

HISTORY OR TELEOLOGY? Recent Scholarship on Cuba before 1959

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- AMERICAN SUGAR KINGDOM: THE PLANTATION ECONOMY OF THE SPANISH CARIBBEAN, 1898–1934.* By César Ayala. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. Pp. 321. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- CUBAN SUGAR IN THE AGE OF MASS PRODUCTION: TECHNOLOGY AND THE ECONOMICS OF THE SUGAR CENTRAL, 1899–1929.* By Alan Dye. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998. Pp. 343. \$55.00 cloth.)
- ENTRE LA IDEOLOGIA Y LA COMPASION: GUERRA Y PAZ EN CUBA, 1895–1903.* By Manuel P. Maza Miguel, S.J. (Santo Domingo: Instituto Pedro Francisco Bono, 1997. Pp. 599. \$25.00 paper.)
- INSURGENT CUBA: RACE, NATION, AND REVOLUTION, 1868–1898.* By Ada Ferrer. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. Pp. 273. \$55.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- INSURRECTION AND REVOLUTION: ARMED STRUGGLE IN CUBA, 1952–1959.* By Gladys Marel García-Pérez. Translated by Juan Ortega. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998. Pp. 137. \$40.00 cloth.)
- ON BECOMING CUBAN: IDENTITY, NATIONALITY, AND CULTURE.* By Louis A. Pérez Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. Pp. 579. \$39.95 cloth.)
- PLEASURE ISLAND: TOURISM AND TEMPTATION IN CUBA.* By Rosalie Schwartz. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. Pp. 239. \$45.00 cloth, \$15.00 paper.)
- PROLOGUE TO REVOLUTION: CUBA, 1898–1958.* By Jorge Ibarra. Translated by Marjorie Moore. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998. Pp. 229. \$48.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- SUGAR AND RAILROADS: A CUBAN HISTORY, 1837–1959.* By Oscar Zanetti and Alejandro García. Translated by Franklin Knight and Mary Todd. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Pp. 486. \$59.95 cloth, \$29.95 paper.)
- THE CRISIS OF 1898: COLONIAL REDISTRIBUTION AND NATIONALIST MOBILIZATION.* Edited by Angel Smith and Emma Dávila-Cox. (New York: St. Martin's, 1999. Pp. 190. \$65.00 cloth.)

Cuban history is typically divided into three broad phases: the Spanish colonial period (1509 to 1898), the Cuban Republic (1901 to 1958), and the socialist revolutionary phase (1959 to the present). In the literature on the republican period, the word *republic* is typically preceded by adjectives such as *neocolonial*, *dependent*, *semisovereign*, *semi-independent*, and *Plattist*. Whichever adjective is used, the meaning is essentially the same: after the U.S. occupation of Cuba in 1898, the sovereignty of the Cuban Republic was sharply restricted by the shifting policies and priorities of successive administrations in Washington.

In this review essay, it will become apparent why the word *republic* should not stand alone. It will also be clear that scholars are only beginning to understand the complexity of Cuban political economy before the 1959 revolution. However historians label the republican system, we must take care not to turn complex and multilayered experiences into one-dimensional, predictable, and lifeless events. Much of the writing on Cuban history on the period between 1868 and 1959 has been framed within the confines of the supposed “long revolution.” This long revolution allegedly began with the independence wars against Spain in 1868–1878 and 1895–1898, continued through the “frustrated revolution” of 1933, and “culminated” in the revolution of 1959.¹ The existing literature on twentieth-century Cuba tends to be so focused on explaining why a revolution occurred in 1959 that many remarkable aspects of Cuba’s history are often glossed over with little or no explanation about how and why Cuban political economy evolved as it did. Scholars hold a wide range of opinions about the relative importance of each revolutionary upheaval, but there is a general tendency to view Cuban history as a series of political and economic processes that would eventually (perhaps inevitably?) lead to Fidel Castro’s victory. The ten books reviewed here will help refocus attention on persons and events that deserve to be remembered and studied on their own merit and not simply in light of what happened in the 1950s and beyond.

