saco assumed the paradoxical stance of advocating an end to the illegal slave trade and ridding the island of its black population without jeopardizing the planters' economic interests" (1994: 7-8). Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, to offer another example of this tendency, summarizes: "Este es el caso en general de la obra de José Antonio Saco López, que no de su vida, otra paradoja en verdad" (2005: 7). Juan Pérez de la Riva argues along similar lines in his revealingly titled "La contradicción fundamental de la sociedad colonial cubana: trabajo esclavo contra trabajo libre" (1970).

[4] It should not go unmentioned that Moreno too misconceives a "tremenda contradicción" between the sugar producers' bourgeois aspirations and their continued use of slave labor (2014, I: 150, see 150-55), which Tomich has critiqued (2004: 75-94).

liberales" for Cuba's white populace and, in the same breath, insist on their denial for its slaves (Saco and Figarola-Caneda, 1921: 14).[5]

Elsewhere, Tomich broadens his critique of the type of binary thinking that disentangles "liberal political economy and pro-slavery thought", and instead "proposes a strategy to go beyond simple dichotomies such as production for the market vs. wage labor and capitalist vs. precapitalist" (2004: 4).[6] But before considering that strategy in more detail, I wish to gain a bit more analytical legroom by stretching the reductive dyad liberalism-slavery a little wider. To do so, let's review some of the transformations that slave labor organization and sourcing sustained in nineteenth-century Cuba, and how these adjustments altered creole liberal concepts regarding coerced labor.[7]

The First, Second, and Third Cuban Slaveries

"A nuevas circunstancias, nuevas formas", Domingo Del Monte (1804-1853), doyen of the liberal-minded Cuban reformers, wrote to Saco in November 1849 (Saco and Fernández de Castro, 1923: 130). Whereas the Venezuelan-born Cuban was not counseling Saco on slave labor, but rather on the manner in which the latter should continue his campaign for Cuban liberties, he very well could have been. To be sure, Cuban slavery's form did not remain static over the three-and-a-half centuries spanning the first introduction of African chattel to the island by Diego Velázquez in 1511 and the labor regime's delayed dissolution in 1886. In fact, the Pearl of the Antilles sets in relief "the formation and reformation of slave relations within historical processes of the capitalist world economy" that Tomich has discerned (2004: 57). The dynamics encompassing Cuban slavery's third such "formation and reformation" are what propelled Saco's indictment of the slave trade studied below.

Up to the turn of the nineteenth century, Cuban sugar production lagged behind that of its Antillean neighbors. As Alan Dye identifies, Spain's mercantilist policies, its focus on mining, and the insular colony's function as a military base "ensured that the sugar industry remained a minor component of the Cuban

[5] We must not neglect the fact that, as Michel Gobat explains, "Latin American liberalism of the era was anything but uniform, and it was shaped by regional peculiarities as well as by class and race" (2013: 1361). This was certainly true for liberalism within the Spanish sugar island, as well.

[6] Later, he "rejects the either/or logic of internal/external; premodern/modern; global/local that such conceptualizations such as that of Moreno Fraginals generate. Instead, it adopts a logic of both/and in order to integrate into a unified and comprehensive conceptual field the diverse relations of production, exchange, and political power constituting the capitalist world economy. This approach enables us to consider the simultaneity and historical complexity of social relations, that is, Cuba as at once slave *and* capitalist and to demonstrate the changing character of slave relations in the nineteenth century through the theoretical reconstruction of the local history of the Cuban sugar complex within world economic processes" (Tomich, 2004: 76-77).

[7] Ghorbal says that "Les années 1835-1845, si elles témoignent d'un schéma économique inaltérable, ouvrent néanmoins la voie au débat autour de la question de l'esclavage, système qui n'avait jusqu'alors pas fait l'objet d'une remise en cause profonde" (2009: 14).

economy" (1998: 29; see also Benítez Rojo, 1996: 61-62). The sugar plantations that did operate at this time would have employed preindustrial production methods and work rhythms. Moreno describes a typical Cuban sugar mill of this era:

> Fueron en sí pequeños trapiches de tracción animal, con tres a cinco pailas para concentrar el jugo de las cañas, un promedio de 30 a 40 esclavos y 3 a 5 cab de mantenimiento, montes y pastos. En realidad, eran reducidos centros de beneficio y transformación de una materia de origen agrícola en cuya siembra, cuidado, corte y transporte se invertía un alto porcentaje de la fuerza de trabajo. Si a ello agregamos los cultivos de mantenimiento, las tareas de desmonte y atención del ganado, y, por último, anotamos que la labor fabril es estacional –solo cinco meses al año y descansando los domingos y días de precepto–, comprendemos que no existe una industria en el sentido moderno de esta palabra (2014, I: 60).

