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A "Spanish Element" in the New South:
The Hispanic Press and Community in Nineteenth Century New Orleans

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
History

by

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Abstract:

Although New Orleans culture has been a popular subject for historians due to its ethnic diversity and multiculturalism, certain groups have been ignored in the city's vast historiography. Such is the case of Hispanics, who have been present for most of the city's history. This study recovers a portion of that lost Hispanic history through analysis of Spanish-language newspapers published in New Orleans throughout the nineteenth century. One of these newspapers, *El Moro de Paz*, was published with the goal of encouraging the advancement of trade relationships between Louisiana and Latin America. A study of *El Moro de Paz* and its Spanish-born publisher could contribute to an understanding of the role that New Orleans played in the emergence of the New South after the Civil War.

Keywords: José Antonio Fernandez de Trava, *El Moro de Paz*, Hispanic, New South

In 1982, Joan B. Garvey and Mary Lou Widmer published *Beautiful Crescent: A History of New Orleans*. In the book, the authors dispute any residual cultural influence of the Spanish from the period of Spanish rule in Louisiana, going as far as to deny the very presence of Hispanics in the city until recent times.¹

An excerpt from the fourth chapter, entitled “The Spanish Period,” reads:

The city of New Orleans was *never* Spanish, in its customs, culture, or language. Throughout the period of Spanish domination, it remained tenaciously French... There was never a Spanish newspaper printed in the city. The people of New Orleans never became Spanish-speaking people until the Cubans began arriving in the 1960s.²

Garvey and Widmer’s rejection of the cultural legacy of the Spanish colonial period is typical of much of the popular historiography of New Orleans. More thorough research reveals a host of residual Spanish imprint on Louisiana, including influence on local language in common Louisiana terms such as *lagniappe*.³ The Spanish also introduced *coartacion* to Louisiana. This practice allowed slaves to purchase their own freedom and had an impact on the development of the free black population in New Orleans. There were also the Spanish speaking immigrants from the Canary Islands who settled throughout Southeast Louisiana beginning in 1778. It is estimated that about two thousand Canary Islanders made it to Louisiana. Their descendants are referred to as Isleños and most of them live in what is now St. Bernard Parish. This distinct, but dwindling, ethnic group spoke a Creole dialect of Spanish well into the late twentieth century.⁴

¹ In this study, the term “Hispanic” is used to refer to people that originated from a place where Spanish is the dominant language. The terms “Latino,” “Latina,” or “Latin American,” are used in reference to people from Central America, South America, and the Spanish speaking Caribbean.

² Joan B. Garvey and Mary Lou Widmer, *Beautiful Crescent: A History of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Garmer Press, 1982), pp. 41.

³ Ned Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008), pp. 94-95.

⁴ Gilbert C. Din, *The Canary Islanders of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1988), pp. xi-xii.

Garvey and Widmer's denial of Spanish newspapers in the city, however, is an inexcusable error. In 2008, twenty six years after the publication of *Beautiful Crescent*, Latino journalists and academics from around the nation gathered in New Orleans with local Latino civic leaders for a nationwide multimedia project entitled *Voices for Justice: The Enduring Legacy of the Latino Press in the U.S.*⁵ The project was put together in celebration of the bicentennial of *El Misisipi*, the first Spanish newspaper in the United States, which began publishing in New Orleans in September of 1808. Indeed, the Spanish language press may be the most enduring legacy of Hispanic presence in the city. Since the first publication of *El Misisipi*, New Orleans has had at least one Spanish newspaper published in every decade up to the present day.⁶ Though Garvey and Widmer were not professional historians their book has become a popular read on New Orleans' history. The New Orleans Taxicab Bureau, which is in charge of licensing tour guides in the city, has in the past been known to recommend the book to potential tour guides in the city's most historic neighborhoods. Yet, information on the Spanish press in New Orleans was easily available to Garvey and Widmer. In 1951, Raymond MacCurdy published *A History and Bibliography of Spanish-Language Newspapers and Magazines in Louisiana, 1808-1949* for the University of New Mexico's Publications Series in which MacCurdy identified over thirty Spanish language publications printed in New Orleans throughout the nineteenth century.

One of the publications mentioned by MacCurdy was a weekly newspaper entitled *El Moro de Paz*. This paper, which was issued weekly on Sundays, began running in 1888. It sought "the advancement of the commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing interests of

⁵ Juan González, "Latinos have a long and rich history of journalism in the U.S.," *El Telecolote*, July 2008.

⁶ Tulane University Latin American Library, "Spanish Language Press in New Orleans: A List of Primary Sources and Secondary Sources," <http://www.tulane.edu/~latinlib/research/guides/news/orleans.htm>.

Louisiana and Spanish-America.” Its intended audience was “the Spanish speaking people of New Orleans and in the Latin-American republics adjacent to the United States.”⁷ Today, the New Orleans Public Library has partial copies of four editions from February of 1889 and Tulane University has a surviving original from March 17, 1889.

New Orleans’ geographic location as a port near the Gulf of Mexico meant that commercial relationships with other port cities in Latin America were inevitable and the city was an active participant in a transnational, commercial and cultural circuit in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Although other ethnic groups in New Orleans were more heavily involved in shipping and commerce, Hispanics had the advantage, through print, to directly communicate with other Hispanic populations throughout the Latin world.⁸ The Spanish press allowed Hispanics in New Orleans to maintain an open and consistent line of communication with Hispanics in Latin America. *El Moro de Paz* enhanced this trend and generated a conduit for trans-Gulf-Caribbean-Atlantic commercial and intellectual exchange.

