

POLITICS AND ROMANCE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP ON CUBAN POLITICS

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- THE CUBAN DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE: THE AUTÉNTICO YEARS, 1944–1952.* By Charles D. Ameringer. (Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 2000. Pp. 229. \$49.95 cloth.)
- CUBA TODAY AND TOMORROW: REINVENTING SOCIALISM.* By Max Azicri. (Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 2000. Pp. 396. \$59.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)
- CONFLICTING MISSIONS: HAVANA, WASHINGTON, AND AFRICA, 1959–1976.* By Piero de Gleijeses. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002. Pp. 552. \$34.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)
- CASTRO AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION.* By Thomas M. Leonard. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999. Pp. 188. \$39.95 cloth.)
- CUBA: THE CONTOURS OF CHANGE.* Edited by Susan Kaufman Purcell and David Rothkopf. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000. Pp. 157. \$13.95 paper.)
- STATE AND REVOLUTION IN CUBA: MASS MOBILIZATION AND POLITICAL CHANGE, 1920–1940.* By Robert Whitney. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. 255. \$49.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)

The time is here to rethink the study of Cuban politics, and perhaps social sciences in general. Not only because the “re” preposition is much *en vogue* in the academy but because the world has changed as have many of us as well. Tracing the intellectual history of Cuban political studies since 1959 reveals a set of models that have framed our work and, in so doing, defined the scope, approaches, presumptions, assumptions and, in no small measure, determined our conclusions. Such research also reveals a scholarship in a tight embrace with politics, romance, and disaffection. Paradigms and romance have been put to the test by developments in and outside of the field.

Although the body of literature on Cuban politics and political history is impressive in sheer volume and indeed in its robustness, much

could use reexamination. The need stems from the changes in world time, the relative openness of archives, the possibility of accessing living sources, the rise of a second generation of scholars in Cuban studies, and last but far from least, the important alterations in Cuban and Cuban-American politics *per se*. Moreover, we are not immune to intellectual climatic changes. Poststructuralism and postmodernity have launched serious charges against the standard modernist approaches (either in liberal or Marxist variants) and areas studies are once again at the heart of one of the most lively scholarly debates, pitting generalists and country/areas specialists.

Changes in ideational landscapes underscore the wisdom of rethinking political analyses of Cuba. Ideas are products, historical, relational. Marx agreed that they were transitory, in and out of fashion, like polyester and disco music; post-structuralists argue that social reality is a construct. These perspectives indicate that Cuban studies have been constructed by us. Since ideas are products of their times as well as products of their authors, with changing times and casts of characters come redefined contours of knowledge.

Indeed the Cuban studies stage is in transition and will be for some while. The tough reality that Cuban socialism has confronted since the late 1980s, the end of the Cold War, the partial access to fieldwork on the island, and the release of classified documents in the United States are possible sources for a renaissance in the study of island politics. Transitions to democracy elsewhere have had an impact on how one looks at Cuba and have sparked a new-found interest in issues such as civil society that had been neglected in the past. A young set of Cuban scholars, many of the best and the brightest, have left the island and are now writing and publishing abroad (Rafael Rojas, Velia Cecilia Bobes, Madeline Camara, Alejandro de la Fuente, among others). A fresh crop of scholars from the United States and elsewhere, who are less anchored in the scholarly ideological battles of the past, are fertilizing the field as well. Many are turning to history (in part as default from what appears an intractable present) and taking a cultural turn as they seek explanations and understanding. Good times are ahead as recently trained scholars return to review past accounts and show our weaknesses and our strengths.

Ushering in the new does not entail the total displacement of the old. The books under review here start to sketch in the shape of things to come, but continue to underscore patterns of past scholarship (some rather unfortunate). If there is anything comforting, it is the eclecticism of Cuban studies. The diversity of the field is commendable and the books discussed below reflect such multiplicity of perspectives. What has not changed is that the literature and its production continues to be deeply imprinted by the politics of the Cuban Revolution: the polarization of

revolutionary politics remain projected onto scholarly camps, although even here there seems to be a slight shift away from apologetics and towards critical engagement. Since the 1960s, the study of politics in Cuba seemed to require taking sides not only theoretically or methodologically, but also ideologically in a much narrower political sense as if scholars were at the vanguard of the revolutionary process or its opposition. A generation of U.S. scholars influenced by the revisionism of the New Left and the Civil Rights movement has had time to study Cuba. At the same time, the first wave of Cuban scholars in the United States, many of whom had left the island quite young, turned their attention to Cuban matters. Suspicion of them/us studying Cuba never ceased, not even after post-structuralism and feminism all but decapitated the rational, objective, detached observer. This dilemma of suspicion is both atypical and exceptional to Cuban studies; one does not find the same phenomenon in the case of Mexican-Americans studying Mexico or the border or Puerto Ricans studying Puerto Rico or their diaspora.