Further influencing the character of this first Cuban slavery was the *asiento* system, a royally conceded monopoly to import slaves to the empire over a certain period, which had the effect of limiting planters' access to chattel (Murray, 1980: 7; see Moreno, 2014, I: 5, 8; Schorsch, 2004: 9).

Cuban sugar production burst forth toward the turn of the century, spurred by a confluence of factors including the British occupation of Havana in 1762 and the independence of the United States of America in 1776 (Moreno, 2014, I: 21-22, 42-44). But it was the slave uprising in the French colony of Saint Domingue (1791-1804), which was baptized Haiti once the smoke from its cane fields had cleared, that contributed the irreversible momentum to Cuba's plantation economy. In 1790, Saint Domingue provided 29.55 percent of the world's sugar; a year later this figure dropped to zero (Moreno, 2014, I: 39). Cuban producers were keen to take advantage of the gap in production and the unprecedented prices that resulted (Dye, 1998: 28-29; Moreno, 2014, I: 55, 66-67, 94). In the 1820s Cuba emerged as the world's foremost sugar supplier, a position for which Arango's farsighted memorials to the Crown, mentioned earlier, had laid the groundwork (Tomich, 2003: 4, 8, 25; Moreno, 2014, I: 66). "The keystone of [Arango's] proposals", Tomich indicates, "was his call for the free entry of slaves into Cuba and for the removal of Spanish mercantile restrictions in order to permit free trade in tropical produce for Havana planters" (2003: 5). Concurring with Arango's reasoning, Spain dissolved the *asiento* in 1789 and enacted other free trade policies that bolstered the Cuban sugar boom (Moreno, 2014, I: 48). Liberalization of imperial fiscal relationships was further propelled by a remodeling of world economic structures, which was a by-product of Great Britain's rise to global supremacy. As the industrial revolution fueled Great Britain's economic expansion to outgrow domestic market structures, Albion looked beyond its borders for outlets for capital and manufactured products (Tomich, 2004: 61; Hobsbawm, 1999: 112-31). "A single free and multilateral system of world trading, increasingly pivoting on London" emerged, while the technological revolution changed production methods (Hobsbawm, 1999: 118). In the case of Cuba, the engines of British capital infusion and industrialization set the stage for the period that Moreno has discussed as "la gran manufactura", in which new production methods and social labor organization patterns took hold (2014, I: 148).

Whereas Moreno sustains the ongoing argument that "el crecimiento cuantitativo determinaba forzosamente cambios cualitativos", perhaps it is the other

way around (2014, I: 61). Fernando Ortiz has shown that technification required all production inputs to multiply in size in order to keep up with the increased capacity of the steam engine, vacuum pan, centrifugal separation, railroad networks, and other modern processes (1973: 75). As the optimal size of a mill expanded exponentially, so did its slave labor force, the sole cultivators of cane until around 1868 (Maluquer, 1976: 21). According to David Eltis's count, some 739 000 African slaves were carried off to Cuba between 1789 and 1867 (cited in Dye, 1998: 31). Now competing in a world market, Cuban producers faced enormous pressure to lower their costs (Tomich, 2004: 83). If on the one hand this encouraged the technological innovations that marked nineteenth-century Cuban sugar production, on the other it resulted in qualitative transformation in the nature of its slave labor organization. In Moreno's words, "El relativo carácter patriarcal de la esclavitud cubana hasta mediados del XVIII, se sustituye por la explotación intensiva del negro" (2014, I: 45). Mills now ran "al máximo de capacidad, todo el tiempo posible", which meant that their labor force did, too (Moreno, 2014, I: 208). By the middle of the nineteenth century, slaves' mortality rate had doubled over that of the prior century, jumping to somewhere between 5 and 10 percent, giving credence to the popular phrase that "con sangre se hace azúcar" (Le Riverend, 1972: 141; Moreno, 2014, I: 45, 79, 94). Natural reproduction could not keep up, leaving the slave trade as the only means of labor sourcing (Moreno, 2014, I: 70). This, in short, is Cuba's "second slavery" (Tomich, 2004: 56-74).