In fact, Lafcadio Hearn, who chronicled daily life in New Orleans during his time in the city from 1877 to 1888, became well acquainted with Hispanics that were living in New Orleans, but found that they were a relatively small group. He once wrote, “Perhaps there is no class of citizens of New Orleans - the Marseilles of the western world - about whom so little is generally known as our Spanish element.”⁹

⁷ “A New Orleans Spanish Newspaper,” *The Daily States*, October 17, 1888.

⁸ Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) goes into extensive detail on the role of print media in allowing information to travel easier and faster as well as its role in creating community consciousness through formalized language.

⁹ Lafcadio Hearn, “The Last of the New Orleans Fencing Masters,” in *Inventing New Orleans: Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 49.

Hearn claimed that about three hundred families from this distinct group of immigrants formed a Benevolent Society. The community was loosely organized and members of the society “pursued special callings,” formed “special industrial organizations,” and had their own social institutions, priests, doctors, and lawyers. Hearn observed that the Spanish settled in “less frequented parts of the city” and were “less publicly visible” than other immigrant groups. Like many other writers of the Victorian era, Hearn ascribed a type for members of this “element”:

A great number of these men are in business on their own account... and the trade generally followed is tobacco manufacturing... So soon a young man lies by a certain sum, he marries –usually either a Creole of the poorer class or a European woman, Irish, English, or German– and thus it happens that almost every one of our Spaniards above thirty is the head of a large family.¹⁰

José Antonio Fernandez de Trava, the founding editor of *El Moro de Paz*, was a prominent member of the Spanish immigrant community in New Orleans and he fit Hearn’s type in varying ways. The native Spaniard was a long time businessman in New Orleans with ties to the tobacco trade from his earliest days in the city. His second wife was a Creole woman, though not of the poorer class. With six children he certainly had a sizeable family. Yet, he did not strictly fit Hearn’s type. Later in life Fernandez de Trava became involved with international shipping firms and established himself as a member of the merchant class. He was lauded for his ability to speak multiple languages and in 1884 he became the first professor of Spanish at the newly established Tulane University, becoming chair of the department soon thereafter. When he died in 1906, his obituary in the *Daily Picayune* was nearly the entire length of a column and it celebrated his accomplishments as an educator and as a businessman.

¹⁰ Ibid, “The Last of the New Orleans Fencing Masters,” in *Inventing New Orleans*, 49-50.

A closer look at the lives of individuals, such as Fernandez de Trava, may reveal insight into the experiences of Hispanics, both as individuals and also as a community in New Orleans. At the same time a better understanding of the development of the Hispanic community in New Orleans could reinforce, or perhaps helps to re-envision, the long-standing reputation of the Crescent City as a place of diversity and cross-cultural exchange. In using *El Moro de Paz* to promote economic progress and industrial development in the region, Fernandez de Trava can be linked to other newspapermen of his day such as Henry Grady and Daniel Augustus Tompkins both of whom became known for promoting the New South: a topic whose historiography all too often excludes New Orleans. Like his fellow New Orleanian and fellow publisher J.D.B. DeBow, Fernandez de Trava saw the city's connections to Latin America as vehicles for Louisiana's economic development after the Civil War. Publications like *El Moro de Paz* not only help us see the city's role in the emergence of the New South, but also give us a transnational view of it as well.

In rediscovering New Orleans's ties to Latin America, the role played by Louisiana's colonial history, which began in 1699 with France's founding of the territory, should not be overlooked. In 1762, the vast North American territory was ceded by the French to Spain in the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau. Delays, a lack of urgency, and a revolt meant that the Spanish would not establish full control over New Orleans until 1769. As a colony, Louisiana was financially unprofitable for both France and Spain. During their tenure, the Spanish never tried to develop New Orleans into an economic and cultural center like Havana or Mexico City. But it would be erroneous to assume that the Spanish left no cultural legacy in New Orleans. The cultural transition that took place in New Orleans after the Spanish took over was not a drastic one. Spain, a Catholic country, maintained many of the same cultural, social, and legal customs

practiced by the French-speaking Creoles of New Orleans, and the French language and French-Creole culture remained dominant in Louisiana throughout the Spanish colonial period.¹¹ This, combined with Louisiana's deep cultural influences from Africans, and indigenous peoples, makes New Orleans' social development more comparable to the societies of Latin America than with the cultural heritage of the British colonies.

Though France briefly regained the colony at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Napoleon Bonaparte had already sold the territory, in 1803, to the United States and the Americans took possession only twenty days following Spain's retrocession to France. Although New Orleans was less than one-hundred years old when the Americans acquired it, the city was already being defined by its ethnic and cultural diversity. Anglo American migrants began to move into the city after the Purchase. This triggered some tensions between them and the French Creoles who controlled the city. Most of the English speakers were Protestants, while most of the Spanish speakers were Catholics, who subsequently forged closer ties with their fellow Catholic French speakers. Intermarriage between the two groups often resulted in the absorption of the Spanish into the French community. This cultural and civic rivalry between Francophones and Anglophones, although generally peaceful, shaped much of the city's history and identity.¹²

The few Spaniards in New Orleans who remained after the Louisiana Purchase could no longer rely on Spanish colonial authorities for news and information relevant to Spain. It is perhaps for this reason that in 1808, five years after the Louisiana Purchase, the first Spanish language newspaper printed in the United States, *El Misisipi*, began publication in New

¹¹ José Montero de Pedro, *The Spanish in New Orleans and Louisiana* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2000), pp.183.

