



Writing the World and the Female Self: A Cuban Woman's Perspective of the Paris (1889) and Chicago (1893) World Expositions¹

Catharina Vallejo

*“Soy de la Habana y suelo enviar a un periódico noticias de lo que veo”
Aurelia Castillo de González in Paris, 1889*

International or world expositions have two main goals, commercial and political. They offer an opportunity for countries to exhibit themselves, to expose the “self” to the world within the context of grand ideological statements. As Noël Valis has stated, the world exhibition is a public space that allows for affirmation of the national identity, in fact “stages” it (635, 636) and confirms the dominant values of participating nations. An exhibition of that nature offers an opportunity to show off pride in the national self in an “other” space with a very broad scope. World’s fairs fueled a “new, broad consciousness of international [...] concepts and expression” (Jackson). This political goal is the foundation for the commercial perspective as the exhibitions show the world the degree of culture achieved by participating nations as reflected in the arts and industrial technology (Weimann 1). Since the 1851 London *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations*, world exhibitions have been a showcase and advertisement for the industrial products of the participating nations. The generation of monetary gains from the sales of samples or copies of exhibited objects was one of the prime immediate goals of these events. Observant passivity on the part of the visitor was meant to be converted into consumerism and international exposure of local products for further trade possibilities. Michel Foucault points out that international exhibitions—together with publishing and other means of diffusion of information—were among the mechanisms through which the bourgeois class expressed power (207). The selection (as gift, loan or purchase) of the samples to be exhibited or sold were the result of power exercised by the dominant national or commercial interests, and the exhibition would validate this power. In fact, everything in a world exposition is a sample or model of the national cultures on display. Exhibitions are organized as an artificial space that immerses the public in a world of representations; by their very nature they create a visual discipline that reconstruct external reality as an image, a map or a photograph (Canogar 50, 51). As Edward Said affirms, the production, circulation, history and interpretation of representations are the very elements of culture; “representation itself has been characterized

as keeping the subordinate subordinate, [and] the inferior inferior” (56, 80), thus validating the exhibiting nations' hierarchy of political perspectives (see also Rydell 3-8).

Foucault considered that the subject is constructed through concrete social practices, located in communities and, more specifically, through the discourses produced by these practices (MacLaren 76). This paper intends to explore several dimensions of women's status and experience at world's fairs, and how the self constructs the subject through this experience, with special emphasis on the views of a representative writer, the Cuban Aurelia Castillo de González (1842-1920), and to show that travel to World's Fairs and the writing produced by these events were a concrete and significant vehicle for the development and dissemination of Hispanic women's views and for the construction of (female) identity. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's concept of “presence” as a scene where identities—dynamic relations between cultures, genders, classes, spaces and times—are constructed is of particular interest: women's presence at World's Fairs produced a “body” of writing, through a process, an energy of (corporeal) intensity; it constituted a dynamic, a change or transformation, associated in this case with the flux of crisis characteristic of the end of the Nineteenth Century. In this context, the essay will concentrate on representation and perception of the nation in another space, on the function of art, on gender issues (as represented by discourses on clothing and fashion), and on (travel) writing, where the dominant self-referent is the presence of the writer as a female.

Politically and culturally, the late 1880's and early 1890's were crucial years for the relationship between Cuba, Europe (especially Spain and France) and the United States, coming just prior to the second war of independence and U.S. political intervention in Cuba. There was an affirmation of the plurality of times and spaces; the simultaneity offered by the new communications technologies offered an acute and ample sense of the present (Kern 6-8), and the visual had acquired greater importance. The World Fairs of this period were events that brought together in one place and time a large number of elements that relate directly to women's status in society. Of special interest in this respect are the views and actions of women from politically and commercially marginal countries, where women's participation in public life had also been marginal, and for whom the end of the Nineteenth Century was a particularly important era. The Paris World Exhibition of 1889 was celebrated to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution, which had constituted France as a modern nation. The use of electricity became generalized there, both for illumination and decoration. In fact, in part because the Paris exhibition celebrated the anniversary of the French Revolution, fewer European monarchies participated, and there was more commercial technology than national art (<http://angelfire.com/stars/worldsfair/>). As Julie Jones has pointed out, this exposition coincided with “a period of very active territorial expansion that would convert France into a major colonial power and further increase the prestige of its capital and its culture” (13). Women had had little place or presence in World's Fairs until Paris in 1889, when there were several world's congresses on women's issues.