1. For examples, see Robin Blackburn, “Prologue to the Cuban Revolution,” *New Left Review* 12 (Oct. 1963):52–91; Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968); Denis B. Wood, “The Long Revolution: Class Relations and Political Conflict in Cuba, 1868–1968,” *Science and Society* 34, no. 1 (Spring 1970):1–41; Luis E. Aguilar, *Cuba, 1933: Prologue to Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972); Ramón Bonachea and Marta San Martín, *The Cuban Insurrection, 1952–1959* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1974); Jaime Suchlicki, *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974); Instituto de la Historia de Cuba y del Movimiento Comunista y de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, *Historia del movimiento obrero cubano*, 2 vols. (Havana: Editoria Política, 1985); and Sheldon Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

The Contested Meanings of Cuban Independence

The 1895–1898 era proved to be such a fundamental turning point in Cuban history that historians have had no choice but to come to terms with its meaning and legacy. In many ways, a great deal is now known about the events leading up to and surrounding 1898, but scholars are timid about building on what we know. Historians know, for example that Cuba's two wars for independence were also social revolutions. Spanish colonial domination was challenged, and the political, economic, and cultural lives of Cubans were transformed in the course of the struggle for independence. By the time of the Grito de Baire on 24 February 1895, the social structure of Cuba and the political consciousness of its people had changed from what they were in 1868. In the early 1890s, the option of reforming the imperial system in Cuba had disappeared. Liberals had failed to deliver on their promises for a new and more equitable relationship between Spain and Cuba. The choice for Cubans was annexation to the United States or independence. Historians also know that despite the long and violent independence struggles, when U.S. troops occupied their island in 1898, many Cuban political leaders readily accepted U.S. hegemony. Many members of Cuba's upper classes had reluctantly joined the independence movement and had always been skeptical about the ability of Cubans to be a sovereign people. For most of the nineteenth century, advocates of independence took third place behind those who supported some form of autonomy within the Spanish orbit or outright annexation to the United States.

Yet while historians can agree on these general narrative points, we still need to know a great deal more about the inner workings of the Cuban independence movement. Ada Ferrer's *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* makes a significant contribution in this direction. Her study combines in-depth archival research in Cuba with a judicious use of more recent writing on race, nationalism, and postcolonial theory. Ferrer is particularly successful at showing how notions of freedom, citizenship, race, labor, and *cubanidad* were all contested social constructs that were forged in the context of Cuba's two wars for independence. While such a contention might seem obvious to many readers, the historiography of the Cuban struggle for independence has been so dominated by what Ferrer calls "imperial silences and nationalist pretensions" that the regional, racial, and class divisions within the independence movement have been either ignored or treated as aberrations (p. 7). The imperial silences come into the picture on realizing how many Americanist writers who discuss Cuban independence ignore, or more often do not even perceive, the complex history of the insurgency. The Cuban struggle for independence has been pushed aside in favor of the so-called Spanish-American War. U.S. strategic concerns and internal debates are what have mattered, and Cuban participation was at best a troublesome sideshow. While Americanist historians have ignored

the revolutionary implications of Cuban independence, on the Cuban side, nationalist mythology has often transformed the two independence wars into the opening shots of Cuba's long revolution. After the revolutionary victory of 1959, especially after 1975, Cuban academic institutions were concerned with institutionalizing the socialist revolution. This process meant that in practical terms, nearly all history became revolutionary history—and sometimes but not always Marxist-Leninist history, which is not always the same thing. Martí, Fidel, Lenin, Che, Maceo, Camilo, Marx, Gómez, and Guiteras all became part of the same hagiographical pantheon of revolutionary heroes. The events of 1868–1878, 1895–1898, 1933, and 1952–1959 have been viewed as the same blurred revolution.

Ferrer's *Insurgent Cuba* directly challenges both versions of Cuba's independence struggles and provides much sharper insight into the truly revolutionary (and counterrevolutionary) implications of what happened between 1868 and 1898. Ferrer shows how in both wars for independence, the simultaneous struggle against racism and colonialism fueled an insurgent energy that threatened both Cuban creole domination and Spanish colonial rule. This revolutionary threat from the poorest sectors of the Cuban population also alarmed U.S. leaders, and one objective of U.S. intervention in 1898 was to block this revolution. Ferrer reveals just how revolutionary Cuba's independence wars were. A multiracial fighting force, integrated at all ranks, carried forward a message of racial equality, land and work for the poor, and total independence for Cuba. Ferrer is especially successful at highlighting the political and racial tensions operating within the independence forces. During both wars, members of the creole elite came to support independence but did not want to surrender their class or social power. As the ranks of the Cuban armies in both wars filled with former slaves and poor peasants, the social and political implications of independence became frightening for the upper classes. By the 1890s, a revolutionary cross-racial alliance was generating images of a future republic where mulatto, black, and white Cubans were equal citizens in a free and democratic country. A powerful rhetoric of racial equality called for no whites, blacks, or mulattos—only Cubans.