¹² Joseph Tregle, Jr., "Creoles and Americans," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), pp.134-167.

Orleans.¹³ The paper concentrated on news of the Napoleonic Wars ravaging the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the paper's content consisted of reports reprinted from other publications throughout the Atlantic world. The American firm William H. Johnson & Co. published the paper, which lasted until 1810.¹⁴

As the nineteenth century progressed, Spain saw its American empire slowly crumble. At the same time, port cities on the various coasts of the former Spanish Main, including New Orleans, were maintaining social, commercial, and cultural networks through trade and print media. Newspapers served to keep Spanish nationals and Latin Americans in New Orleans in touch with metropolitan politics and up to date with international trade. Kirsten Silva Gruesz has argued that, similar to the region known as "the South," the "Gulf of Mexico" is a geographic region that served as a "system of transnational cultural exchange" throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gruesz argues that New Orleans's "Latinness" is not only due to its colonial heritage and other historic connections to the Caribbean, but also to its proximity to Mexican port cities along the Gulf of Mexico and the commercial relationships developed with these cities. Instead of lumping New Orleans into a region together with Memphis, Mobile, Atlanta, and Raleigh, the city's cultural development could be better understood, Gruesz insists, if New Orleans were associated with port cities on the Gulf of Mexico's Mexican shoreline including Veracruz, Merida, Tampico, and Campeche.¹⁵

This position gave New Orleans' Hispanic community, many of whom belonged to the merchant class, an important advantage, however small its size. Spanish language newspapers in

¹³ "National Project honors Latino Journalism," *El Tecolote*, July 2008.

¹⁴ Raymond MacCurdy, *A History and Bibliography of Spanish Language Newspapers and Magazines in Louisiana 1808-1949* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1951), pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "The Gulf of Mexico System and the 'Latinness' of New Orleans," *American Literary History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2006), pp. 472-476.

New Orleans and throughout Latin America gathered and disseminated information vital to the trade taking place among the ports of the Gulf of Mexico. Gruesz refers to this phenomenon of Spanish newspapers as the “Gulf print circuit.” Study of this circuit reveals that print was a crucial medium in maintaining this system of cultural exchange across the Gulf’s waters. By the end of the nineteenth century, New Orleans’ reach in the “Gulf print circuit” extended beyond the Gulf of Mexico to include Caribbean ports.

Throughout the nineteenth century the number of Spanish-speaking residents in New Orleans remained relatively low.¹⁶ The Spanish immigrant community never had the overwhelming numbers to match the city’s Irish or Italian populations. Yet, the Hispanic community, which also included immigrants and political refugees from Latin American as well as Spain, was consistently present and active throughout the century. Though it was rare in the nineteenth century for a Spanish newspaper to survive more than two years, the Spanish language press in New Orleans had a steady presence and Hispanics in New Orleans were served by several publications.

One year after *El Misisipi*, in 1809, *El Mesajero Luisianés* began publication, running until 1811. At least one publication, the semiweekly *El Telégrafo*, ran during the mid-1820s. In late 1829, *El Español* was published, only to be suspended and then reintroduced in 1830 for a brief period. In the 1830s, the city saw the rise of a new publication with an old title when, in November 1834, a semiweekly appeared entitled *El Misisipi*, an ode to its predecessor from a generation earlier.¹⁷

¹⁶Joseph Logsdon, “Immigration through the port of New Orleans,” in *Forgotten Doors*, ed. M. Mark Stolarik (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute Press, 1988), pp.114.

¹⁷ MacCurdy, 9-13.

As the Spanish immigrant community grew, they began to solidify themselves. In 1829, New Orleans' Spanish residents created a militia unit designated the "Cazadores de Orleans." In 1832, a second Spanish militia, entitled the "Cazadores Volantes del Estado" was organized. Both companies were founded to strengthen Spanish national ties and cultural preservation to go along with its military and defense duties. The "Cazadores Volantes" lasted until 1846, when they were reorganized into a mutual aid society named "Sociedad Ibera." The "Cazadores de Orleans" would remain intact for another five years as a military unit until disbanding and reorganizing as a strictly social organization, the "Sociedad Española de Beneficia Mutua."¹⁸

The rise of these organizations is evidence of a growing community of Spaniards in New Orleans who continued to be served by a fledgling press. As the number of Hispanics grew so did the number of publications. The 1840s saw a boom in newspapers for the Hispanic populace. Publications with titles such as *El Hablador*, *El Iris de Paz*, *La Patria*, *El Perro Grullo*, *El Pobre Diablo*, and *La Sombra de Padilla* all appeared during the decade. Like the original *El Misisipi*, the Spanish-language newspapers of the day continued to be largely concerned with international affairs.¹⁹

Into this era of Hispanic publications, José Antonio Fernandez de Trava arrived in New Orleans in 1849 at the age of twenty-three, with his wife, Maria. The sire of an aristocratic family in Málaga, a port city on the southern coast of Spain, Fernandez de Trava received his education from "the most famous colleges and universities of his native land" and was known as a "consummate linguist," a skill that was more than helpful in nineteenth century New Orleans.²⁰

¹⁸ General Committee of Arrangements, *A History of the Proceedings in the City of New Orleans, on the Occasion of the Funeral Ceremonies in Honor of James Abram Garfield, Late President of the United States* (New Orleans: A. W. Hyatt, 1881), 213-214.