It was the Columbian exposition in Chicago in 1893, however, which for the first time dedicated a Woman's Building, designed, organized and managed entirely by women. It included among others art and industry by women, a library of 7,000 volumes by women writers, and a conference hall which celebrated 325 conferences during the *Congress of Women*

in May of the Exhibition (Wels 3, Weimann 531). This building was one of the most popular of the Fair and its exhibits among the most commented. For the first time, women participated in committees set up to select the national contributions to the Fairs and in the congresses that formed part of the exhibitions' events. This was an important dimension for women in all participating nations. As Mrs. Bertha Potter Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers, stated in her inaugural address to the *Congress of Women*, "Government recognition and sanction give to these committees of women official character and dignity" (in Eagle 29). The 1893 Chicago World Exhibition was subtitled "the Columbian" to commemorate the 400th anniversary of what was then still called the "discovery" of America. By proposing this special place for women, the Chicago Columbian Exhibition "discovered" women as Columbus discovered America (Bertha Palmer in Wels 2) and as progress and power through machines and technology were discovered.²

The changes in the perception of the world carried with them concomitant changes in society and in the status of women. Victorian emphasis on the separation of public and private space was being challenged by the imminent feminism in Europe. Women were working their way slowly into professional life, especially in teaching, nursing and writing. The female reading public—"muy al día, liberalizado y hasta rebelde," according to David Viñas (146)—was growing strongly. Representations of women were increasingly exploited commercially and women were just beginning to be seen as consumers to be courted.³ In Chicago, in fact, there had been a significant controversy about whether the Woman's Pavilion should sell anything at all; another about the disparity between the sale of objects produced by industrial means (which lined the pockets of those already rich) and those made by artisans (which fed family units). In the end, there also cheap souvenirs won out and sold by the thousands (Weimann 422-425).

"El viaje a Europa" had been a standard feature of the education of (male) members of the élite and emergent bourgeois class for the entire Nineteenth Century, and especially after independence.⁴ During this era, and especially in Hispanic environments, women still travelled little: "Mobility is clearly a gendered phenomenon" states Kerstin Shands (19). Therefore, although there are texts and other evidence of Hispanic women travelers in the Nineteenth Century, these are only enough to constitute an exception.⁵ Although in general women traveled accompanying their husbands or fathers, a number of women visiting the Paris and Chicago World's Fairs did so, for the first time, in some official or professional capacity such as government representative⁶ or journalist, among them Aurelia Castillo de González of Cuba, Emilia Pardo Bazán and Eva Canel of Spain—some of them, now accompanied *by* a husband. As one of the first (semi-)professional women journalists, Aurelia Castillo de González was sent by the Havana newspaper *El País* to Paris in 1889 (where she spent almost six weeks towards the end of the Exhibition), and to Chicago in 1893, also during September and October.⁷ She published her accounts in the *Revista de Cuba* in 1894 and later in her five-volume *Escritos*. Two men journalists from Cuba also visited the Chicago Fair; Raimundo Cabrera had little interest in women's issues (he only devotes part of one chapter to the Woman's Building), and Manuel Serafín Pichardo, a francophile and tireless promoter of Cuban women artists and writers through the pages of his weekly cultural magazine *Figaro* in Havana. Their accounts afford interesting differences of perspective—both political and gendered.

Traveling put women concretely in another “space” as a bodily (gendered) “presence.” For Latin-American (Cuban) women this implies a series of elements that put into question their status in the social and cultural imaginary. There is the contact and comparison with the other/s, displacement by vehicles and general use of public transport, the ease and (in)dependence of women in this displacement, etc. In addition, travel has always constituted a metaphor for the inner road of existential development. Just as earlier male discoverers had experienced, in travel to new places there are also questions of interior and exterior exploration of the female space. Temporal and spatial distance from the home, spiritual and cultural distance from the places visited provoke a state of existential insecurity, nostalgia, loneliness, and comparisons which constitute differences (gaps) to be overcome by means of letters (public or private and spanning a distance in a present time) or memoirs (spanning a time period once back in the home). The status of letters in particular undergoes a transformation. Allowed as writing by women because of their essentially “private” nature, once published they constitute the legitimation of the travel experience and thus of the travelers as writers. Travel writing afforded women legitimacy through knowledge and access to authority through authorship. “The validation of the feminine subject is the fundamental sign of travel literature written by women,” writes Aileen Schmidt (221). Visiting a new place is “reading” it, interpreting its signs according to a code that was set for another place. The spatial distance that constitutes travel, as Charles Grivel explains, produces new signs because of its capacity to disrupt normal sign behavior (246). The woman fills a double role, that of female traveler and female author; in the latter role, she has to invent the signs that will make the new reality intelligible to her readers. In this process of travel writing, women generally try to collect and possess themselves (Pratt 160); ultimately, therefore, the writing is a process of construction or invention of the self, which occurs, paradoxically and dynamically in an experience that by definition destabilizes the identity by having the subject wrenched from her habitually defined space, the home. The identity of the writer, therefore, as well as the identity of the reader in the home country, are transformed by this travel-writing process. In this sense, travel writing is a dialogue—between the self and the other, between the here and there—relations which during the traveling process may become reversed and will be constantly questioned and (re)negotiated. In addition, at an international exhibition, there will be confrontation not just with one culture, but with representations of a multitude of different “others,” constantly challenging the identity-construction process.