Compelled by Great Britain, Spain signed treaties banning the African slave trade that went into effect in 1820 and 1835 (see Murray, 1980). Slavery as an economic system may have changed little as a result of these successive bans, as Karim Ghorbal has illustrated, yet its imperial function and conceptions regarding it transformed radically (2009: 14-15). Once more we can look to Arango for a benchmark of creole sensibilities. Whereas he had argued in 1794 for the need to "alentar con premios y con ensayos nuestro comercio directo a las costas de África", by 1832 he would claim that "Hace muchos años que estoy predicando la necesidad, la justicia y también la utilidad de esta abolición efectiva" of what he calls "tan asqueroso comercio" (2005, I: 160; II: 335). Among the concerns goading this doctrinal U-turn, commentaries on Saco in particular regularly deliberate the creole intellectual's Negrophobia or his eastern roots. More on these approaches later. Here, I would like to discuss the novel political dimensions that the slave trade took on with its prohibition. As David Murray shows, Spain manipulated the bilateral treaties signed with London "to protect the slave trade rather than to prosecute it" (1980: 91; see also Ghorbal, 2009: 126). But such protection was not provided unconditionally. Spain empowered peninsular merchants supportive of the imperial order: "De ahí la razón del hecho de que comerciantes y gobierno metropolitano se apoyen mutuamente, formando un nudo de intereses inextricable" (Moreno, 2014, I: 125). By doing so, while suppressing alternative forms of labor sourcing, Madrid managed the labor spigot, which it wielded as a pressure point of colonial control. Further, by fomenting the island's slave population, the metropole put a brake on the liberal program pursued by

creoles such as Saco, which it viewed as a precursor to Cuban independence.[8] Thus Spanish politicians would cynically argue that slavery, which they encouraged, blocked concession of political and civil rights to Cubans (Ghorbal, 2009: 438–49). As Gerard Laurence Aching summarizes:

> Having lost most of its colonies in the first three decades of the nineteenth century to Creole insurrections and independence movements, Spain was determined to retain its last colonies and hold on to its status as a European empire. In the case of Cuba in the 1830s and beyond, Spanish ministers understood that maintaining a large supply of slaves on the island was tantamount to undermining the potential for Creole insurgency. This policy was not lost on the Creole reformist bourgeoisie, whose ideologues were among the first to recognize how any discussion of the island's political status and future hinged on the question of slavery. In other words, if Madrid employed slavery to maintain its hold on the island, the reformists saw the elimination of the slave trade as a first step toward an eventual whitening of the island that they associated with civilization, progress, and the potential for greater political autonomy (2015: 7).

It was in this epoch and in these terms that "the systemic meaning [if not the character] of slavery was transformed", and Saco composed the first condemnation of the slave trade to be published on Cuban soil (Tomich, 2004: 61; Saco, 2001, II: 28 n. 1).

Saco's Trans-American *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil*

Saco's *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil* circulated in June 1832 in the *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, a short-lived organ of the creole reformers. In the opening words of the study, Saco reasons that, with respect to sugar production, "Cuba tiene en el Brasil su rival más formidable. Parécenos pues que será aceptable a nuestros lectores el bosquejo político y económico de un país, que saliendo del abatimiento en que yacía, se ha elevado en el trascurso de pocos años al rango de un imperio poderoso" (2001, II: 28). This is the expressed rationale for a hasty review of the Latin American hegemon's history, socioeconomic structure, and demographic composition that moves quickly toward what is undoubtedly the article's true purpose. Saco next offers a few summary remarks regarding Brazil's involvement in the African slave trade. He suggests several amendments to Portugal's bilateral agreements with Great Britain banning the trans-Atlantic that, it is interesting to note, were put into place in the 1835 treaty signed by Spain and Great Britain (see Murray, 1980: 70, 100). It is at this point that Saco, rather heavy-handedly, pivots to what is plainly the *Análisis*'s intended mark:

> Y ya que estamos tratando de una materia que tanto nos interesa, ¿no sería reparable que diésemos todo nuestro tiempo a la contemplación de los pueblos extranjeros, y que nos olvidásemos de la Isla en que vivimos? Si tal hiciéramos, nosotros mismos no podríamos perdonarnos tan culpable omisión. Rompamos

[8] "L'esclavage ne permettait donc pas l'instauration, à Cuba, de lois dites libérales car seul un État fort était à même de constituer la base de l'édifice esclavagiste" (Ghorbal, 2009: 437).