¹⁹ MacCurdy, 15-23.

²⁰ Obituary of José Antonio Fernandez de Trava, *Daily Picayune*, November 24, 1906.

With a steady flow of immigrants (between 1820 and 1860 more than half a million immigrants from Europe passed through the city's port of entry), the city evolved into a polyglot society where hearing multiple languages in the streets would not have been uncommon.²¹ Fernandez de Trava, however, was not the first person in his family to make the journey across the Atlantic: his brother had earlier settled in Havana. His infamous uncle, named Pedro Blanco Fernandez de Trava, is better known in Cuban history as "El Negrero" or the "slave dealer," and rumors persist that he was the benefactor of the slave ship "Amistad."²²

When José Antonio and Maria arrived in New Orleans, they settled in the Vieux Carré at a home on the corner of Royal and Toulouse streets, in proximity to many icons of what is today identified with antebellum New Orleans. Their home was around the corner from Jackson Square. At the time of their arrival, the former Place d'Armes was undergoing renovations that would not be completed until 1852. Mansard roofs were added to the Cabildo and the Presbytere, making them appear more like contemporary European structures than the colonial-era Creole buildings that they are. St. Louis Cathedral's exterior and façade also underwent a complete makeover.²³ The colonial era design, which resembled churches in the Caribbean, was renovated in favor of its current design that has become iconic.

In the decade before the Civil War, the city had become the center of the domestic slave trade. The city grid was dotted with slave pens. In fact, before 1852, slaves could be sold on the street. The St. Louis Hotel, located only one block from the de Trava's home, hosted slave auctions underneath its rotunda. But during the antebellum period, the hotel was known as a

²¹ Logsdon, 107-108.

²² Dolores Garcia Cantus, "Fernando Poo: Una Aventura Colonial Española en la África Occidental (1778-1900)" (PhD Diss., University of Valencia, 2004), pp. 218-219. Osagie and Cantus works

²³ Samuel Wilson, Jr. and Leonard V. Huber, *The Cabildo On Jackson Square* (New Orleans: Laborde Printing Co., 1970), pp. 65-67.

centerpiece of New Orleans's Creole society and culture and it hosted elegant balls and carnival festivities.

The young couple's home also lay close to institutions vital to immigrant communities. The office of the Spanish Consulate was located on Bourbon Street, less than one block from their home. In Exchange Alley, located less than two blocks from the de Trava's address, were the offices of several slave trading firms. The alley was also home to a Spanish language newspaper, *La Unión*. The editors of this paper were known for their political positions. In an era when Spain's American empire was in decline and its territories in revolt, the editorial voice of *La Unión* remained pro-Spanish.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Spaniards were known for their interests in the tobacco trade and many of the city's cigar shops were run by Spaniards. In 1850, José Antonio Fernandez de Trava opened a cigar shop named "La Corina" on the corner of St. Charles Avenue and Gravier Street, directly across from the St. Charles Hotel. The tobacco industry in New Orleans seems to have been one of the industries to which other Hispanics gravitated to as well. Benito Juarez, who would later become president of Mexico, worked as a cigar manufacturer while in exile in New Orleans in the 1850s. And Juarez was not an oddity in the city either. By mid-century a noticeable community of Cuban exiles was present in New Orleans. Due to its geographic location and history, New Orleans was affected by the politics of Spanish America like no other city in the United States. War and peace often meant the difference between a thriving or flailing international market and, like the present day, international politics were followed closely, even by those not directly involved.

Just before the Civil War, Filibusterers began to take advantage of the city's convenient geographic location and used it as the staging point for several expeditions into Latin America. In the summer of 1851, Narcisco Lopez, in exile from Cuba, organized just such a filibustering expedition to overthrow the Spanish from that island. Members of his expedition were recruited from among the community of Cuban refugees and attracted many young men from the American South, including citizens of New Orleans. The expedition was funded with bonds that many New Orleanians bought, with the good faith that they would get their returns once Lopez took hold of Cuba. This plan never materialized. The expedition was a disaster once it landed on the island. On August 16, 1851 a division of Lopez's men led by Colonel William Crittenden were captured and executed by the Spanish. Lopez would eventually be captured with his band and suffered the same fate. He was publicly executed on September 1, 1851 in Havana.

When word of these developments reached New Orleans, it stirred emotions and passions which manifested themselves violently. On August 21, 1851, the editors of the pro-Spanish publication, *La Unión*, condemned the failed Lopez Expedition and its attempt to incite rebellion in Cuba. Fueled by this commentary, a grieving and angry mob of Cuban refugees and local New Orleanians charged into Exchange Alley and attacked the offices of the newspaper. The mob stormed the offices and threw furniture out into the street, including the printing press. The editors are reported to have escaped just before the mob reached them. They never returned to the city.

The mob's indignation soon turned from *La Unión* to members of the Spanish community itself. After attacking the newspaper's offices they then made their way to Bourbon Street and ransacked the office of the Spanish Consulate. The consul himself barely escaped according to reports. As with the office of *La Unión*, the mob expelled the consulate's furniture

out into the street. Among the furniture and objects that hit the ground was the Spanish national flag. The same mob was implicated in the destruction of personal property belonging to Spaniards. The rioters vandalized homes and ransacked cigar shops.²⁴ Though violent and dangerous, the riot was a rather mild one and no bloodshed was reported.