Travel writers often try to impose a narrative on their experiences; it makes for a dynamic construction of the reality represented. A central narrative authority is constructed which brings order to the impressions that need to be communicated. Writers visiting World's Fairs, overwhelmed by the multitude of impressions, end up making lists, as a catalogue of the samples represented in the exhibit. In fact, world's fairs would naturally engender such a style, as they tended towards encyclopedism and the desire for comprehensiveness typical of the Nineteenth Century (Jackson). There is a constancy in the style: lists of objects, often even without descriptive adjectives except for the superlative, repetitions of verbs of observation, movement and information (we saw, we bought, we ate, we shared, we walked, we visited...), comparisons and evaluative statements of a nationalistic nature.⁸ During the time-period indicated, and as Luisa Campuzano has stated (*Cartas de México* 21), Aurelia Castillo de González was the most prominent woman writer in Cuba, and a traveler of considerable experience. Her account narrates some of the incidents of her voyage,

providing an experience of mobility and displacement, formulated in terms of a chronological enumeration: on this day we arrived at such a place, we visited these things, such and such happened, we left so many days afterwards and arrived at such an other place, etc. Once arriving at the World's Fair however, the text becomes spatialized, and Castillo focuses on the descriptions of places, buildings, objects, and other elements of the environment without mentioning movement, displacement or the passing of time except to indicate the day of the month. The chronological succession of time ceases to exist, and gives way to spatial perception, as of an archive, a collection of descriptive labels of objects and places, a catalogue of what was seen; for example, just in her first day in Paris, she sees the Eiffel Tower, the pavillions of Argentina, Mexico, and Belgium, and makes a start on the sculpture galleries (II 153-54). Given her traveler's knowledge of places "other" than Cuba, one of her narrative techniques is comparison: the Eiffel Tower with the Brooklyn Bridge (II 154), the illuminated fountains of the Paris exhibition with Niagara Falls (II 158), and the immensity of Chicago's features with the Roman Circus, or Saint Peter's (III 73). Yet Castillo always sees herself first and foremost as Cuban, a country—yes—in which much is lacking compared to others. For example, she admires the well-tended public parks in Paris and laments their lack in "mi pobre país [que] carece de todo eso" (II 170-171), and in the United States, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* provokes her lengthy and unqualified admiration, being an "acabada pintura del servicio esclavo." She then parenthetically draws her national self into this picture: "Como cubana, tengo el triste privilegio de ser perita en el asunto" (III 105).

In keeping with the importance she affords to writing, and showing traveling to be a reading of new signs, Castillo constructs the metaphor of the Fair as a book: "la Exposición es un libro abierto, donde sus incansables *habitantes* tienen que ir leyendo siempre" (II 164). Another metaphor, however, might be just as appropriate: the Fair is like a museum, in which objects are taken out of their context and denied their original function. Their primary function now is not to do but to be seen (Canogar 21); the observer-writer's function is to compose the (open) book of the Fair. In this museum/book every item brought from other lands becomes a "significant" object simply because it is there; a value is immediately conferred upon it by having been selected for exhibition. Samples of functional items made by women become "art." For example, Cuban cigars and sugar are taken out of their commercial context—the floors of the tobacco shops and the cane fields and factories—and are presented as single, sterile objects to be admired. Castillo perceives this spatial isolation from an economic and agricultural perspective. In Paris, in the representation of Cuban products she is appalled to see only nine small pieces of raw sugar, none refined, "ni siquiera una de aquellas magníficas cañas, para dar muestra de la feracidad de nuestros campos y de lo que *puede* valer nuestra isla como país azucarero; ni siquiera un trago de los caldos que producen esas cañas; ni siquiera una palma real...; ni siquiera un coco...; ni siquiera una piña, un mamey-zapote, un corajo..." (II 202). Significantly, she lists things not there in an implicit negative judgment of the selection criteria and/or ignorance of the variety and importance of Cuba's vegetation and its products. The nostalgia and proprietoriness towards those beloved objects, those things that make Cuba special, that make it a national "self," are also evident.

