

# RETHINKING PAST AND PRESENT IN CUBA

Essays in memory of Alistair Hennessy

edited by Antoni Kapcia



INSTITUTE OF  
LATIN AMERICAN  
STUDIES

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## Abbreviations

AHPC	Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cienfuegos
ANC GSC	Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Gobierno Superior Civil
ANC ML	Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Misceláneos de Libros
ANC RCJF	Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento
ANC ROC	Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Real Ordenes y Cédulas
CANF	Cuban American National Foundation
CEAP	Centro de Estudios de Alternativas Políticas
CEDEM	Centro de Estudios Demográficos
CEMI	Centro de Estudios de Migraciones Internacional
CNOC	Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (led by the Soviet Union)
CPB	Comisión de Población Blanca
CRF	Cuba Research Forum
CTC	Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba (Central Union of Cuban Workers)
CTC-R	Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba Revolucionaria
FEU	Federación Estudiantil Universitaria
FON	Frente Obrero Nacional (National Workers' Front)
FONU	Frente Obrero Nacional Unido
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDP	gross domestic product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
ICAIC	Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MINREX	Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba (Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MTSS	Ministerio del Trabajo y Seguridad Social (Ministry of Labour and Social Security)
NA RO	National Archives, Foreign Office
PC (up to 1944)	Partido Comunista de Cuba
PCC (from 1965)	Partido Comunista de Cuba

PSP	Popular Socialist Party
UNEAC	Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba
UNJC	Unión Nacional de Juristas de Cuba (National Lawyers Union of Cuba)
UR	Unión Revolucionaria



## Notes on contributors

### Editor

**Antoni Kapcia** is professor of Latin American history and director of the Centre for Research on Cuba/Cuba Research Forum at the University of Nottingham. After gaining his BA and PhD at University College London, he taught and researched at Wolverhampton (Polytechnic, and then University) until 2003, when he took up his post at Nottingham. At this time he also served a period as president of the Society for Latin American Studies and was a visiting professor at Havana University. He has researched widely on modern and contemporary Cuban cultural, intellectual and political history, his publications including *Cuba: Island of Dreams* (2003); *Havana: a Cultural History* (2008); *Cuba in Revolution: a History Since the Fifties* (2008); *Literary Culture in Cuba: Revolution, Nation-building and the Book* (2012, in collaboration with Par Kumaraswami) and *Leadership in the Cuban Revolution: the Unseen Story* (2014). He is currently completing a collaborative project on the role of local history in Granma province, Cuba, and writing a history of Cuba since 1959 alongside a historical dictionary of Cuba.

### Contributors

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**Michael Chanan**, whose involvement with Latin American cinema dates from the 1970s, is a seasoned documentarist, writer and professor of film and video at the University of Roehampton, London. Author of a history of Cuban cinema (second edition, 2004) and numerous articles on different aspects of Latin American film and video, he has filmed in most of the continent's countries since the early 1980s. Michael has also written about early cinema, the history of recording, the social history of music and the politics of documentary, while most of his films since the turn of the millennium have either been academically funded, or else no-budget videos for the web and educational use. These include documentaries about Detroit, the electrification of the Soviet Union, political memory in Argentina and Chile, the City of London as the Vatican of financial capitalism and, most recently, money and debt. See [mchanan.com](http://mchanan.com) and his blog, [putneydebater.com](http://putneydebater.com).

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**Jordi Garrell** teaches and researches in the University of Nottingham and other institutions. After graduating in sociology from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 2000, he launched and edited his own magazine for five years, during which time he developed skills in all aspects of publishing, from copywriting to management, but also developed a passion for creative writing, such that he completed a three-year course in the discipline at the Ateneu de

Barcelona's Writing School. He then worked as a freelance copywriter until moving to the UK in 2011, beginning his teaching career and obtaining a master's at the Nottingham Centre for Research on Cuba. He continues to investigate and write about the subject of his master's thesis, the history of journalism in Cuba, seen through the particular case of José de Armas y Cárdenas, Justo de Lara.