In the years after the Lopez Riot, New Orleans' Spanish immigrant community seems to have gone into a phase of public isolation. The Cazadores militia disbanded shortly thereafter out of protest for not being allowed to put down the riot. *La Unión*, a catalyst in the riot, would be the last Spanish newspaper published in New Orleans until after the Civil War. The episode caused a near international incident between the United States and Spain. The Spanish government demanded reparations for their citizens who had lost property. At the request of Spain's government José Antonio Fernandez de Trava was appointed to arbitrate the claims of Spanish residents.²⁵ According to his obituary, he was successful in securing reparations for the victims and was thanked, but not compensated by his native country.

Fernandez de Trava moved on with his life as he settled in the Crescent City. In 1852, his wife gave birth to a daughter, who they named Mercedes. Unfortunately, there is no record of Maria after the birth of Mercedes and by 1860 José Antonio Fernandez de Trava had remarried. His second wife, named Carmen Lesseps, was the 15-year-old daughter of Auguste Lesseps, one of the more prominent sugar planters in Louisiana. She bore him five children.

During the Civil War, Spanish language newspapers retreated as the region's traditional infrastructure was broken. New Orleans, unlike other parts of the South, had escaped complete destruction and ruin. The city fell in 1862, in one of the Union's earliest major victories.

²⁴ MacCurdy, 23-24.

²⁵ Obituary of José Antonio Fernandez de Trava, *Daily Picayune*, November 24, 1906.

Without the Crescent City in the hands of the Confederacy, and the Mississippi River controlled by the Union, the strategy of the war changed for both sides.

With abolishment of slavery and much of the traditional infrastructure destroyed, the South struggled for economic stability. As Reconstruction phased in, the focal struggle, as some viewed it, was between the region's long standing agricultural tradition and the necessity for it to modernize and become industrial.²⁶ Yet, there were those who were hopeful. In a region still in recovery, a vision of a New South was being crafted. Many believed, or professed to believe, that the South could achieve regional prosperity and national redemption. The New South, as a movement, was led by newspaper publishers and editors

The idea of an industrialized and progressive South was not new. Before the Civil War, the New Orleans journalist J.D.B. DeBow championed the modernization of the South. His magazine, *DeBow's Review*, called for the South to move towards industrialization. DeBow meshed this message with an "intense Southern Nationalism" that promoted New Orleans as a commercial hub vital to industrializing the region.²⁷ DeBow understood his city's relationship to Latin America, and he understood the impact that the Gulf circuit could have on New Orleans. He once wrote that exploiting New Orleans' relationships with cities in the Gulf of Mexico would make it not "the great mart of southern commerce," but "the great mart of American commerce."²⁸

²⁶ Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Kopf, Inc., 1970), 48-79.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 23.

²⁸ J.D. B. DeBow, "Passage Between the Oceans by Ship Canal," *DeBow's Review* (June 1847): 496, quoted in Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "The Gulf of Mexico System and the 'Latinness' of New Orleans," *American Literary History* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2006), pp. 484.

Once the war was over, the push for industrialization and for a new Southern economy was again taken up, but with much stronger and more vigorous support. Like DeBow, the most ardent supporters of this cause were journalists. The editorial pages of newspapers throughout the region were used to promote ideals of the South's past, and new visions for its future. Daniel Augustus Tompkins, the son of a South Carolina planter and an industrialist himself, was among these newspaper men. Tompkins owned three southern newspapers, including the *Charlotte Observer* where he argued heavily for industrialization. Henry Grady, of the *Atlanta Constitution*, became famous through his editorials that promoted his visions for the future of the region and he gained wider acclaim and notoriety throughout the nation on the speaking circuit, a pulpit that he used steadily to preach the gospel of the New South to the rest of the country.²⁹

New Orleans was not immune to this new type of expressive journalism, no matter what language was being used. In 1866, the weekly *El Indicador* became the first Spanish newspaper printed in New Orleans in fifteen years. The editor of the paper, Emilio R. Torribio, was the former secretary of the local Spanish consulate. The newspaper expressed political opinion and, in the veins of a true New South supporter, *El Indicador* was not shy to articulate its disdain for the Republican governments of the Reconstruction era. This newspaper lasted for another three years until 1869.³⁰ *El Indicador* would be followed by the one known Spanish publication during the decade of the 1870s, the weekly *La Libertad*. This paper was short lived and was primarily dedicated to the cause of Cuban independence.

²⁹ Gaston, 23.

³⁰ McCurdy, 25-26.

In 1868, Fernandez de Trava began a relationship with Charles T. Howard of the Louisiana State Lottery.³¹ Fernandez de Trava would be involved with the lottery throughout the rest of his life, first as an employee and years later the lottery would advertise in the pages of *El Moro de Paz*. As the Civil War ended Fernandez de Trava began to expand his business ventures. He became involved in real estate, founding the Credit Foncier soon after the Civil War, an organization that functioned like the contemporary homestead associations of the day. A year after the war, he and his wife Carmen bought a plantation in St. Bernard Parish with the intention of cultivating sugar cane, though they did not immediately move there.