Paris and Chicago, both urban spaces, have had quite a different resonance in the intellectual space of Latin America. Since Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's well-publicized

travels in the mid-Nineteenth Century—in whose travelogues for the first time “un ‘estilo’ se personaliza a través de un cuerpo” in the words of Viñas (167)—the voyage to Paris represents an act of integration into a cultural and economic center, which allowed the Latin-American traveler to participate symbolically in modernity (Grinfeld, Jones); Paris, in fact, is the “artistic and organizational model that inspires Latin American progress” (Schwartz 13). Towards the end of the century, the writers of *modernismo* constructed Paris as a myth; memoirs, chronicles and essays from this period “embellish Sarmiento's Paris of social prestige, expanding into the realm of the sensual and sexual” (Schwartz 14). As Cristóbal Pera states, one of the essential functions of the myth of Paris in Spanish America consists in the confrontation between the writer and his identity, with his European roots and his identity as American (327, 336). Paris was considered to be the center of the highest cultural achievements and artistic expression, and possessed the added values of exotism, bohemia, sexuality and decadence (see Jones, Schwartz). In this process of mythification, “...woman and the city are conflated; possession of the one signals possession of the other...” (Jones 20), a schema whose terms also include beauty and art (Pera 334-335). The artist becomes son or lover of this complex female entity, taking all components out of historical times and converting them into a deforming rhetoric, in an “aesthetic space” filled with stereotypes and emblems (Grinfeld 356, 362). Sarmiento, for example, upon his arrival in France already felt “como cuando el enamorado novel va a presentarse ante las damas” (quoted in Viñas 168). Enrique Gómez Carillo confirms this when he states that Paris, for those who know how to love her, is a lover, a fiancée, and a wife (33). Any identity construction of the Latin-American “woman writer” in Paris, therefore, becomes extremely problematic in such a situation.⁹

Chicago, on the other hand, is a space that symbolizes the power and progress of democracy, capitalism and pragmatism; it doesn't have much significant weight as a city but rather as the representative of a people and a politics. Manuel Pichardo, on his way to Chicago via New York, Philadelphia and Washington in 1893, comments that the ambition of the United States “crece hasta el propósito de poseer cuanto el suelo y el hombre puedan producir en el globo” (23). Indeed, the 1893 World's Fair would establish the United States as a recognized world economic power (Rosenblum, et al. 64), and would institutionalize a new identity for the United States, privileging the urban over the agrarian, the dynamic over the static (Canogar 60). In the public discourse on the Fair, the “concept of progress as a *willed* national activity toward a determined, utopian goal” was constantly emphasized (Rydell 46). Hence, in the evaluation of that city, in that time, and with the Columbian theme of the exhibition, there will be a dialectic of power and authority, both cultural—between materialism and art—as well as political—between the colonizer and the colonized. There was great anxiety in Europe with respect to American intentions towards Latin America, and Spain's contribution to the Chicago World's Fair—relics of a glorious but dead past, including paintings and writings by the Spanish royal family (Pohl 297)—emphasized the abyss between the potential imperialistic power of North America and the old degenerate dynasty of the now extinct colonizing power (Valis 641-42). In Latin America, and especially in Cuba, there was great ambivalence towards the economic, political and cultural power of North America on the one hand, and on the other, great admiration for what was seen as a model of progress and democracy. Manuel Serafin Pichardo and Raimundo Cabrera will embody the extremes of this dialectic. With respect to Castillo, it is evident from her text that she advocated some form of autonomy for Cuba, and

it might not be extravagant to suggest that she used some of her time in the United States to have discussions with Americans and Cuban exiles favorable to this cause, which would explain some of the gaps in her chronology.¹⁰ This might also explain her unusual silence on political issues and her almost neutral observations of American culture. Where Pichardo is passionately anti-yankee, and Cabrera is respectful, Castillo only makes brief and careful judgments on the American people: “Sé que [la raza angloamericana] tiene defectos; pero juzgo que pesan muy poco puestos en balanza con sus grandes cualidades” (III 83). Thus, the political dimension of Castillo's account is subtle, but it is clear nonetheless. For example, she sees Cuban art by women in terms of the qualitative and quantitative space it occupies precisely *as Cuban*, that is, as a function of its political value relevant to Cuba's status in the Woman's Building. Of the library in the Woman's Building, for example, she exclaims about the fact that Cuba, “La Niobe americana, castigada en toda su prole,” has its own section in the catalogue of works contributed by women and, she adds: “por Dios que es un gusto y parece una buena profecía verla autónoma, aunque sea de mentirijillas” (III 114). Again, though not stated explicitly, the reference to Spain, and Cuba's political situation, is clear in the following: “...triste es ver decaer las naciones, sobre todo, si llevamos su sangre en nuestras venas, y más aun, si nuestro país puede ser arrastrado en la caída...” (II 176).¹¹