Because a Cuban victory against Spain seemed imminent, the issue of which social groups were legitimately Cuban was replaced by the problem of who was best qualified to lead a future republic. It was one thing to be Cuban, but quite another matter to be "a cultured Cuban" capable of representing the country. Having "culture" now became a prerequisite for political leadership. Military skill and popularity among the masses had its place, but the authority to rule must be founded on "civilized," "modern," and (by implication) white standards (pp. 187–92). These disagreements were fueled in large measure by the internal class and racial divisions among the anti-Spanish sectors as well as by the positivist and social Darwinist thinking so common in late-nineteenth-century Latin American and U.S. political

and intellectual circles. For many members of the creole elite, the United States was the epitome of modernity, progress, and freedom, while Spain was decadent, backward, and authoritarian. Cuba was literally caught in the middle and had to choose which historical direction the country would take. Typically, the Cuban political class expressed the hope that one day Cuba would be independent, but this would take time. Not all Cubans were “morally,” “psychologically,” and “intellectually” ready to assume nationhood. The Cuban population was too racially mixed, and years of war had made Cubans unruly, violent, and irresponsible. Cuban “high culture” was not sufficiently developed to lead the nation out of this “uncivilized condition.” Thus like all revolutions, “the seeds of the revolution’s undoing were present in the revolution itself” (p. 197). But it would not be left to Cubans themselves to sort out these issues. There was nothing inevitable about the revolution’s undoing, and the U.S. invasion of 1898 guaranteed that the most conservative elements of the Cuban political class would dominate the semi-sovereign republic.

Ada Ferrer’s book enhances understanding of the inner workings and contradictions of the Cuban independence movement, while Manuel Maza Miguel’s *Entre la ideología y la compasión: Guerra y paz en Cuba, 1895–1903* does the same thing for those on the opposite end of the social and political spectrum. A Cuban Jesuit priest based in the Dominican Republic, Maza has written the first systematic study of why the Catholic Church opposed the Cuban independence movement. The existing writing on this subject has usually dismissed the Catholic Church in Cuba as a mere arm of the colonial state, with no other option but to resist independence. Maza does not challenge the obvious fact that the church opposed Cuban independence. The church hierarchy viewed the rebellions as a racial and Masonic conspiracy against the established order. But Maza does challenge the idea that the Catholic Church in Cuba was a passive tool of the colonial state. He highlights how it was a product more of the convulsive church-state conflicts in Spain and Europe than of Cuban conditions. For most of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in Rome and Europe had been on the defensive against secularizing liberal policies. In Spain liberals of various shades took advantage of the Carlist Wars of the 1830s and the 1870s to weaken church power. Spanish Catholics fought on both sides of these wars, and church wealth and political credibility were sacrificed in the ebb and flow of civil war. The crisis of church-state relations peaked with the Spanish “Glorious Revolution” in September 1868. One month later, Cuba’s first war for independence began. Maza convincingly shows how the Spanish Catholic Church could not understand events in Cuba because its leaders were too absorbed in the crisis of church legitimacy in Spain. The church was under siege on too many fronts. Church leaders in Cuba were suspicious of anticlerical officials such as General Valeriano Weyler because while they might be hard-nosed colonialists, they were perfectly willing to watch the church lose

secular power and wealth in order to save the empire. These contradictions compelled the ecclesiastic sector to be more pro-Spanish than the Spanish state (p. 460).

In *Entre la ideología y la compasión*, Maza explains why the Catholic Church lost touch with Cuban reality. In contrast to the situation in the Philippines, popular Catholicism was not a significant component in the struggle for independence in Cuba (p. 459). The church failed to evangelize the Afro-Cuban population, and most creole nationalists were anticlerical. As shown by Ferrer, the politically conservative and racist character of elite Cuban society was rising by 1898, and many upper- and middle-class Cubans identified with the Hispanic Catholic Church as a barrier against “uncultured” black and poor Cubans (p. 466). Maza illustrates the church’s position in Cuba by focusing on the ideas and activities of Manuel Santander y Frutos, the last colonial bishop of Havana, and Francisco Sáenz de Urturi y Crespo, the last colonial bishop of Santiago. These profiles demonstrate how the church hierarchy was a prisoner of the dogmatic ultramontane ideology of the late nineteenth century. Maza suggests that both bishops might have been more humanitarian (compassionate), although not less colonialist, if circumstances had given them more room to maneuver. Maza’s use of Vatican archives allows readers to observe how both bishops struggled to be good Catholics within the limitations of the times. Their efforts to be compassionate and to defend the Cuban people against the horrors of war, however, were overshadowed by ideology—a lesson, Maza warns, that should not be forgotten.