> pues el silencio, y trazando con mano breve la historia fatal de nuestro comercio africano, descubramos nuestra condición presente, fijemos la vista en el cercano porvenir, y conjuremos la tempestad que ya se oye tronar en nuestra zona (2001, II: 62).

With these remarks, it becomes thoroughly transparent that Saco is playing a game of bait-and-switch.[9] Years later, he would confirm as much in his monumental *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el nuevo mundo y en especial en los países Américo-Hispanos*, in which he writes:

> Era la vez primera que allí se sacaba este asunto a la pública luz. La Habana entera se conmovió profundamente con la lectura de aquel artículo. Los contrabandistas negreros lanzaron gritos de indignación; pero sus aullidos produjeron un bien, porque dando más importancia al papel, excitaron la curiosidad y aumentaron su circulación. Los que ya eran enemigos del tráfico, encontraron nuevas pruebas en que apoyar sus investigaciones; los dudosos se convencieron; los tímidos se adelantaron y la gran mayoría sensata e imparcial inclinóse del lado de la razón y de la justicia (quoted in Ghorbal, 2009: 175).

He is even more plainspoken, if less upbeat, in a letter to José Manuel Mestre from October 8, 1868: "(...) no puedo menos que echar una ojeada hacia los buenos años de mi juventud, y recordar con dolor, que si cuando escribí aquel artículo sobre el contrabando africano, me hubieran oído y entendido, hoy, al cabo de 35 años, ya seríamos blancos y pudiéramos ser cubanos" (Saco and Figarola-Caneda, 1921: 350). These later reflections confirm what was clear enough to its contemporary readers, including the colony's Captain General Miguel Tacón y Rosique, who would expel Saco from Havana a couple of years later: the *Análisis* was nothing if not an attack on the contraband slave trade to Cuba.

After reviewing the slave trade to Cuba during its *asiento* and liberalized periods, Saco declares that, in defiance of the 1820 ban, slavers have continued the traffic "clandestinamente, con desprecio de las leyes, con ultraje de la humanidad y con riesgo inminente de la patria" (2001, II: 65). From here on, the *Análisis* redundantly and with a mounting degree of alarm tightens the screws on creoles' sense of "black peril", the "fear that Cuba might turn into another Haiti" (Aching, 2015: 7; see Ghorbal, 2009: 561-590). The article's position then, as Saco's words to Mestre quoted earlier also confirm, is at once "anti-slave trade and anti-slave", to modify the title of David Haberly's instructive study on Brazilian abolitionism (1972).[10] A spectral Haiti haunts the South Atlantic region of Saco's *Análisis*, in which a deliberative demographic analysis demonstrates that the black-white population ratio is shifting in a direction that indicates to the Cuban statesman, historian, and polemicist "que nos hallamos gravemente enfermos, y

[9] "Saco se sert de l'histoire de l'esclavage au Brésil comme un moyen pour dénoncer les trafiquants qui abreuvaient Cuba d'esclaves africains" (Ghorbal, 2009: 174).

[10] It is of interest that Del Monte writes in a letter to Saco from March 3, 1852: "No sé si te dije que he leído revistas literarias del Brasil, muy buenas, en que se habla libremente, y con energía, y en varias formas, de la abolición de la esclavitud en aquel Imperio" (Saco and Fernández de Castro, 1923: 200).

que si no aplicamos el remedio con mano firme, la muerte puede sorprendernos en medio de la aparente felicidad de que gozamos" (2001, II: 66).

The first "repeating island" whose "sickness" Saco diagnoses is Cuba.[11] His review of census numbers establishes that as early as 1791 "los blancos perdieron su preponderancia numérica, porque no llegan sino a 49 por ciento, mientras que la población de color sube a 51 por ciento: y, al paso que venimos descendiendo en los últimos años, se observa dolorosamente que la gente de color ha ido ganando sobre la blanca; y ganando en tales términos que ya en 1827 los blancos y los esclavos casi se balancearon, llegando aquellos a 44 por ciento, y estos a 41" (2001, II: 66). Accounting for probable errors in calculation resulting from slavers' need to conceal sales, Saco suggests that the actual situation is even worse than reported, which is to say that the proportion of slaves and free people of color has far exceeded that of whites: "(...) es decir, que en una población donde hay pocos [*sic*] más de 300 000 blancos, se cuenta casi 500 000 personas de color" (2001, II: 66).[12] Again, Saco is playing on Cubans' fears that a Haitian-style revolution could, under the least provocation, take place on their island –an "épée de Damoclès sur les esprits créoles" in Ghorbal's eloquent phrasing– to which he first alludes (and connects to the slave trade) some pages earlier: "un comercio que degradando a la especie humana, ha destruido ya una de las Antillas, y puesto a otras al borde de su ruina" (Ghorbal, 2009: 16; see 128-30; Saco, 2001, II: 60).