By 1870, Fernandez de Trava and his entire family were living at the St. Bernard Plantation in Chalmette where he was listed as a sugar farmer.³² He named the property “Bueno Retiro” which in Spanish means “good retirement.” Though the plantation seemed promising at its inception, the venture ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. In 1880, the land was sold to Rene Beauregard, the son of former Confederate general P.G.T. Beauregard.³³ Throughout the 1870s, Fernandez de Trava had maintained business interests in New Orleans and he was never far from the city. He kept an office on Decatur St., less than one block from Canal St. By the mid-1880s, he returned permanently to New Orleans, settling in the Faubourg Treme. The New Orleans that he returned to was a starkly different place from the one he found more than thirty years earlier.

Lafcadio Hearn described the city in 1879:

³¹ Jose Antonio Fernandez de Trava is listed as a lottery agent in several city directories between 1868, the year the lottery began, and his death in 1906.

³² U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Inhabitants in the 1st Ward, in the Parish of St. Bernard of Louisiana, 1870*.

³³ Samuel Wilson, *Plantation houses on the Battlefield of New Orleans* (New Orleans: The Battlefield of New Orleans, 150th Anniversary Committee of Louisiana, 1956), pp. 39-53. The plantation is now well known as the “Beauregard House at Chalmette Battlefield.

Times are not good here. The city is crumbling into ashes. It has been buried under a lava flood of taxes and frauds and maladministrations so that it has become only a study for archaeologists. Its condition is so bad that when I write about it, as I intend to do soon, nobody will believe I am telling the truth. But it is better to live here in sackcloth and ashes than to own the whole state of Ohio.³⁴

It was in this climate that José Antonio Fernandez de Trava, the immigrant linguist, business owner and planter turned academic founded *El Moro de Paz*. He had never kept far from the business world and his years in New Orleans made him familiar with the business sector. Since his earliest day as a cigar shop owner and tobacco importer, he understood the importance that the port meant to the local business community, and the entire city. The paper's mission statement declared its support for advancing "the commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing interests of Louisiana and Spanish-America." The New South movement affected immigrant communities in the United States and it is clear that newspapers, at least in New Orleans, were being used to reach out to them. While Henry Grady, Daniel Augustus Tompkins and others were promoting the South to the rest of the nation, Fernandez de Trava was part of a small community of Hispanic immigrants in New Orleans that were not only supporting the same cause, but also promoting it to a foreign populace in a foreign language to places that had historical ties to New Orleans. And Fernandez de Trava was not alone. Along with *El Moro de Paz* other Spanish publications of the day, such as *Revista Mercantil de Nueva Orleans* and *El Observador Ibero*, were devoted largely to promoting the city's industrial and commercial interests.³⁵

³⁴ Lafcadio Hearn in *The New Orleans of Lafcadio Hearn: Illustrated Sketches from the Daily City Item*, ed. Delia LaBarre (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007), pp. xiv.

³⁵ McCurdy, 26-27.

An analysis of the contents of *El Moro de Paz* shows that it made the effort to fulfill its mission statement. A strong editorial voice is present and auspiciously favored a greater level of engagement between the economies of Latin America and the United States. The newspaper also covered technological and industrial developments related to trade, especially in the international market. The issue of February 3, 1889, ran an article continued from the previous issue entitled “Comercio Entre Los Estados Unidos, Republicas Hispano-Americanas y el Brasil.” In it the United States is chastised for not investing enough capital into Latin America while allowing Europe to surpass it in trade with the region. The writer goes on to make suggestions to strengthen the commercial ties between North America and South America. One of these suggestions was a permanent exhibition, hosted by a city in the United States, where the produce, products, and technological innovations of the various American nations would be on display. This form of commercial exhibition was a favored device of New South proponents.³⁶ Atlanta held a similar exhibition in 1881, only 17 years after Sherman burned it to the ground, and it was widely regarded as a success. However, the statement in *El Moro de Paz* is particularly striking coming from a newspaper based in New Orleans. The city had recently hosted the World’s Cotton Exposition of 1884, for a similar purpose, but unlike Atlanta’s exposition three years earlier, 1884 was widely regarded as a failure. The Columbian Exposition, held in New Orleans the following year, was even less successful than its predecessor. In 1888, this would still have been fresh in people’s memories. Perhaps this is why the author was careful not to outright nominate New Orleans to host the event, even though they would have been fully aware of the great economic implications a more intense commercial relationship with Latin America would mean for the Crescent City.

³⁶ Gaston, 74.

For Fernandez de Trava, fulfilling the mission statement of *El Moro de Paz* entailed more than a close scrutiny of trade and commerce. Industrial infrastructure was and still is an important key to international trade. The February 17, 1889 issue of *El Moro de Paz* praised a recently published essay on a newly developed process for sugar cane cultivation. The essay, written by J.B. Wilkinson, also contained analyses of the sugar cane industry in various Latin American countries.³⁷ This article was followed up a month later, not by the actual Wilkinson essay, but with a more detailed description of the cultivation process. Within that same issue is an article on a trans-Andean railway, which had just been completed in South America. Running through the Andes Mountains, the railway promised to speed up travel across South America through one of the most treacherous mountain ranges in the world. Other articles that were relevant to infrastructure reported on a new defense system for ports as it was being developed in Philadelphia and submarine technology being developed by the Spanish navy.