One theme common to both Ferrer’s and Maza’s books is how popular mobilization “from below” was changing the meanings of freedom, empire, political participation, and national identity, whether for poor Cubans or for upper-class Catholics. A work that helps place the entire historical period in a larger context is the collection of essays edited by Angel Smith and Emma Dávila-Cox. *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization* examines the complex interplay of economic development, colonialist expansion, racist policies and ideologies, nationalism, and mass mobilization in Cuba, Spain, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and the United States. Each of the chapters on these countries was written by a recognized historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Smith and Dávila-Cox provide an excellent introductory essay entitled “1898 and the Making of the Twentieth-Century World Order.”

It is common to view the War of 1898 as the beginning of the American Twentieth Century, and while this characterization is true in many ways, 1898 also inaugurated modern anticolonialist and working-class movements (p. 15). The Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Filipino struggles for national independence can therefore be perceived as part of the same wave of revolutions that included the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the Chinese Revolution of 1911, India’s struggle against British rule, and the Mexican

Revolution of 1910–1920. This point is clearly illustrated by Alistair Hennessy's sweeping yet insightful essay on the origins and development of Cuba's revolt against Spain. In contrast to the Cuban case, Dávila-Cox argues in her essay that Puerto Ricans did not have a strong sense of national identity at that time. This lack of nationalist consciousness resulted from the small island's economic history in the nineteenth century. Puerto Ricans generally welcomed U.S. troops, and the United States had shown little interest in acquiring the territory. The significance of 1898 for Puerto Rico, then, is that nationalism was the result of the invasion, unlike in Cuba, where popular nationalism was a major factor that provoked U.S. intervention. In Spain the crisis of 1898 provoked an existential crisis among the country's intellectual elite and initiated a crisis in the oligarchic state that would fuel regionalist nationalism in Spain and sharpen the ideological weapons of both the Spanish political Right and Left. In this sense, the crisis of 1898 intensified existing social and economic tensions that would lead eventually to the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939 (see Chapters 7 and 8). An essay on the Filipino independence struggle would have complimented nicely the pieces on Cuba and Puerto Rico. María Dolores Elizalde's fine contribution on the strategic location of the Philippines makes the reader crave information on that country's long and complex resistance to U.S. occupation after 1898.

At another level, the crisis of 1898 witnessed the emergence of the United States as the undisputed leader of capitalist modernity, at least in the Western Hemisphere. John Offner's essay on 1898 and U.S. politics, John Oldfield's contribution on the sinking of the *Maine* and U.S. sectional reconciliation, and Joseph Smith's piece on U.S. military strategy toward Cuba all show how this new and aggressive modernity combined economic power, racism, and moralistic imperialism into a unique brand of U.S. populist nationalism. Without ignoring economic factors, these authors echo much of the recent work on the cultural aspects of U.S. imperialism, both inside and outside the United States. The year 1898 was a year of crisis for Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and it was also the year when U.S. democracy, liberty, and justice became the cornerstones of U.S. expansionism (Oldfield, p. 59). The United States would not permit independence and democracy to be used against U.S. strategic interests. The unruly peoples to the south (including the U.S. South) could not be relied on to establish democracy on their own.

Cuban Political Economy and Revolution, 1898–1959

The overall trend in Cuban historiography has been to emphasize how foreign capitalists took advantage of the war of 1898 to buy up cheap and damaged sugar mills, expel peasants from their land, and impose the values of capitalist profiteering and corruption on Cuban society. From 1880 to 1930, Cubans witnessed the gradual abolition of slavery, the destruction

of thousands of peasant communities and households due to the expansion of sugar *latifundios*, the evolution of *colono* sugar production, and the importation of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers. These changes in the life and labor of rural Cubans meant that most of them were neither peasants nor proletarians but an unstable combination of the two. Especially after the destructive independence wars, many poor and displaced workers needed some measure of security. The sugar companies that invested in Cuba after 1898 took advantage of this vulnerable population by paying low wages, imposing long working hours, and denying workers the right to organize unions.