What is worse, according to the *Análisis*, is that Cuba is encircled by a minefield of ticking time bombs:

> Todavía nuestra situación será mas comprometida, si volvemos los ojos al horizonte que nos rodea. Con ellos vemos ya el humo y el fuego que se levantan de los volcanes que han reventado; y el horrendo combustible que devora las entrañas de las Antillas, amenaza una catástrofe general en el Archipiélago americano. Leed, compatriotas, leed la historia del porvenir en los padrones que sometemos a vuestro examen, y después de haberlos meditado con la detención que merecen, decidnos si no oís los profundos quejidos de la patria agonizante (2001, II: 67).

It is at this point that Saco renders a demographic analysis of the English Antilles, concluding that "en 1823, los blancos formaban 9%, los esclavos 81%, y los libres de color 10%", numbers that are trending in an ill-fated direction (2001, II: 67-68). The islands of the French Antilles demonstrate a similar "resultado espantoso", namely that by 1823, "esos blancos estaban reducidos a 53 000, y la gente de color elevada al terrible número de 986 000" (2001, II: 69). He finds much the same in his scrutiny of the Danish and Swiss Caribbean colonies: "(...) aunque su población no es tan numerosa como la de las inglesas y francesas, los blancos forman una parte muy pequeña" (2001, II: 69). Summing up the numbers for the entire archipelago, Saco determines "que en 1823 había 40% de esclavos, 43 de

[11] To borrow the title of Benítez Rojo's book *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*.

[12] I remind the reader that race is a social construct. Still I refrain from using scare quotes around racial designations for the same reasons outlined in Jacobson (2000: ix–x).

libres de color, y 17 de blancos; es decir, que para cada 17 de estos ya teníamos 83 de color!!!" (2001, II: 70).

And it gets worse: "No debe juzgarse de los tiempos presentes por los pasados: entonces se cuidaba poco de los esclavos, porque los amos podían reparar sus pérdidas en un mercado abundante; pero ya que han cambiado las circunstancias, el interés, más que la humanidad, los ha obligado a tratarlos con menos rigor" (2001, II: 70). Here, Saco hints at the practices of *buen tratamiento* that, as Ghorbal has studied in depth, were energetically propagandized during Cuba's third slavery (2009: 321-380). Ghorbal offers this synopsis: "Entre 1800 et 1840, le prix de l'esclave tripla sans que sa productivité augmente proportionnellement. Pour remédier à ce problème économique, il fallait prolonger la vie utile de l'esclave tout en veillant à modifier les facteurs responsables de sa mort prématurée. C'est cette logique qui a mené au 'bon traitement'" (Ghorbal, 2009: 325). Ghorbal goes on to recall that in 1827 and 1833 Saco had resided on the coffee farm Angerona, whose owner, Cornelio Souchay, "ambitionnait de se défaire de l'emprise des commerçants péninsulaires et qu'il était partisan d'un meilleur traitement des esclaves" (2009: 325). It is on Souchay's Angerona that Saco would have observed firsthand the practices of *buen tratamiento*. Saco's acquaintance with good treatment is further demonstrated as he assesses sex distributions among Caribbean chattel: "La proporción en que se hallan los sexos en muchas de las islas, contribuirá también a su conservación" (2001, II: 70). He continues:

> (…) aunque antes de la abolición del tráfico en las colonias inglesas, las pérdidas anuales llegaban en aquella isla a 2,5%, después de aquella época han sido nulas o casi nulas. En años anteriores se computaba el decrecimiento anual de los esclavos en algunas de las pequeñas islas británicas de 5 a 6%; y en las Antillas francesas todavía era mayor; pero estas pérdidas, además de haber sido reparadas por el aumento de los mismos esclavos en otras islas, y por el de los libertos, cada vez irán siendo menores, ya con la suavidad del trato, ya con las reformas que piden la fuerza de las circunstancias y la ilustración del siglo (2001, II: 71).