To make matters more complex, the Cuban state officialized the role of the scholars—particularly historians and social scientists—and the artist who became the anointed secular interpreters of the revolution and its archivists. After the early 1970s the intellectuals on state payrolls had to conform to the parameters set by Fidel Castro in the early 1970s of “dentro de la revolución, todo; fuera de la revolución, nada.” They were expected to become (Communist) Party “props,” not party poopers (as Mario Vargas Llosa has defined the role of Latin American scholars). Those who did not conform to the new dictum paid a heavy price, even when the limits of what was permissible were contested and changing over time.

Within this temporal, spatial, and ideational context, several epistemological presumptions developed that helped frame the paradigm of Cuban studies. First came the widely shared perception by academics, observers, policy analysts, Cuban officials, and the island’s populace of Cuban exceptionalism: somehow Cuba is and was different, not normal (in terms of following the norm), not “a case of” but an outlier. Second emerged what we can call the political imperative, or the need not only to pass judgment on the Cuban revolution but to be a participant in the process. No other country has generated in Latin American studies the passion Cuba has and the apparent need to take sides, polishing one’s credentials with the Left or the Right in the process (which has made life difficult for those of us in the middle). For many, the ultimate litmus test of a work of scholarship or of a scholar is precisely where he or she stands politically (for or against the revolution; for or against “Cuba”; for or against the *embargo*).

Third is the teleological bent, or the tendency to see the Cuban revolution as inevitable, as having been always in the cards, somehow

prescribed by (and from the times of) José Martí. From this perspective the Cuban Revolution is the logical culmination of Cuban history: no more frustrated nationalism, no more social injustice. The revolution appears as the moral outcome of decades, if not a century, of immorality (from the vantage point of some). From the vantage point of others, any teleology was betrayed by the communization of the political process that began in 1953. And, fourth, is the *tabula rasa* syndrome: a new nation with a new history was born with a clean slate after 1959. This presumption accepts at face value the claim that the revolution revolutionized all spheres of social life. In doing so, it mistakes political wishful thinking for political reality. Rupture rather than continuity, therefore, is what scholars have focused on. But revolutionary societies have plenty that is not revolutionary or revolutionized. Continuity is as powerful as change.

These four analytical presumptions have defined issues of epistemology, approaches, topic selection, and the politics of the epistemic community. The context became part of the text of Cuban studies or a supratext, that is, a set of criteria, presumptions, shared values and beliefs among the scholars that, although falling outside of the scholarly text itself and pre-textual, constituted a basis of pre-judgment of the work and the author in question. One of the cardinal points of the supratext is what I call the epistemology of geography in Cuban studies; that is, tell me where you write from and I will tell you where you stand. Are you from “*allá*” (meaning over there, the island—which is supposed to give you special academic standing) or from “*acá*.” Especially in the case of Cuban scholars abroad or Cuban-Americans being from “*acá*” renders you somehow more biased, your voice is less legitimate, and, ironically, more politicized than official Cuban scholars, who seem to speak for the Cuban people.

Politics in this field, or any other for that matter, are hardly new or unusual. More than a decade ago Enrique Baloyra wrote a review essay on Cubanology for LARR (22/1: 265–24) in which he argued that three distinct models of scholarship prevailed in Cuban studies. First, an orthodox approach attempted to make Cuba fit into the Marxist-Leninist paradigm even if the evidence could hardly be made to fit. The second was the apologia model or what he called “literal populism,” whose center of epistemological gravity was testimonial support or opposition to the Cuban revolution. The third model was ideological, but subtly so; in Baloyra’s words this model suffered from “analytical leniency,” where the case and the conclusions took precedence over the rigor of the approach. Accurate as his classification might have been, it missed a fourth model: the “normal” one, which applies to Cuba the same methods and analytical rigor common in disciplines when dealing with less seductive topics.