In a characteristic late nineteenth-century movement away from the religious paradigm towards the authority of science, Aurelia Castillo is entranced by the technological innovations, both in Paris and Chicago, because: “la ciencia... inspira confianza... [Es la] única madre legítima de la industria y de las artes” (II 163, 188). The end of the Nineteenth Century saw great industrial and commercial improvements, especially, for example, with the increasing use of technological developments for home-life, urbanization and industrialization—all attractive to Latin-American women as manufactured into time and energy-saving devices that could make life easier. In Paris Castillo admires “lo menos bello que tiene la ciudad, pero lo más esencial acaso: sus cloacas” (II 197). She recognizes that recent numerous inventions and new technology had made it ever more possible to conquer space, to control the environment better, to make movement easier for more people of all classes: “Chicago tiene la máquina en todas partes... ruidosas fábricas... trenes de vapor, eléctricos y de cable... ascensores... electricidad,... relojes públicos..., ventila[ción]... el molino... la bomba...” (III 70). She declares the Machinery Pavillion to be “el que más me gusta en toda la Exposition” (III 160), though she insists on “no intentat[e]” in regards to machinery (II 162). However, in a tactic repeated by many and often (and to be considered one of the “tretas del débil,” as Josefina Ludmer explains in her now celebrated article), she in fact does express a judgment of the importance of machines which, she states, “da[n] idea elevada del poderío que ha alcanzado el hombre” (II 162). She clearly sees these technological achievements as progress, and a way to a better life in the future. She thus prefers to abandon the aesthetic for the practical: “Salgamos de lo estético y vengamos a lo útil, a lo práctico, a lo indispensable ya para la vida” (II 197). The past has no importance for her; the Trocadero, which had been an “opulento palacio de otra Exposición, grande en su tiempo” has now become a repository of antiques, and she is bored by these “cachivaches de antaño” (II 189). In Paris she is impressed by some construction machinery that would be useful in the port of Havana (II 156), and in Chicago she is delighted with an electric fan, imagining Julián del Casal shaving himself in its coolness during the hottest month of the Cuban summer: “Quisiera yo ver a Casal afeitándose de este modo en la Habana y en el mes de agosto, y preguntarle entonces si reniega del progreso”

(III 77). In other words, she admires the present, the visual, the practical, which she sees as progress, and offers no implications of the political power that technology represents. In addition, her perspective allows her to elude the whole issue of the degenerate, sensual Paris of the *modernista* myth and the powerful image of that city as a female to be possessed, as well as the political implication of a Paris one hundred years after the revolution, and a Cuba as yet without one. She is simply delighted with the state of progress that Paris exhibits, including its sewers, security and cleanliness.

Once again resorting to the “treta del débil” to allow the legitimacy of an uninformed opinion, and in much the same formulation as her previously quoted declaration regarding machinery, Castillo states her incompetence to judge art at the Paris exhibition, but reserves the right to express her taste: “No soy inteligente en el arte, diré simplemente lo que más me ha gustado” (II 157). So, though she does admire the splendid showing of contemporary art in Paris (II 190), she hardly mentions the respectably large collection of Cuban women artists' work in Chicago.¹² Castillo believes in artists when they work in the most noble way, without financial compensation, only for the sake of beauty. It is this which makes art useful. Castillo in fact sees beauty in technology. She states that the Chicago Ferris wheel occupies the same symbolic space as the Eiffel Tower, “tanto por lo atrevido y científico de su concepción como por la grandiosa hermosura de su aspecto” (III 144-145). In Paris she would have liked to see more of this science, for example as applied to agriculture in Latin America: “encontrar además el genio poderoso del hombre sacando todo el fruto posible de tan exuberante naturaleza, perfeccionándola, convirtiendo las materias brutas más bastas en primorosos objetos de arte que, aunque parezcan superfluidades, no lo son, porque ...contribuyen a la prosperidad de las naciones y, refinando el gusto de sus habitantes, ayudan a refinar las costumbres” (II 170). This is precisely why she criticizes traditional women's crafts, especially embroidery: “¿a qué gastar una vida, perder ojos y pulmones en obras que nunca se retribuyen en todo lo que cuestan a sus autoras?” (III 114). In this, Castillo reveals the contradiction of the World's Fairs, between their stated goal of exhibiting technology and commerce on the one hand—eminently masculine pursuits both—and, on the other, craft and products by women—which are neither technical nor commercial, nor even considered artistic. This gap will be more evident at the Chicago Exhibition, where the commercial and industrial dimensions were very strong, and where the Board of Lady Managers had been concerned about showing too much traditional “woman's work.” Yet even there “needlework was [still] the predominant theme in every collection” of all nations (Weimann 413, 404).¹³