This discussion touches on another key ingredient of the so-called good treatment program, practices whose aim it was to increase the rate of natural reproduction among Cuba's slaves. Natural reproduction, it was argued, was a far less costly labor source, both economically and politically, than the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Once more I turn to Ghorbal's investigation: "Les grands propriétaires s'essaient, en effet, à une politique de reproduction des esclaves à grande échelle. Au cours de la décennie 1820, on introduisit cinq femmes pour dix hommes, rapport qui s'éleva à six pour dix au cours des années 1830. À cet effort consenti par certains propriétaires en vue d'augmenter le nombre de femmes dans leurs exploitations, s'ajoute un plus grand soin accordé aux esclaves enceintes et à leur progéniture" (2009: 323-24). Thus Saco embeds his arguments against the slave trade within the discourse of *buen tratamiento*, which was a response to the large-scale planters' modified conceptualization of the slave trade during Cuba's third slavery. But Saco's declaration of victory is premature. The fact of the matter is that the slaves' rate of natural growth in Cuba could never keep up with that of their mortality (Moreno, 2014, II: 82-92; Bergad, Iglesias García and Barcia, 1995: 38; Ghorbal, 2009: 324). Saco is able to suggest that the prac-

tices of *buen tratamiento* were working so well that the trans-Atlantic trade was no longer necessary, though, by cherry-picking demographic data and making no "distinction between those slave regimes that precede, and are partly responsible for, the emergence of industrial capital and wage labor as dominant poles of the world economy and those slave regimes that were created as part of the processes restructuring the nineteenth-century world economy" (Tomich, 2004: xiii).[13] To offer an example, he discusses the low rate of slave mortality in plantation zones that were contracting in the second decade of the nineteenth century, such as the English Antilles, as if it could be applied to Cuba, then still a "sugar frontier" that was increasing production and with it exploitation and the mortality rate of slaves (2001, II: 71; Tomich, 2004: 62; see Moreno, 2014, I: 17-18, 39).

After insisting on these misleading points, Saco turns to the United States:

> Y, como si no bastara tener en nuestras puertas 900 000 haitianos y 400 000 jamaicanos, la república de Norteamérica, el país más libre de la tierra, presentando una de las anomalías más extrañas, viene a ofrecernos también por complemento de nuestros temores una población de color casi toda reconcentrada en sus Estados meridionales, que son los más cercanos de nosotros. Un país que desde su descubrimiento hasta el día solamente ha recibido 300 000 negros de las costas africanas, cuenta ya 2 011 320 esclavos, y 339 360 libres de color: y, cuando se considera la rapidez con que se propagan, nuestra ansiedad debe aumentarse, más por el influjo que podrán ejercer en los años venideros que por la fuerza numérica que hoy tienen (2001, II: 72).

A few lines later Saco reiterates the point –that the black population's natural rate of reproduction is superabundant–: "(...) todo el incremento que ha habido de 1790 a 1830, procede exclusivamente de la reproducción de los mismos esclavos", making the trans-Atlantic slave trade superfluous (2001, II: 73).

But the young republic, if aggravating Cuba's "males," also offers "el medio de curarlos" (Saco, 2001, II: 76). While his own countrymen do nothing as the number of Cuba's slaves and free blacks soars, Saco lauds his hemispheric neighbors:

> ¡Qué conducta tan contraria no siguen nuestros vecinos los norteamericanos! (…) organizan sociedades, reúnen fondos, compran terrenos en la costa de África, establecen allí colonias, fomentan la emigración de gente de color, y redoblando siempre sus esfuerzos, si no han conseguido cuanto desean, han hecho todo lo que pueden para merecer el título de amigos de la humanidad y de la patria. (…) Ved aquí los pasos de un gran pueblo que busca su conservación, y ved aquí también el modelo que debiéramos imitar (2001, II: 74).

Cubans should, in Saco's analysis, follow the example set by the American Colonization Society. The racial politics of the American Colonization Society's members is the matter of some critical debate (see Tomek, 2010: 1-7). Saco's though is not; it would have aligned closely with that of the U.S. Americans

[13] Schmidt-Nowara: "Saco militated for the Cuban elite's inclusion in the new constitutional regime and for abolishing the slave trade, arguing that Cuba had sufficient slaves to work its plantations and that the importation of slaves was bringing the island ever closer to race war" (1999: 21).

whose plan it was "to remove free blacks as a first step to ridding the country of all African Americans", as his above-quoted letter to Mestre and other writings make abundantly clear (Tomek, 2010: 6). Concluding the *Análisis*, Saco suggests experimenting with alternative forms of labor organization, namely wage labor (which to Saco's mind is equated with white labor) and with what would later develop as the system of *centrales* and *colonos* (see Dye, 1998).