Even Jorge Domínguez has said that Cuba seduces. He is right. The seduction is also intellectual. While seduction can procreate scholarship, it might abort quality. Therein lies the danger of any romantic impulse toward Cuba. The romanticism with which scholars have approached Cuba has been ideological, political, moral (if selective); normalization in Cuban studies is welcome and seems to be around the corner. Although Baloyra's first three models continue to hold sway in the field, they are not dominant; on the contrary, they are losing ground to model four due to the changes outlined above. Perhaps the shift is best conceptualized as a transition from Cubanology to Cuban studies, an effort led among others by Marifeli Perez-Stable. If Cubanology carries the sign of the Cold War and of epistemological (as well as political) exceptionalism (which too often translates into analytical double standards), Cuban Studies regards Cuba in a different light: "Cuba as a case of—," or Cuba as normal. There we have a revolutionary idea!

In conjunction with the dominant models in Cuban studies comes a litany of questions posed time after time since the advent of the revolution. What were the roots of the radical social transformation? Who was the social agent of the political struggle? What were the historical (if not teleological) and structural preconditions for revolution? What role did the United States play in its radicalization? Which ideological dimensions were autochthonous? In short, what relative weight did national and international variables and material, ideational, and voluntaristic forces have? What is the nature of the political regime since then? Has it changed over time? If so, how so? What has been the relationship among leaders, state, and society? What factors explain the connection between the maximum leader and followers? What is the relative importance of personalities and institutions? What are the roles of socialist institutions? Which institutions matter most? What degree of autonomy and efficacy do they have? Do they provide the venues for authentic participation and representation of the Cuban people? Who has benefited from social change since 1959? Which dimensions of social life have been altered most dramatically since 1959? (The counterpoint question of social continuity has been largely bypassed since the revolution was seen predominantly as transforming). What explains the atypical and formidable display of Cuban internationalism and foreign policy? What weight did material and non-material factors have on the revolution's trajectory? What role has the United States and its embargo played in influencing or determining internal dynamics on the island? What have been its costs and benefits? What forces explains its resilience; the possibility of change?

As of late, other questions have come to the fore. Issues of race, gender, and age figure among the newer topics in an attempt to disaggregate

the category of Cuban people or masses. The limits of official socialization and state power have become a topic of greater import. The strength of society and its resistance, the rise of autonomous groups, including human rights organizations, and the rebirth of religion have attracted considerable attention. A cottage industry of transition studies has developed in the context of the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, the third wave of democratization throughout the world, and the expectation that Cuba would follow suit.

As some look forward, others look back. Scholars have been turning their attention to the Republican period (1902–58) to reinterpret the years before 1959 and to issues of identity on the island and in the diaspora. Others are currently working on economic relations between the United States and Cuba, challenging the conventional wisdom associated with dependency analysis. Important topics await scrutiny as they have been understudied, and as a consequence, clichés sometimes carry more weight than scholarship. These include the working of political parties in the Republic (the Ameringer book reviewed here makes an important contribution in this regard); the changes in social thought of key institutions (i.e., the Catholic Church); the reformist, if not revolutionary, origins of segments of opposition to the revolution; the history of such opposition to the regime and the human rights violations of government and opposition during the early 1960s; the continuities between pre- and post-1959; the tense coexistence between *Fidelismo*, nationalism, and Marxism-Leninism; the political beliefs and attitudes of average Cubans; and bureaucratic politics. The nature of the regime renders some of these issues, particularly the last two, extremely difficult to undertake due to a lack of transparency and information.

Many questions have not been posed in a comparative framework within the parameters of specific temporal reference. For instance, when discussing inequality in Cuba, authors seldom use a broader regional context and thus give the impression that inequality in Cuba was worse than elsewhere in the 1950s and that in and by itself fueled revolution. The regulatory nationalism of dictators such as Machado and Batista and the culture of state intervention in the economy have been in need of elaboration (something to which the book reviewed below by Robert Whitney contributes). The perception of the rebels and the population in general towards the United States, despite some recent work on the topic, needs to be explored, since the literature surmised an a priori prevalent anti-Americanism throughout the diverse groups of revolutionaries and the population at large. Other topics will continue to be problematic and perhaps never fully settled, for example, the nature of class relations. Counter-factual political history (much debated at present) could illuminate possible Cubas that never were, and why and how they would have differed from the Cuba that was and is.