An excellent illustration of how Cuban entrepreneurs were more than ready to take their own initiative for capitalist development can be found in *Sugar and Railroads: A Cuban History, 1837–1959*, by Oscar Zanetti and Alejandro García, two of Cuba's most respected economic historians. This excellent English translation by Franklin Knight and Mary Todd of the prize-winning *Caminos para el azúcar* (1987) will provide the English reading public with a taste of Cuban historical writing at its best. Zanetti and García make a threefold contribution. First, they have written the definitive history of Cuban railway development prior to the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Second, *Sugar and Railroads* covers much more than Cuba's railways, including a considerable amount about the broader social and economic characteristics of Cuban capitalism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For this reason, the book is not just an indispensable work for railway buffs and historians of Cuba but will also be of immense value for anyone researching the history of development and underdevelopment in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Cuba was the first Latin American country to build a railroad (in 1837) and the seventh country in the world to have railway transport. As one would expect, the development of railway construction was dominated by the interests and priorities of the sugar oligarchy. Railways were introduced to Cuba at the behest of sugarcane planters who wanted to improve transport of sugar to the world market. Consequently, rail transport did not open internal markets nor did it play a significant role in transporting human beings. Sugar-related products accounted for 80 percent of all railway freight. Most rail tracks were constructed in a north-south direction to link the interior sugar-producing regions to the nearest ports. Given the seasonal nature of sugar production, rolling stock was used only during the producing season (roughly January to June) and remained idle for the rest of the year. The economic benefits that accompanied the rise of railways in Europe and the United States were clearly not repeated in Cuba.

These observations are not surprising. Typically, railway expansion in the third world went hand in hand with the economics of export capitalism. What is noteworthy about *Sugar and Railroads* is that unlike most of the historiography, Zanetti and García highlight the role of native entrepre-

neers as those who initiated railroad construction. To be sure, the financial and technical backing for railway development came mostly from foreign (British, Spanish, Canadian, and U.S.) capitalists. But the authors do a wonderful job of showing how some sectors of the sugar oligarchy played leading roles in the railway companies from the beginning. Sugar planters who backed railway construction were not a passive and unimaginative lot. They wanted modern communications to facilitate economic development and were more than willing to invest part of their considerable profits in what could be a risky business. Before 1880, three-quarters of the railways were owned and controlled by Cuban business owners. *Sugar and Railroads* provides fascinating details about the early formation of joint-stock companies, how the financing was arranged and who provided it, how labor was mobilized and deployed, and how the inter-elite conflicts and competition among twenty-one railway companies played out. In this sense, Cuban railroads accelerated the pace of capitalist organization and relations of production throughout the island. The book also supplies information about railway workers, their working conditions, and the unions they organized.

After the war of 1895–1898, Cuban railway development entered a new phase. U.S. capitalists, adventurers, land speculators, sugar companies, and railway entrepreneurs flooded the island. Railways quickly opened up the eastern half of the island to large-scale sugar production. Equally significant, the nature of sugar production was changing. Since the 1880s, the agricultural and industrial aspects of the production processes were increasingly becoming separate concerns, with large milling companies dominating sugar growers.² This trend intensified after 1898. By the second decade of the twentieth century, exclusive mill-company railways competed with publicly registered railways and would eventually undermine the viability of many of the older Cuban-owned companies. Traditional personalistic ways of doing business gave way to more depersonalized forms of modern corporate organization. Landed interests increasingly withdrew from the railway business. Sugar growers large and small came to depend on mill-operated railways and had no choice but to pay the rates demanded by the private railroads. Cuban railway capitalists demanded that the state protect their interests, which it did in a rather halfhearted way. This story will be familiar to many readers. What makes *Sugar and Railroads* stand out is that it avoids a one-dimensional and sterile narrative of capitalist exploitation and economic underdevelopment. Zanetti and García convey the complex social and political realities involved in railway development in Cuba. Readers get a feel for the persons involved, whether planters, financiers, engineers, politicians, or workers.

The impulse for modernization was clearly not the preserve of for-

2. For an excellent analysis of this period, see Fe Iglesias García, *Del ingenio al central* (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998).

eigners. The Cuban sugar planters and millers had long been receptive to new technical innovations and new forms of business organization. Two books that make this point abundantly clear are Alan Dye's *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production* and César Ayala's *American Sugar Kingdom*, even though the authors disagree as to how and why the Cuban sugar industry developed as it did.