**Catherine Krull** is a professor in the sociology department and dean of the social sciences faculty at the University of Victoria, Canada. Having studied at the University of Alberta, and then taught as professor of sociology and cultural studies at Queen's University, Canada, her special expertise covers Cuban migration/Latin American diasporic cultures; family diversity, politics and policies; and revolutions – daily life and measures of resistance. She has edited *Cuban Studies* and the *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, and her publications include *Cuba in Global Context: International Relations, Internationalism and Transnationalism* (2014); *A Life in Balance?: Reopening the Family-Work Debate* (with J. Sempruch, 2011); *Rereading Women and the Cuban Revolution* (with Jean Stubbs, 2011); *A Measure of a Revolution: Cuba, 1959–2009* (with Soraya Castro, 2010); and *New World Coming: the 1960s and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (with Dubinsky et al., 2009). Catherine has research fellowships at the School of Advanced Studies (University of London), the University of Florida, the David Rockefeller Center, Harvard University, Boston University and the London School of Economics. She is currently working on two monographs: *Transnationalism in an Era of Nation Branding: Cuba and Cubans in the Post-1989 World* (with Jean Stubbs) and *Entangled US/Cuban Terrains: Empire, Identity and Memories of Guantánamo* (with Asa McKercher).

Until his retirement in 2016, **Steve Ludlam** was senior lecturer in politics at the University of Sheffield. After working in the health service, he graduated in politics and economics at Sheffield, going on to gain his PhD there, on British trade unions and the public spending cuts of the 1970s. After teaching in both Sheffield and the University of Central Lancashire, he returned to Sheffield's politics department in 1993. Steve was a founding convenor of the Political Studies Association's Labour Movements Group, having been an active trade unionist from the early 1970s. From the late 1990s, he began to research on Cuba, focusing (and writing extensively) on the Cuban labour movement, labour organisations and the labour code, establishing himself as a leading expert in that relatively neglected field. He died suddenly in September 2017.

**Louis A. Perez Jr.** is J. Carlyle Sitterson professor of history and director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the author of many award-winning books, including *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* and *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society* (both from the University of North Carolina Press).

From a poor background in central Cuba, **Fernando Martínez Heredia** rose to become Cuba's foremost public intellectual, until his death in June 2017. A member of the rebel 26 July Movement from 1955, he helped its local administration after January 1959 and even while studying social sciences and law at Havana University, continued to work as a civil servant and to serve in the Rebel Army. He headed the university's seminal philosophy department and, from 1967, edited the influential radical magazine, *Pensamiento Crítico*, helping to shape Cuba's Third Worldist radicalism, until it was closed down in 1971, after which Fernando was marginalised and remained unpublished for years. After working in Nicaragua (1979–84), he joined his former Havana university philosophy colleagues in the new Centre for Studies of the Americas set up by the Communist Party's central committee. He began to publish widely, producing 14 books by 2014, including *Desafíos al socialismo cubano* (1988); *El Che y el socialismo* (1989); and *En el horno de los 90* (1990), and from 2010 till his death, led the prestigious Juan Marinello Institute for Cultural Research. He was awarded Cuba's National Social Sciences Prize in 2006 and the Havana International Book Fair was dedicated to him in 2011.

Until his sudden death in June 2015, **Christopher Schmidt-Nowara** was professor of history and the Prince of Asturias Chair in Spanish Culture and Civilization. After studying at Kenyon College, gaining a PhD at the University of Michigan, and then becoming a Fulbright Scholar and Mellon Foundation scholar, including at Stanford University, he moved to Tufts University, Medford, where his work blossomed, especially his studies of the history of slavery, abolition in the Hispanic world, and the history of politics and ideas in the Spanish empire, during the imperial crises of the 19th century. He published extensively, especially the ground-breaking *Empire and Anti-Slavery: Spain, Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1833–1874* (1999).

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## Preface. In memory of Alistair Hennessy

*Antoni Kapcia*

This book had a very specific genesis. When the sad news emerged of Alistair Hennessy's death in early 2013, the planning for the September 2014 annual conference of the Cuba Research Forum (CRF: an entity which, in its first incarnation at the University of Wolverhampton, had owed much to his sponsorship) took on a new dimension:<sup>1</sup> the inclusion of a special session dedicated to celebrating his work, influence and contribution to Cuban studies. Three leading experts (with a spread of subjects designed to pay homage to his own breadth of expertise on Spain and Cuba) were duly invited and spoke at the conference. As a result, there was a consensus that, given Alistair's importance in the development of Cuban studies, an edited collection should be put together, incorporating appropriate contributions from other conference participants. The idea was that those essays would, between them, reflect the wide range of interests, vision and expertise that was always characteristic of Alistair Hennessy's work: history texts, mostly, but also writings on other topics (cultural and political) with a clear historical dimension and approach.