In *State and Revolution in Cuba: Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920–1940*, Whitney frames political conflict (between what he labels oligarchic rule and masses), the rise of radicalism, and the changes in the state and political culture (construed in a broad and rather unorthodox fashion, p. 9) within a modified version of the Marxist paradigm. As ambitious as his project is, Whitney succeeds in part only. The two decades under scrutiny are important, marked at the beginning by traditional politics, passing through the revolution of 1933, and ending with the Constitution of 1940. Cuba was modernizing and as such political participation was changing, although radicalization was not inevitable. The decades were rich in politics, mainly Whitney argues, because the *clases populares* affected the construction of the new Cuban state. Indeed the state had to adapt to the *clases populares* even if the post-1933 state did not embrace the interests and needs of the lower classes.

Whitney's approach is comparable to Joel Migdal's state-society relations.¹ His central thesis relies on a foundational economic analysis. It is at its best when it portrays the dynamics of politics and the accommodation and resistance between the state, leaders, and society; and when it shatters simplistic and commonly held perspectives on a number of Cuban political phenomena. The treatment of Batista is a case in point. Rather than presenting the strongman as an old-style military dictator allied with the upper classes, Whitney paints Batista with the broad strokes of populism.

Less satisfying is Whitney's use of key concepts such as oligarchy and to a lesser extent *caciques* and *caudillismo*. The first is problematic and Whitney acknowledges as much. However, he does not offer a way out of the conundrum. Any definition of class, especially its operationalization in specific settings, can be unsettling and unsettled. Did Cuba have an oligarchy? Or was the upper economic echelon much more variegated, less unified, politically and economically speaking, than what the terms imply? If indeed the term oligarchy fits, would the island's politics not have been qualitatively different? If there was an oligarchy, was it as monolithic as the term implies? In his book the term oligarchy is used as a counterpoint to the modern state. How useful such a counterpoint is remains in doubt. Whether Cuba had an oligarchy, and what its ideological nature was, is at the heart of the question. Was it as conservative as the concept presumes and as the author argues? Whence, then, did the progressive dimension of Cuban politics and political culture derive? Was it only the result of the worldview of the *clases populares*? Additional work on the mindset of the upper classes in Cuba is in order; on the intellectual history of the island more is

1. Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

available in Spanish than in English. Where did their mental maps of elites come from? How did those maps portray social change, the common good, inequity and equity, the role of the state, among others dimensions of politics?

A similar argument, but less significant, can be made regarding Whitney's usage of the terms *caciques* and *caudillos*. In the first place, the difference between the *caciques* and *caudillos* is not adequately explained. When such terms are used their definitions need to be specified; if their definitions are stretched the terms might lose their utility (7). Their premodern character is not self-evident since *caudillos* and *caciques* acted in entrepreneurial ways, which are signs of the modern. Was personalism the only indication of their pre-modernity? Are we not falling into the typical duality between tradition and modernity of the dual society literature?

On other matters, Whitney is much more convincing and original. He intelligently addresses the role of competing national elites in the United States as well as the unintended consequences of U.S. interventions in local politics. The recognition of the involvement of a host of social actors whose aims did not always coincide with the interests of the U.S. government or of the sugar sector is intelligent and illuminating, and it is here that Whitney breaks new ground. In the final analysis, though, Whitney accepts the blanket notion that export capitalism was imposed on Cuba (Who was doing the imposing? What were the alternatives? Did not post-1933 Cuban elites rearticulate the economy within it?) and that fact alone explains the limitations of Cuban economic development. One might argue, though, that the limits were imposed by U.S. tariffs rather than the model per se, which points to the possibility of the model's (and the Cuban economy's) competitiveness.

Charles Ameringer's *The Cuban Democratic Experience: The Auténtico Years, 1944–1952* is emblematic of the long overdue review of aspects of republican politics, particularly the years of electoral regularity and competitive parties prior to the 1952 coup. The story of the failure of democracy due to endemic corruption, gangsterism, lackluster leadership, U.S. meddling, and radicalization is well known in general terms. What has been missing are in-depth studies of specific dimensions of the politics of the period that do justice to the efforts, achievements, and missteps of democratic politics and to the complexities of U.S.-Cuban relations (instead of the monochromatic gloss with which it is usually covered). The neglect of the Auténtico Party was a glaring omission in the historiography, and Ameringer helps to correct it and competently so. The big lessons of this book—that Cuba had a working democracy, with strengths as well as weaknesses—is a fundamental one that has too easily been forgotten. In this regard alone, Ameringer makes a noteworthy contribution.