The paper's editorial voice was not limited to the domains of trade and commerce. International politics and U.S. foreign policy were subjected to commentary as well. Ironically, while *El Moro de Paz* encouraged the United States government to intensify its commercial relationships with Latin America, the paper strongly insisted that any attempt at political dominance by the United States in the region was to be resisted and rejected. This sentiment is on full display in an article entitled "Proposicion Edmunds" in the February 10, 1889, issue. Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont had submitted a proposition on the floor of the Senate declaring American opposition to any European country that planned to build a canal through Panama. The proposition stated that such action would be seen "in opposition to the legitimate rights and interests of the United States, and also as a threat against its prosperity." *El Moro de*

³⁷ J.B. Wilkinson identified as the son.

Paz unequivocally rejected this notion and it added that the canal, once completed, would be a “free and neutral route, not because of decisions made in...Washington, but by the honor and strength of a free and independent Colombian nation.”³⁸ This was a preemptive rejection of *yanqui* hegemony over Latin America before it was demonstrated a decade later in Cuba during the Spanish-American War.

Immigration was another issue that became central to the New South movement as boosters saw immigration as an agent for the South’s anticipated boom. By the 1880s, European immigration was already widely recognized as integral to the commercial growth of the Northeast during the period. Across the South, immigrants were being courted by state immigration agencies, various immigration organizations as well as individual planters, speculators, the railroads, and other industries. Fernandez de Trava understood the importance of immigrants in a growing market. An immigrant himself, he had arrived in New Orleans during its heyday as a port city and as an immigration center.³⁹ He understood what immigration and heightened commercial activity with Latin America had meant for the city in the past, and its importance to major cities in the late nineteenth century. Perhaps this is why in the February 24, 1889, edition, in an article entitled “La Asociación de inmigración del estado de la Luisiana” announcing meetings for election of new officers, the paper announced that the editors of *El Moro de Paz*, would be present at the meetings because they were “long convinced that only through immigration will commerce and agriculture be developed in this decayed state (Louisiana).” Not many details are provided about the organization itself, except for the names of its officers: H. H. Baker, Secretary and Geo. Mooran, President. Other international issues covered by *El Moro de Paz* included the ongoing exodus of millions of Spaniards from Europe,

³⁸ Panama was part of Colombia at the time.

³⁹ Logsdon, 105-114.

many of whom ended up in Latin America.⁴⁰ Immigration fueled Argentina's population explosion which more than doubled from approximately 1.8 million in the 1860s to over four million by 1895.⁴¹ Most of these immigrants were from Spain. Fernandez de Trava may have wanted to see these Spaniards make their way to his adopted home.

The intended audience for the newspaper, that is the "Spanish-speaking people of New Orleans," could have theoretically been anyone that was Hispanic, whether of European or Latin American origin. Yet the overwhelming amount of coverage devoted to Spain in the surviving issues suggests that beyond the fact that the editor, later director, of *El Moro de Paz* was himself a Spaniard, the main group reading the paper was a community of Spanish immigrants. More foreign correspondence was received from Spain than from any other country and no foreign country received more coverage in the pages of *El Moro de Paz* than Spain. The issues of February and March 1889 are mostly concerned with the political and social developments in Spain.

Topics of local interest are not covered prominently in *El Moro de Paz*. This may suggest that Hispanics may have relied on the daily English and French newspapers for local news and developments, though the audience seems to have had an interest in the city's elite social sphere. However, Fernandez de Trava and *El Moro de Paz* were not only interested exchanging news and commercial developments, but actively pursued cultural exchange with the greater Latin-Hispanic world. The four issues from February 1889 each contain a section of a philosophical essay written by the local Creole writer Leona Queyrouze entitled "The Indulgence." The essay, a call for religious tolerance, was based on an 1884 lecture given by

⁴⁰ "Europa," *El Moro de Paz*, 2/24/1889.

⁴¹ George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800-1900* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), pp.18-22.

Queyrouze, originally written in French and translated into Spanish. Queyrouze was known as the “Creole philosopher” and is widely recognized as the first woman to give a public speech in Louisiana.⁴² Here, *El Moro de Paz* is engaging the Hispanic community in New Orleans, as well as other Hispanics across the Latin sphere, in cultural dialogue emanating from a document originally published in French. The first portion of the essay in the February 3 edition of *El Moro de Paz* reported that the first Spanish translation of this essay had appeared in a Puerto Rican newspaper named *El Buscapie*.⁴³

Like most newspapers, *El Moro de Paz* had advertisements, which are useful for understanding the contemporary community that the paper served. The lone surviving original issue of *El Moro de Paz* from 17 March has all of its advertisements intact. Most of the proprietors in the various ads in *El Moro de Paz* had Spanish surnames. Though it is impossible to know from the names themselves if these proprietors were Spanish Creoles, Spaniards, or Latin Americans, the advertisements still present us with an opportunity to better understand the larger Hispanic community of late nineteenth century New Orleans. These advertisements include various fields and professions related to medicine such as dentists and physicians. Shipping, commerce, and printing also represent a high volume of advertisements placed in *El Moro de Paz*, not surprising during a time when the Spanish language press in New Orleans was openly promoting the commercial and industrial interests of the city.

Though the Spanish never had the numbers to rival other immigrant groups, *El Moro de Paz* suggests that the members of the Spanish community living in New Orleans were not as obscure as Hearn’s writings may lead one to initially believe. The group was involved in various

⁴² Donna M. Meletio, “Leona Queyrouze (1861-1938) Louisiana French Creole Poet, Essayist, and Composer” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2005), pp.19.