Castillo also broaches a question that even now continues to occupy scholars and thinkers on women's issues: whether to recognize women's work through a separate catalogue or in a separate space, or to treat women's work as part of the general cultural production of a nation. In Chicago this was a question debated before the decision was made to design and construct a Woman's Building (Weimann 260-61, 279ss). Castillo believes that all women should have sent their work to the Women's Pavillion, because “hubiesen tenido... mayor lucimiento, porque es uno de los edificios más concurridos” (III 127). Although this is, again, taking women's work out of its cultural context, Castillo evidently believed it was more important to showcase women's work than to address social and gender equality. Just as she wished Cuban agricultural products to be shown in what she considered to be their proper national context, she wants women's work to be shown in its gendered context. The status of

women is, thus, also a debated space for Castillo. She admires American women's freedom of movement: "Qué gusto es ver aquí a las mujeres dirigiendo sus carruajes, ya solas, ya acompañadas con una amiga o con una hija pequeña, y marchar rápidamente en velocípedos, sin que las faldas les estorben para nada, ...Y todo esto, sin perder ni un tantico de su reputación, ...libres y felices, y tan virtuosas y tan respetadas— ... —como la más modesta y buena en nuestros países de reclusión y de preocupaciones" (III 80). Women's clothing, under the topic of dress reform, was in fact a much debated question, especially during the Women's Congress held in May. American power and progress also came to be symbolized in women's freedom of movement, with dressing in pants (it was the beginning of the era of the "bloomers") or shorter skirts, especially. "¿Qué vale el pie diminuto, a fuerza de compresión, de la mujer china, junto al pie ligero y firme de la mujer norteamericana?— Castillo remarks—Desdichado es siempre el que necesita protección, por muy generosa que la obtenga" (III 81). While Castillo thus admires some of the elements that offer women more freedom, she is not entirely at ease with the concept. Together with the admiration expressed above, and in relation to this same freedom of movement accorded to American women, she adds "¡Bárbaros de yankees! ¡Bárbaros y mentecatos!" (III 68). In Charles Grivel's words, Castillo "is missing a language, the language of the other..." (Grivel 244): she cannot seem to resolve the contradiction between the "other" as observed and the acceptance of the customs of that "other" for the self. Pichardo shows no such ambivalence. He is severely critical of American women and their status, and feels that their conduct "tiende a despojarla de la exquisitez y de la debilidad que han sido su encanto" (43).¹⁴ Pichardo applies his own known language to the reality of the other.

It is evident that Castillo, in her brief visit, will not judge some of the things she sees. The account of her voyages contains no "private" space; there is no reference to her husband, who accompanied her, except through the writer's conceit of the first person plural subject she occasionally uses. She refers only the very public artificial culture of the Exposition. She mentions no meetings with people, no visits to homes in either Paris or Chicago. She is focused entirely on the World's Fairs, and has very little, if any, contact with American culture as American, only as an "other," and in Paris only briefly with the cultural and scientific community. The political possibilities for Cuba included annexation to the United States, but Castillo is reticent in her admiration for Americans; through her continued insistence on Cuba as a legitimate "nation" she clearly favors independence. Thus, there are constant references that connect the Expositions to her own place of origin, her "country." Her absence from Cuba creates a strong dialectic between self and other. Thus, upon her return to Cuba from Paris she is invaded by a very sad "nostalgia a la inversa;... la nostalgia de la libertad y del progreso, del orden..." that she had experienced in the French capital (II 375). The terminology she uses here is remarkable: the "freedom" of the French revolutionary slogan, and the equally emblematic "progress and order" of the positivist philosophy (which she had embraced precisely for its focus on these issues) all underline, by contrast, her own status as a colonial subject. In Cuba she finds a weak people who allow its cities to fall into ruin, and this time squarely blames Spain:¹⁵ "Harta responsabilidad cabe a la Metrópoli.... Ella nos trajo la esclavitud; ella resistió cuanto posible fue a extinguirla; ella descuidó mañosamente nuestra cultura; ella da constante preferencia a los últimos que envía...; ella, por el poco tino en elegir sus hombres, nos ha acostumbrado al fraude en la administración y al despotismo en el gobierno; ella se niega obstinadamente a reconocer a este país la mayoría de edad..." (II 375). In France she would have felt Spain's connection

with the rest of Europe; it is almost as if she needs to be “present” concretely on her own Cuban soil before being able to launch such a strong and direct attack on the “mother country.”