Dye's *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production: Technology and the Economics of the Sugar Central, 1899–1929* sets out to counter the prevailing historiography that views the development of a highly mechanized and organizationally sophisticated sugar industry as something imposed by foreign imperialists. Ever since the publication of Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez's *Azúcar y abolición en las Antillas* in the late 1920s, most writing on Cuban sugar has highlighted U.S. political and economic power as the single most important factor accounting for the loss of Cuban control over the sugar industry and for the imposition of modern forms of mass production and technical improvements. Dye argues to the contrary, "large-scale production, which previously has been seen as a political outcome of large private economic entities, is understood, rather, to be an outcome of the peculiar technical characteristics of sugar manufacture. . . . The structure of the sugar industry that emerged in early-twentieth-century Cuba was driven largely by technical factors related to the optimal procedures for grinding cane" (p. 105). Without denying that ties with the United States were important, Dye views the changes in the organization of the Cuban sugar economy as part of the larger pattern of mass-production techniques, economies of scale, and the growing power of finance capital all emerging in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century business world. The nature of production and prices were determined far more by worldwide market forces and competition from other sugar-producing regions than by unique Cuban-U.S. relations. As a consequence, changes in mill size, business structures, and the relation between millers and sugar growers (colonos) were driven by the internal economic logic and technical demands of a modernizing mass-production sugar industry rather than by politically motivated foreign capital. Dye acknowledges that the result of this process was the "expropriation of an important nationalist class—the colonos." But this outcome resulted less from "imperialism" than from "a solution to a real problem of firm organization that needed to be resolved if substantial investments in modern milling equipment were to be made" (p. 252).

Dye's methodology falls squarely within the tradition of the New Economic History, which emphasizes quantitative techniques based on neo-classical economic theory. This approach allows the reader to focus on the actual structure of the sugar industry and how sugar production was organized. *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production* makes a valuable contribution in showing how the transition took place from small-scale proprietorships to modern hierarchical corporate structures. As in Cuban railway

development, Cuban capitalists could either become participants in economic modernization or fall victim to it, but the evidence simply does not support the idea that Cuban entrepreneurs were all cowed by U.S. economic power.

Space does not permit discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the New Economic History. But like many who write in this mode, Dye does not seem to trust anything that he cannot quantify or measure. He maintains a rigid dichotomy between “politics” and “economics,” with politics being a rather awkward intangible factor that should be ignored whenever possible. For example, in a sentence typical of this brand of history, Dye writes, “Despite the inequalities that seemed to be exacerbated by sugar-induced prosperity, the average person was probably much better off than he or she would have been without the injection of foreign capital, the industrial renovation, and the market competitiveness it made possible” (p. 14). Is Dye saying that the inequalities he refers to were not real and that the “average person” (whoever that might be) imagined them? Or is it that historians have allowed their political biases to detect inequalities where in reality no such inequalities existed? Many practitioners of the New Economic History take these kind of potshots at those they believe are employing “politically based explanations” (p. 103). But these same historians often shy away from an open debate because there are too many variables such as “inequality” and “average people” that cannot be measured.

César Ayala’s *American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean, 1898–1934* looks at many of the same issues that Dye examines but in a wider context and from a broader perspective. Like most of the historians writing on Caribbean sugar, Ayala argues, “a radical social and economic transformation took place in the islands of the Caribbean as a result of U.S. imperial expansion” (p. 2). In contrast to the “managerial paradigm,” the process of vertical integration of the sugar industry was not a simple matter of capitalist efficiency in response to market demands. Rather, it was made possible by the metropolitan state creating the conditions for big business through military power and tariff policies favorable to large refiners (pp. 75–76). Ayala would agree with Dye that the drive for reorganizing the sugar industry began with competition among sugar refiners for control of the market for refined sugar in the 1890s. Where Ayala differs with Dye and makes his major contribution is in arguing that the structure and organization of the Caribbean sugar industry cannot be understood without taking into account shifting power relations among all the major players in the American sugar kingdom. The imperial state, refiners, local landholders (large- and small-scale) in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic as well as workers and peasants struggled over issues of land, labor, property rights, and market access. The logic of capitalist efficiency and organization was certainly a goal of refiners and investors, but only by study-

ing local class structures and political conditions can analysts determine how and why the sugar industry was organized differently in the three regions. The social classes in the Caribbean—whether local mill owners, colonos, or the agricultural proletariat—were not social vestiges of a bygone era of a precapitalist plantation economy. Rather, these groups were the product of both modern capitalist development and class struggle after 1898. Local social actors, whether allies of the imperial project or those who resisted the changes taking place, played as much a part of the story as did metropolitan forces (pp. 8–10, 184).