As I mentioned earlier, modern readers of Saco's *Análisis* have understood it as a reflection of its author's Negrophobia or eastern provenance. Moreno's work "Negrofobia", which discusses Saco's fear of and repugnance toward blacks exemplifies this first tendency, while Olga Zúñiga Portuondo's *José Antonio Saco: Eternamente polémico* reads his condemnation of the slave trade as an outgrowth of his upbringing in the eastern city of Bayamo, his family's cattle raising, and its old creole patrician identity (2005: 44, 142). Without discounting these approaches, I would like to stress the Cuban liberal's political agenda. Saco was consumed by Madrid's "iron-handed rule of the military government in the Antilles", as evinced in pieces such as *Protesta de los diputados electos por la Isla de Cuba a las Cortes generales de la nación* (1837) and *Paralelo entre Cuba y algunas colonias inglesas* (1837; Corwin, 1967: 65). Above all else, it is in his personal correspondence that Saco denounces most candidly the *facultades omnímodas* possessed by the captains-general that invested them with total powers, the substantial military presence on the island, Cubans' dispossession of civil liberties, and continued refusal to seat Antillean representatives in the Spanish Cortes. These letters, moreover, reveal that Saco's fight against the slave trade was part of a racial project narrowly conceived to bring about colonial reform in Cuba.[14] In a missive to Gonzalo Alfonso from March 3, 1835, he writes: "Vd. sabe que nunca me he alucinado sobre la verdadera naturaleza de nuestros males, y cada día me confirmo mas en que nuestra suerte es padecer y padecer. España ni nos conoce, ni nos quiere, ni se acuerda de nosotros, sino para desangrarnos y consumirnos. (…) No nos queda mas que un remedio: *blanquear*, *blanquear*; y entonces hacernos respetar" (1921: 274). A little over a decade later, on October 6, 1846, Saco expressed the same to Gonzalo's son, José Luis: "(...) estoy persuadido de que las ruedas sobre que está montada la máquina cubana no se cambiarán, sino cuando Cuba tenga una población blanca respetable, que pida derechos a su metrópoli, y esta conozca que no se los puede negar sin exponerse a consecuencias que pueden serle dolorosas" (1921: 77). These and other dispatches suggest that with the *Análisis*, Saco looked to inflame the climate of "black peril" as a tactic of domestic terrorism.

[14] Others have made the same general point, as well. "Hay una amenaza constante a la pérdida de poder de esa oligarquía criolla por el crecimiento numérico del esclavo y este es responsable, a la postre, de las incongruencias políticas entre el imperio y la Isla. (...) Ha propuesto la abolición de la trata porque piensa que así puede cumplirse su proyecto de blanqueamiento progresivo, tal y como en la práctica había visto que sucedía en su tierra de origen. Piensa que la llegada de inmigrantes blancos también contribuirá, y entonces no habrá pretexto para que España acepte a Cuba como provincia y sea gobernada por las mismas leyes que rigen en la península" (Portuondo Zúñiga, 2005: 158-59). "Les intellectuels créoles réformistes visaient à atténuer la domination de la Métropole sur l'île, sans toutefois remettre en cause, dans l'immédiat, les fondements esclavagistes de la colonie" (Ghorbal, 2009: 87).

Concluding Reflections

José Antonio Saco's *Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil* reads Cuban slave labor organization and sourcing through a trans-American lens. In looking beyond Spanish colonial borders, the *Análisis* anticipates, to some degree, modern world-system theory. Yet he fails to conceptualize the "asymmetry, unevenness, and tension between particular local histories and the diverse but unified temporal rhythms and spatial extensions of world economic processes", and in so doing understands slavery throughout the South Atlantic region as "only one thing with only one meaning" (Tomich, 2004: 31, 18). I suggest that Saco's conflation of "specific local slave regimes" may not be entirely unintended (Tomich, 2004: 31). Rather, the Cuban reformer presents slavery as singular throughout the region for the sake of his liberal political agenda.

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