The exploration of the “other” is turned inwards and proposed as a comparison with and based on the self. The visual dominates; everything is seen from the position of and in relation to Castillo's own national space. In Paris she introduces herself to Louis Pasteur with these words, which should be considered emblematic of her spatial, writerly and visual focus: “Soy de la Habana y suelo enviar a un periódico noticias de lo que veo” (II 229). In this phrase she expresses the confidence of her existence, her identity as Cuban, her work as a journalist, her interest in the new, and the importance of observation of the visible. With these simple and brief words, Aurelia Castillo expresses a female and modern perspective as a Cuban woman traveler. The comparison between the foreign, other and her own, and her return to the national self-space is often difficult and bitter, as is evident from the following quote, which collapses Paris and Chicago into one “other,” and in which again the visual and spatial dominate: “Figúrome que Chicago es una torre Eiffel y que todas nuestras ciudades latinoamericanas se arrastran penosamente allá abajo. Mi sitio no es éste de arriba, sino aquél, y con angustias de pesadilla, quisiera yo—no trocar las cosas,...—sino que todo en este hermoso continente se volviese torres de Eiffel, sin vistas a gentes desdichadas” (III, 87). According to Daniel Canogar, the Eiffel tower can be seen as a homage to the panoramic view of the European, an insidious view which from its elevated central position sought to dominate the most remote corners of the globe (52). The Ferris wheel emphasized another type of civilization, that which could allow itself the luxury of building a giant machine whose ends were exclusively ludic (Canogar 55), and equally elevated. Castillo unites the symbols of the two expositions and relates the merged emblem to her view of the status of Latin America in its entirety: the power of foreign technology dominant above the “gentes desdichadas” of the Latin-American continent.

The voyages made by Castillo allowed her the opportunity to compare, to see other worlds and other cultures in order to transform the seen objects into words and symbols, and to shorten the distance between them, trying to find a promising future for her own space. At the end of both exhibitions she understands that all world exhibitions have essentially the same character. She sees them as places and spaces that represent innovation, modernity, displays of objects that will make life easier. In her customary emphasis on the visual, she states that in Chicago she sees many of the same things that she had seen in Paris in 1889¹⁶ and fears writing the same things as well: “Todas las exposiciones universales —a juzgar por las dos que he visto— se parecen...En Chicago vuelvo a ver casi todo lo que vi en París en 1889, de tal modo, que...temo repetir a cada momento lo que antes dije...” (III 108-109). Her emphasis on the visual and on technology and innovation, her search for women's space and place in public action, movement and recognition—“la gran novedad de la Exposición norteamericana consiste,...en haber consagrado un edificio al trabajo de la mujer en todos los países de la tierra...” (III 109)—all this make Aurelia Castillo a modern woman. Her consciously careful approach to the political shows the beginning of Latin-American women's consciousness of and participation in the political domain of their countries. Her status as a woman sent out in an official capacity by a newspaper to write about “other” cultures, places and women is evidence of the growing importance and legitimacy of women's public expressions, of the acceptance of women's professional writing. Mary Louise

Pratt has explained how journalism and travel writing were fundamental mediators working to legitimate authority (29). In this case, Castillo legitimates her own status as a writer, a professional (woman) writer of modern culture and contemporary life. Raimundo Cabrera, who had characterized his own account of the Chicago Columbian Exhibition as being without pretense of authority (150), awards this authority to Castillo: “la distinguida escritora cubana tan interesante por su estilo y gusto refinado como por sus formas suaves y tonos exquisitos, ilustra y recrea ahora a los lectores de *El País* con brillantes descripciones de la Exposición y sus *autorizadas observaciones* confirman la veracidad del relato escueto, desnudo de galas, pero real y positivo que... he hecho de aquellas maravillas” (150, emphasis added). Although clothed in the traditional adjectives accorded to women's work (sweet, exquisite, refined)—and incidentally reflecting Pichardo's characterization of good Cuban women—Castillo is also granted the legitimacy of authority in her observations of and in the public space. Julián del Casal—by then a recognized icon of *modernismo*—considered the brief paragraph Castillo wrote summarizing her feelings upon her return to Cuba from Europe to be “la página más bella, más varonil, más enérgica, y más oportuna” (235) that she had written.

Women's writing has generally been analyzed through the traditional genres of poetry, narrative and drama. Women's journalistic writings construct other types of “authors” and, by doing so, call attention to the mechanisms by which they shape identity; they afford other, complementary views of identity construction. From Aurelia Castillo's texts on her visits to these two World Fairs it can be argued that travel accounts allow women to construct both a personal and national identity, a professional and international gendered “presence.” Travel and visits to World's Fairs allowed Hispanic women to break the interior/interior binary, expanding space, confronting the political dialectic in a time that was acutely present. From the political and the commercial, the cultural and pragmatic, women would choose their focus; Aurelia Castillo de González clearly chose the political—but subtly—and the pragmatic—openly.