The American Sugar Kingdom excels in providing a coherent comparative analysis of capitalist underdevelopment in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Ayala explains why and how the land and labor relations in these three regions evolved and how the sugar industry in each area adapted to these conditions. Most important, Ayala reveals what was new about the Spanish Caribbean sugar plantations after 1898. Like Dye, Ayala focuses on the changing structures of corporate organization in the sugar industry. Unlike Dye, Ayala shows that other social actors in addition to the milling companies and their agents played major roles in how sugar production was organized regionally and locally.

What emerges from all the studies examined so far is that the complexities of republican class structures are only beginning to be appreciated. One study that sets out to analyze the formation of social classes in Cuba is Jorge Ibarra's *Prologue to Revolution: Cuba, 1898–1958*. In the case of Cuba and Latin America generally, any discussion of the meaning of social class must first acknowledge that class formation was an uneven process and that the middle and working classes were highly fragmented social groupings. If class identity is defined in reference to a group's social relation to the means of production, then such identity was highly unstable in Cuba between 1898 and 1958. Mass unemployment and underemployment and periodic economic crisis combined with the large-scale importation of migrant labor undermined any predictable or long-term access to jobs, land, education, and financial stability. Ibarra shows persuasively how the unstable process of class formation eroded stable class identity as well as the political and social expectations of the Cuban middle classes. Similarly, the proletariat (except for the unionized sugar workers) was socially and political fragmented into small groups working in equally small workshops and factories. As a result, no social class was solidly linked to the production process. And the constant threat of unemployment, victimization by corrupt officials, foreign domination, and the popular sense that young Cubans were denied a place in their own country all combined to fuel a national popular revolution against Fulgencio Batista's repressive dictatorship (p. 183).

Like García and Zanetti, Ibarra is one of Cuba's most respected historians. His book, however, is less accessible to readers unfamiliar with Cuban

twentieth-century history or Marxist analysis. First, the title of *Prologue to Revolution* can be misleading. The book is not intended as a study of the causes of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, although the word *prologue* might give that impression. Ibarra is careful not to employ crude or reductionist class analysis and therefore avoids simplistic connections between class formation and political consciousness. In this sense, *Prologue to Revolution* is a highly suggestive work that should be used as an analytical reference tool for those wanting to delve deeper into Cuban class structures. The book is also useful for those familiar with the republican years who are open to Marxist methodology. But it could be a frustrating book to read for those only beginning to study Cuban history or those who have no use for Marxist class analysis.

A study that addresses the insurrection against the second Batista government is *Insurrection and Revolution: Armed Struggle in Cuba, 1952–1959*, by Gladys Marel García-Pérez. Its main contribution is that García-Pérez shifts the focus away from the famous battles and *comandantes* of the Sierra Maestra. *Insurrection and Revolution* concentrates instead on the underground movement in the province of Matanzas. Those interested in the Cuban revolutionary process of the 1950s have long recognized that the regional and local character of popular struggles needs to be investigated if historians are to understand adequately the nature of the revolution. The 26th of July Revolutionary Movement (MR 26–7) was a multiclass organization that appropriated local traditions of struggle and translated them into concerted national political action. García-Pérez does a fine job of bringing to light how local brigades of workers, students, and other activists in Matanzas organized sabotage, strikes, and armed actions against Batista's army and police. Especially useful is the information about the identities of the men and women who joined these insurgent groups and how they coordinated their activities. The MR 26–7 was remarkable in its tactical flexibility and discipline in the face of government repression. Yet too little is known about the regional struggles from 1952 to 1958. It is to be hoped that García-Pérez's *Insurrection and Revolution* will stimulate scholars to undertake more research on the regional history of the Cuban revolutionary process during the 1950s.

Rethinking the Cuba-U.S. Connection

A theme that has long fascinated Cubanists is the complex relationship between Cuba and the United States. The same thing could be said about almost any other Latin American country, but it is essential to remember that Cuban struggles for independence took place at the time when the United States was becoming an economic and political power. Cuban debates about their own national identity, especially after 1868, were almost always framed by Cubans' encounters with their northern neighbor. Two

books illustrating just how complex this encounter was and still is are Rosalie Schwartz's *Pleasure Island* and the latest contribution by Louis Pérez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban*.

Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba deals with the commodification of pleasure and "the exotic" in Cuba from the 1920s through the 1950s. Schwartz set out not to write a history of Cuban tourism but to highlight how temptations such as prostitution, narcotics, gambling, alcohol abuse, and pornography became exotic and therefore permissible, at least in Cuba. She points out that for the rich in the 1920s and for middle-class and working-class Yankees in the 1950s, Cuban temptations provided an escape from the humdrum of work and home life (pp. 120–21). In the early 1940s, the Auténtico administrations made an attempt to clean up the most corrupt aspects of the Cuban tourist industry by trying to shift the focus to art, dance, music, and other cultural forms. Although these efforts were somewhat successful, by the late 1940s, the Mafia in the United States had made the seedier side of the industry too lucrative for politicians to ignore. In the 1950s, Cuba was seen by millions of U.S. tourists as a carefree and rather silly place, a view strongly promoted by Desi Arnez and Lucille Ball on the weekly television show *I Love Lucy*.