Ameringer's book is well pitched. It challenges standing knowledge in the literature, such as the classic representation of the *Auténticos* as puppets of Washington. In Ameringer's convincing account the party is nationalist and its anti-Communist orientation resonated with the majority of the Cuban population (48–9). Ameringer does not become apologetic though. While he does not condone or dismiss the excesses of various administrations (for instance, civil rights abuses), he points out that different branches of government (and specific party leaders) endorsed the rule of law and the rights of opponents (even Communists). The picture that emerges, therefore, is one of a Cuba not unlike other countries, with the typical limitations of nations forging democratic practice, neither as unblemished nor horrifying as others have painted it, and as far from perfect as from morally repulsive. While corruption was endemic, the fight against it was the single most important rallying point for the citizens.

The book highlights several key aspects of Cuban politics during the republic. The most revealing is its progressive character in terms of ideology, both national and international. Such reformist proclivity was evidenced in domestic legislation and in regional law. First, the Cuban delegation spearheaded the promotion of a legal norm at the Organization of American States (OAS), which proposed that democracy should be recognized as the appropriate form of government in the region (something that took four decades to be encoded in the statutes of the organization). And two, the ambivalence vis à vis the United States during the 1940s, and echo of principles of the revolution of 1933, were not abandoned by the *Auténticos* (56).

The culture and institutions of violence existed not only within the state but outside of its control (i.e., gangsterism) as well. The state was hard-pressed to reign in the sponsors of *pistolero*. In this and in other ways, though, Cuba was hardly exceptional. The island's politics fit into a larger regional pattern and served as a basis to connect the past with the revolutionary period; the continuities before and after 1959 are easily gleaned from the text (in terms of structural constraints, social problems, leadership, and political culture). Ameringer's conclusion is not only warranted but representative as well of the balance the book achieves. It captures the tension between the positive and negative in the *Auténtico* years: "The *Auténticos* failed the Cuban people miserably, but they gave Cuba a period of freedom it had not experienced before, or up to now, since" (185). This balance is not usual and Ameringer must be commended for sustaining it.

It is the bountifulness of archival sources that makes *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* by Piero Gleijeses a masterpiece. The rich diversity of material (extensive work in Cuban archives, particularly) is matched by sophisticated analysis and stylistic elegance.

More than an extensive account of Cuba's interest and actions in Africa, this book is a canvas of the revolution, its moral imperative, its leaders, and its not infrequent tragicomic episodes. The view of history that emerges from these pages is complex, one in which human agents and their mind-sets operate in a world of structural constraints imposed by the Cold War, but in the final analysis, it is a world of their making.

One of the central questions of Gleijeses' book is that of Cuban agency. For example, was Cuba a proxy of the Soviet Union? For sure the question is not an original one; volumes have been written on it, some of them of excellent quality. On this issue the author reinforces the existing consensus; that is, Cuba had interests of its own in Africa, initiated significant actions in the continent (for instance in the case of Algeria), and convinced the Soviets to follow suit. Here the proverbial tail wagged the proverbial dog.

Glejeses underscores that complex relationship between the USSR and Cuba and he does it with greater attention to empirical details than anyone else before him. One of the aspects that the author teases out of the Cuban way of operating on the global stage is the idealistic impetus (which, although the author does not elaborate on this, can be traced back to the republic and to the national revolution). What makes *Conflicting Missions* unique compared to other studies of Cuban involvement in Africa is that it is peopled, it is political history with the characters brought back in. The narrative could serve as the basis of a screenplay, for Gleijeses places a number of individuals in some of the most surprising (even to themselves) comic positions and places: Che Guevara in disguise, or Ulises Estrada's objections to being sent to Africa ("I don't know anything about Africa," he objects, p. 99). Revolutions in the 1960s were made this way, with small groups of friends doing the most unlikely things, and things did not always go as planned. The narrative is one of almost unimaginable magic realism, in which chance, luck, mishaps, and the unexpected make regular appearances. There is no teleology here, thankfully, as teleology is one of the plagues of Cuban political history regardless of ideological preference. Accounts in which history seems to unfold in a linear fashion, orchestrated by whatever force one gives agency (social classes, ideas, institutions, individuals), do not do justice to the everyday realities of inefficiency, delays, and surprises of life. Gleijeses fills in the picture where it has been left blank by other scholars, who in the past did not have the access to the sources he has had. The same nuanced perspective is brought to bear on the politics of the United States vis à vis Africa: the players come to life and with them tensions and competing visions.