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Notes

- ¹ This paper represents the findings of preliminary research on a project of much larger scope investigating identity constructions in Cuban and Spanish women's (newspaper) writing on three World Expositions towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, through the analysis of the "presence" of the gendered (female) subject (see Gumbrecht and Foucault).
- ² The comparison, of course, was an obverse to what she undoubtedly meant to be positive: exploitation and oppression quickly followed discovery.
- ³ A curious fact underlines this link: Cuban cigar factories were quick to take advantage of the popularity of the Woman's Building and women's products in Chicago, producing cigars for sale at the exposition carrying the name and portrait of Mrs. Bertha Potter Palmer (Weimann 561).
- ⁴ See, for example the section in David Viñas' *De Sarmiento a Cortázar*, in which the author distinguishes different types of voyages by Argentine intellectuals as the Nineteenth Century progresses: *el viaje colonial* (Belgrano), *el viaje utilitario* (Alberdi), *el viaje balzaciano* (Sarmiento), *el viaje consumidor* (Mansilla), *el viaje ceremonial* (Lucio López), etc.
- ⁵ Some of the best known are the Larrainzar sisters of Mexico (who visited the 1867 Paris exhibition), the Colombian Soledad Acosta de Samper (whose 1867 novel *Una holandesa en América* includes travel narratives of different kinds, and who participated in several of the many congresses held in Spain in conjunction with the 1892 celebrations of the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America), Aurelia Castillo de González (who travelled throughout Europe, Mexico and North America), and several Spanish women: the countess of Merlín in the early part of the century, Emilia Serrano, baroness of Wilson (both of whom traveled extensively throughout Latin America), and Emilia Pardo Bazán (who visited many international expositions in Europe). See also Martin.
- ⁶ María Luisa Dolz, another Cuban woman who traveled to Chicago in 1893 and to the Paris exhibition of 1900, also published the brief accounts of her visits. She was particularly interested in the educational structure for women in these countries.
- ⁷ I wish to acknowledge my debt to Luisa Campuzano of *Casa de las Américas* in Havana, who has studied Aurelia Castillo's travels from a different perspective, and who kindly allowed me the use of her unpublished manuscript on the subject.
- ⁸ Pichardo is particularly prone to this practice; lists of tobacco producers (114), wood samples (121), painters and their works (120), sculptures (135), and other multiples are listed exhaustively. Cabrera is fond of detailing figures, of costs and dimensions, for example, and adds an entire chapter at the end of his account, comparing statistics from the Paris and the Chicago exhibitions.
- ⁹ This, of course, is also the case for other stereotypically gendered relationships such as that between the muse (always female) and the woman-writer, or between the "mother-nation" (*madre patria*) and women.
- ¹⁰ I thank Luisa Campuzano for pointing out this possibility.
- ¹¹ By contrast, the political dimension is very explicit in Manuel S. Pichardo's perspective. In the Cuba section of the Exhibition, whose largest representation was in the Agriculture building, he is proud because the Cuban installation, rather than being merely competitive, is clearly superior to the others in this category, as is the culture. He sees

evidence of a national space, “...el recinto de una nación, no el de una colonia combatida, explotada y casi exangüe...” (111).

- ¹² Upon reading Pichardo one perceives that in addition to the seven painters, there were also representative works from women writers, including Castillo herself (Pichardo 40).
- ¹³ The different perspectives are here very evident. Manuel Serafín Pichardo, so passionately seeking what he saw as the progress of independence, did not take this forward look into gender issues; he remains resolutely traditional, admiring the beautiful works of embroidery in Chicago, by the “señoras americanas, más femeninas” (43).
- ¹⁴ Women's activities and participation had evidently taken on a major role in the exposition to such an extent that Pichardo criticizes women because they are everywhere, keen to get in on every event: “Ellas, siempre en todas partes, con afán de azacarse en pos del último suceso” (100). In the United States, he says, “el tragín se ha hecho mujer” (43). He qualifies the women as masculinized: “¡qué hombres son estas mujeres!” (43, 100).
- ¹⁵ In contrast to the more usual “mother Cuba-father Spain” relation of nineteenth-century Cuban texts, where the writer is the offspring with ambivalent feelings towards both (Beaupied 290).
- ¹⁶ In many cases, this would have been factually true, since a number of exhibits from the 1889 Paris Exposition—especially art works—were also shown in Chicago, and some of the features of the Paris Exposition—such as inhabitants of exotic villages—were copied in Chicago.

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