⁴³ “La Indulgencia,” *El Moro de Paz*, 2/3 /1889

business interests throughout the city, as José Antonio Fernandez de Trava's own life attests. The topics, commentary, and advertising also suggest that the group had a high stake in the city maintaining its identity as a port.

In present day New Orleans, one can witness the diverse ethnic festivals and celebrations that take place year-round. Second lines, St. Patrick's Day parades, and St. Joseph's altars are all observed to celebrate local heritage and history. No such holiday or festival exists for the ethnic Spanish. It is as if this group, which is directly tied to Louisiana's colonial heritage, was condemned to an obscurity that has not befallen other groups in New Orleans' history. This is also the case for the Spaniards that came to New Orleans after the colonial period. Though a small immigrant community, it had a consistent presence throughout the nineteenth century. The legacy of Spanish language newspapers in New Orleans is the oldest in the country. And there were Hispanics in New Orleans, such as Fernandez de Trava, that reached prominence and notoriety. Yet Garvey and Widmer were still able to deny this history confidently. Why?

Perhaps, this lost legacy is due to what evidence suggests was a small, loosely organized population in the nineteenth century. Lafcadio Hearn's observations are vital to understanding the group's obscurity. He refers to them as an element, which has a quite different existential tone from words like *group* or *community*. His description of them as "less publicly visible" suggests a weak presence in a multi-ethnic society. Hearn also implies that there was a gender imbalance in New Orleans' Spanish element in which men outnumbered women. Consequently, this forced Spanish men in New Orleans to look to other groups for their brides; usually among the Creoles of "the poorer class" or other non-Spanish European women as Hearn attested.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Lafcadio Hearn, "The Last of the New Orleans Fencing Masters," in *Inventing New Orleans: Writings of Lafcadio Hearn*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp.50.

Hearn observed that Spanish Creoles of colonial legacy were fully absorbed into the French Creole sector. At the end of the nineteenth century, he was witnessing Spanish immigrants slowly meeting the same fate; marrying not only into the Creole sector like Fernandez de Trava, but also marrying into populations of other European immigrants. It seems that the Spanish effectively disappeared from the ethnic landscape in New Orleans.

This phenomenon, of a “lost population,” is not rare to history. A well documented example is chronicled by George Reid Andrews in his book, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires 1800-1900*. In Buenos Aires, the Black population has long been considered to have “disappeared,” even though Blacks have a storied place in Argentine history. A combination of several factors transpired to cause the disappearance of the black population in Buenos Aires. The community suffered from high mortality rate in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They were also afflicted with a gender imbalance where women outnumbered men. The group also dealt with racism and legal discrimination at the hands of the white majority that made their survival ever more difficult. These factors combined with an overwhelming influx of European immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century worked to eventually “white out” the black community in Buenos Aires. Because the myth of disappearance persists, many Argentines who fit a white phenotype fail to realize that they also carry African ancestry.

Though the Spanish in New Orleans did not have to deal with the racism experienced by blacks in Argentina, it seems that they shared a similar social fate. One of the most tragic consequences of the Afro Argentines’ disappearance is that their contributions and achievements have been stricken from Argentine history and scholars have only recently gained interest in retracing it. Unfortunately this is the same case in New Orleans historiography when it comes to the Spanish.

José Antonio Fernandez de Trava was an example that such assimilation occurred in New Orleans. He married a French Creole woman and lived his entire life in the Creole section of New Orleans, which in the late nineteenth century was one of the most ethnically and racially diverse in the United States. When Fernandez de Trava died in 1906, his obituary was entitled “Noted French Resident.” Unlikely to be a typo, this suggests that the native Spaniard, because of marriage along with local social and cultural identification, had become “Creolized.”

As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth century progressed, New Orleans’ polyglot society began to deteriorate. English had become the predominant language spoken in every sector of the city. As New Orleans’ many languages were forgotten so did the city’s historic connection to Latin America. A geographic and commercial connection that Kirsten Silva Gruesz argues was important to the city’s cultural development. Jose Antonio Fernandez de Trava, published *El Moro de Paz* with the hope of strengthening the commercial aspect of this connection. Like Henry Grady, Daniel Augustus Tompkins, and J.D.B. DeBow, Fernandez de Trava was pushing for a New South, but a South that understood the advantages of international relationships and what this could mean for its future.

Spanish newspapers continued to be published in New Orleans throughout the twentieth century. These newspapers targeted an audience whose members were not first generation European immigrants, but primarily Latin Americans, often fleeing poverty and political repression. By the 1960s, Latinos were a much more visible component of the city’s ethnic landscape. The largest group of Latinos had come from Honduras throughout the first half of the century. Cubans fleeing Fidel Castro’s government made up the second largest group that came to New Orleans, mainly throughout the 1960s. New Orleans had, like a century before, become an important destination for Cuban refugees. As immigration to New Orleans from Spain

dwindled, the descendants of Spaniards were absorbed into the city's white Creole sector. These white English speakers probably would not have identified with Latin American immigrants, who were often of Indigenous or African ancestry. But this does not excuse the fact that Garvey and Widmer rejected the notion that Spanish language newspapers ever existed in New Orleans. For too long this historical misstatement has compromised the historiography of the city.

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