Neither apologist or unabashed critic, Gleijeses's easy to read (despite its length) and engaging book does not lack a point of view. *Conflicting Missions* offers what Miguel de Unamuno called *intra-historia* by

presenting the roles and personalities of individuals within the structural architecture of global politics. The trade-offs that Cuba had to make and the limits of U.S. power are factored in concurrently with the minute details of policy and personalities.

One of the book's many significant contributions is in the area of foreign policy. Gleijeses brings back human agency (in terms of individuals and their networks) to a field that has been largely disembodied. Little has been written on decision making in Cuban foreign policy and Gleijeses indirectly fills that void as he focuses on the formulation of decisions and their implementation by the men behind the scenes, including, among others, Fidel Castro. The decentering of Fidel is indeed useful and welcome.

On the contrary, in *Castro and the Cuban Revolution*, Thomas M. Leonard follows the well-established tradition of placing Fidel Castro at the center of Cuban politics. The book is an introductory text covering the background to the revolution and its course since 1959 to the late 1990s. In a mere eighty-five pages, Leonard provides a surprisingly useful synopsis of Cuban political history touching on the key points, leaders, and dynamics, internal and external. While synthetic ability and minimalism can be a virtue, the book is better suited for a general audience and advanced high schoolers than university students or experts in the field.

The book's brevity leads to serious omissions. For example, the entire post-1933 period (until 1959) is brushed aside in a matter of paragraphs (82–83). Instead of revisiting the Republic like Ameringer, Leonard hardens stereotypes. Leonard, like Whitney, also resorts to concepts whose utility and descriptive value are in doubt. In referring to Cuban elites in the first half of the twentieth century, Leonard labels them "creoles," and he uses the same term to describe the first wave of Cubans to seek exile after 1959. The historicity of that term seems anachronistic in this context (84). When Leonard discusses the history of emigration from Cuba before the revolution, he neglects to mention the Cuban working class (and blacks among them) who settled in Key West, Tampa, and New York (69). Nevertheless, several appendices and an engaging photo essay contribute to the quality and value of the book (including an annotated bibliography, biographies, and selected primary documents).

What is perhaps most striking is that Leonard holds no punches when he characterizes the regime as totalitarian, a label that has been surprisingly absent in the vast majority of works on Cuban politics. Leonard, a historian by training, might be signaling a trend in the discipline, but it is too soon to tell. His position is diametrically contrary to that of Max Azicri's *Cuba Today and Tomorrow: Reinventing Socialism*.

Azicri's book offers an overarching, and yet quite detailed, view of the challenges confronted by and confronting Cuban socialism since the late 1980s. If Leonard is a minimalist in his approach, Azicri is a maximalist in terms of empiricism, unfortunately at the expense of analysis. The book's jacket presents Azicri as an "objective observer," seemingly challenging all we have learned by now of poststructuralist epistemology on the inexistence of the detached observer. From this point on, one is forewarned that whatever strengths this book will have (and it has several), they are not in the realm of the conceptual or theoretical. The book's greatest achievement is in terms of breadth of coverage, thematically and chronologically.

The book's argument, appearing in the book's subtitle, is that Havana has over time reinvented socialism, and that reinvention, with its tendency toward flexibility and accommodation, will tend to prevail well into the future. Azicri offers a comprehensive view of the government's accommodation to changed international circumstances, economic and ideologic. For anyone interested in the policy choices of the past decades and their official justification (which at times entailed a reversal of positions that had been corrected previously) this is a must read. The descriptive dimension of the course of Cuban socialist politics and economics is another useful aspect of the book. For example, the reform of the 1976 constitution is outlined thoroughly (112–13).

The analytical dimension is not as competent. The political accommodation, the rise of civil society, the cost in terms of loss of credibility, the spread of informality, and the real tensions between the state and the society are less studied and less convincing. Regarding the ideological revision and redefinition, Azicri points to debates in the Cuban journal *Tema* and argues that these would not have been possible before. He forgets *Pensamiento Crítico* in the early 1960s. The purge of the Centro de Estudios sobre América (CEA) is brushed aside (210–11) with no substantive discussion. At stake is the notion of what is the character of the political and economic regime in Cuba, and whether it enjoys consent, support, and legitimacy. Azicri does not grapple with the thorny issues of increasing inequality, the fraying of the state welfare system, the enclave in the economy for the military (which some observers have characterized as a *piñata* before the end of the party), and the widespread notion of "*sociolismo*" (cronyism).