Pleasure Island raises the important issue of the relationship between Cuban culture and U.S. consumer culture. Although Schwartz restricts her analysis of this interaction to the tourist industry, Louis Pérez takes a much broader picture of the Cuban-U.S. encounter in *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*. Pérez insists that U.S. influences became a vital factor in Cuban identity during the country's national formation. Most of the literature on Cuban-U.S. relations has stressed that U.S. hegemony over Cuba was mainly economic and political. The aggressive imperialist monster to the north had long-standing designs on Cuba, and imperialist dreams became a reality via the U.S. invasion in 1898, the Platt Amendment, and the ensuing massive infusion of U.S. capital. But as has been shown, the economic dimension of U.S.-Cuban relations was not a simple or one-sided encounter. Pérez stresses that U.S. hegemony over Cuba had much more to do with "a cultural condition in which meaning and purpose were derived from North American normative systems" (p. 10). This claim is not meant to deny the role of U.S. economic and political coercion. Pérez is asserting that national formation in Cuba combined a deep sense of what it meant to be Cuban with an equally strong ability to accommodate many U.S. values and market forms. The central thesis of *On Becoming Cuban* posits that Cuban participation was indispensable to the success of U.S. hegemony. Cubans had already made many U.S. values their own, and when they objected to the cruder forms of U.S. domination, they did so because Cubans were more anti-interventionist than they were anti-imperialist. Cubans were often quite willing to accept U.S. hegemony, but on Cuban terms. Cuban national dignity was affronted when U.S. intervention became blatant, paternalistic, and racist.

On Becoming Cuban is a remarkable book. It seems safe to say that most Cuban and non-Cuban scholars would find nothing objectionable in what Pérez is saying about the complex cultural encounter of the two nations. What Pérez manages to do, however, is to bring considerable insight and depth of analysis to a subject that Cubanists discuss incessantly but have not yet articulated in such a systematic manner. Most striking is that this book shows how Cuban culture was and is strongly imbued with U.S.-influenced expectations of modernity and prosperity without being any less Cuban. Whether Pérez is discussing baseball, literature, dance and music, the press, cultural clubs, schools, food or tourism, the reader will not consider Cuban adaptation to U.S. culture as a weakness or a simpleminded aping of a “more developed society.” On the contrary, Cubans often reappropriated and redefined U.S. attitudes, making them Cuban in the process.

Cubans did not want to become U.S. citizens, but they accepted on the whole the U.S. paradigm of civilization and progress. What this finding implies is that the character of being Cuban was contested terrain. As shown by Ferrer’s study, ideas about the meaning of citizenship and cubanidad had been contested during two wars for independence. Pérez demonstrates that by the middle of the twentieth century, Cubans were clamoring for a modern and democratic state to legitimize and implement the principles of democracy and nationhood. Yet Cuba was not a developed capitalist country. By the late 1940s, gangsterism, violence, and corruption were far more effective political tools than were the high-minded statutes of the constitution. Cuban politicians and political activists were bitterly divided over what “popular” and “modern” state power meant: mass participation and democracy meant very different things to different people. Ironically, Pérez argues, the vitality of U.S. structures and the power of adaptation became a basis on which Cubans challenged the failed promises of U.S. civilization (pp. 13, 482). As he explains, “The potential and the promise of nationality—of being Cuban—was within reach if only the ‘weight’ of North American hegemony could be lifted” (p. 14). It is therefore impossible to understand the Cuban Revolution of 1959 without understanding the role of U.S. culture in Cuba.

Concluding Remarks

It is evident that the idea of a “Cuban long revolution” is hard to resist. Yet historians should resist, but with great respect. There are connections between Cuba’s four revolutions. Scholars just have to be very careful about identifying what those connections are. It is important to recognize that our choice of historical outcomes determines the way we construct our narratives. By making these choices, the sequence and relative importance of events changes significantly. We gain a heightened appreciation of how cit-

izens saw their country change in more specific and immediate ways. The books reviewed in this essay make a major contribution by making history—not teleology—the center of our attention.

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