Likewise, Azicri does not address the challenges of participation, legitimacy, distribution, efficacy, or the creation of symbols, rituals, and myths that are compelling to the population, especially those confronting adverse conditions and those whose social subjects have changed dramatically since its inception (which is the case in Cuba). Azicri does not deal with the typical tasks that all states must perform: of penetrating

society, appropriating resources, regulating social relations and the limits that the Cuban state has encountered and is likely to encounter in the future. In short, there is no master framework through which to analyze changes and continuities in governance. The reader is left without an explanation of how regimes reproduce themselves or how they change. For Azicri, it seems that the international setting determines the national, but in an ironic twist the national (i.e., governments) can chart their own course despite adverse conditions with minimal repercussions.

In the end, what appears to be a radical reading of Cuba's political future is inherently conservative: continuity rather than change. In the final analysis, one is left to wonder about the reinvention of socialism, if its material bases are almost nonexistent. In terms of the redefinition of the political system, incorporating contending perspectives and latent pluralism within a one-party system is unlikely, given the foreclosing of such options after the last two-party congresses. The reader does not get a clear picture of what the new, reinvented socialism is like.

Azicri's discussion at times becomes dichotomous, rather than nuanced, and based on partial, rather than, comprehensive readings. Regarding the Catholic Church, Azicri writes that it "did not hesitate to demonstrate its opposition to the island's communist transformation" (251). Indeed the Church opposed communization, but it also supported the opposition to Batista, was internally divided, and at times backed the new government.

The presentation of contending perspectives is clear in Susan Kaufman Purcell and David Rothkopf's edited anthology *Cuba: The Contours of Change* and is one of the book's most admirable qualities. Based on an Americas Society working group on Cuba, the volume addresses the island's current economic and political situation, the prospects for democracy and the market, and options for U.S. policy. The authors included represent a wide range of opinions and offer alternative policy prescriptions for Cuba's future. Proponents of the embargo, whose voices are all but absent in the academy (i.e., Jaime Suchlicki and Kaufman Purcell, among others), share the pages with opponents of current U.S. policy (including Andrew Zimbalist and Manuel Pastor, among others). As William LeoGrande writes in the introduction,

Not surprisingly, the authors' views often differ, but each of them offers a well-reasoned, plausible vision of things to come. That they disagree so sharply on some points is testimony to the difficulty social scientists have in making predictions about Cuba, where so much depends on the *líder máximo*. (1)

LeoGrande also provides a thoughtful conclusion in which he discusses the challenges for the United States as it attempts to achieve peaceful change on the island (a new version of an old romance?).

The chapters on the economy by Zimbalist (who remarks on how Cuba has become a class-based society) and by Pastor (who assesses the prospects for a market economy) are excellent. In fact, the entire volume deserves to be read, for it presents some unconventional thinking that should spark debate. For example, Rothkopf argues that the United States would be well served by having no policy at all towards Cuba, rather than the policy it currently has. Again, the chapters by Kaufman Purcell and Suchlicki epitomize the arguments of those who support embargo. Suchlicki analyzes the national and international factors that point to the hardening and retrenchment of the Cuban government. His argument is not without merit, but he does not consider the social changes at the grassroots and the loss of the state vis à vis the society. The irony should not be lost that both Azicri and Suchlicki, coming from opposite point of the political spectrum, agree on the strength of the Cuban state to survive. What that survival means, though, is interpreted differently.

The study of Cuban politics has not been divorced from politics or from romance. While all scholarship is political in a broad sense, Cuban studies has been marked by a particular brand of politicization and polarization that is deeply romantic. Altered conditions on the island and throughout the world, in tandem with new social science perspectives and access to archives, have produced a wave of scholarship that addresses new topics and challenges, standard assumptions, and hegemonic interpretations. The books under review reflect dynamics of continuity and change and effervescence and diversity that are hallmarks of a field in search of a paradigm. Exciting times lay ahead as younger scholars (such as Javier Corrales and Mary Speck) advance fresh arguments, as others who have made important contributions in Spanish get their works translated into English, thus reaching the wider audience they so deserve (for example, Rojas and Bobes), and as Cuban political scientists return to the study of Cuba. Of course, the scholarship will continue to be political, but one would hope less partisan and less romantically so.