Alistair Hennessy was, in the 1960s, probably the best known and most respected historian of Cuba in Europe, whose work and ideas influenced many of the generation that followed him. But he was much more than that. Beginning as a historian of Spain, when his focus on Pi y Margall helped to open a reassessment in Spain itself of 19th-century politics, he soon branched out, carrying out research and writing on Cuba, and then on Latin America more broadly, tasks which always reflected his pioneering vision and approach. As a result, his publications have stood the test of time and still serve as influential classics in their respective fields.

The most obvious characteristic of his work was, therefore, its breadth. It encompassed a wide range of subjects and countries, addressing issues from the histories of Spain (Hennessy, 1962; 1982; 1984; 2000), Argentina (1992), Latin America generally (especially his work on the frontier, 1978), Cuba

1 The resource collection and small library which has borne his name (the Hennessy Collection) since 1998, now housed in the University of Nottingham's Centre for Research on Cuba, originated from Hennessy's donation of a vast collection of Cuban newspapers, magazines and history books (the Foreign and Commonwealth Office originally gifted these to the University of Warwick). Since substantially expanded, it has provided invaluable material for a great many researchers and graduate students from many countries.

(1963; 1982; 1984; 1990; 1992) and the whole Caribbean region (1978). But above and beyond all that his always astonishing encyclopaedic knowledge was always evident and his broad spectrum of interests was legendary. He could perorate endlessly on a wealth of historical detail across diverse topics, people and events, and often included fascinating anecdotes and information in his writing and lectures. On one memorable occasion, the CRF conference was treated to a keynote lecture lasting an hour-and-a-half, completely without notes, which went way beyond his remit but kept the rapt audience spellbound. That breadth of vision was also clearly manifest in the restless energy with which he came up with new projects (some of them regrettably unfinished) and ideas on new angles to pursue.

Yet that breadth was always accompanied by depth. For Alistair always showed a willingness and ability to dig deep into his subject, often focusing his attention on one small event or one lesser-known protagonist whose wider significance he had perceived. That ability was demonstrated, for example, in his seminal article on Cuba about the fundamental role of nationalism in the genesis and shape of the 1959 revolution (1963).

That depth, in turn, demonstrated the pioneering nature of his work. For he was always in the vanguard of approaches to his broader subjects: his focus on 19th-century Spanish republicanism, his awareness of the Cuban revolution's nationalist roots, his vision of the 'frontier' in Latin American history (1978), and so on. But it also came across in one of his most influential contributions to Latin American historiography: his refreshing openness to, and encouragement of, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches to history research, writings and teaching. He was one of the first, then, to stress the importance of understanding culture as a major element in the shaping of history, and therefore as a necessary and revealing element (especially through literature) in studying it, providing valuable insights and incomparable evidence for historiography. That awareness fed into his teaching, his writings, and the innovative structures and courses of comparative American studies at Warwick (where he insisted that the study of the Americas should include history, literature and Spanish language). And it also shaped the character of his path-breaking Caribbean Centre there.

Finally, Alistair always generously welcomed fresh ideas and approaches, and encouraged and provided opportunities for new and innovative researchers. It was that spirit which enabled him to help shape the thinking of so many others concerning the history of the Americas and also, more specifically, to help establish the Cuba Research Forum. He is already sadly missed, but his influence remains. We hope that this volume will pay due homage to that influence.



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# 1. Spanish republicanism and the colonial empire: Alistair Hennessey and Spain's democratic revolution<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Schmidt-Nowara<sup>2</sup>

Alistair Hennessey wrote widely on aspects of Spanish and Cuban history, addressing topics such as the impact of peninsular immigration to Cuba, politics in the prelude to Cuba's War of Independence, and the complicated ties between the two countries after separation, as seen in Cuban responses to the Spanish Civil War and the forging of *hispanismo* as a post-imperial ideology by Spanish intellectuals with close Cuban connections, such as Ramiro de Maeztu (1982; 1984; 1986; 2000).

This chapter focuses on his book *The Federal Republic in Spain: Pi y Margall and the Federal Republican Movement, 1868–74*, a meticulous political and intellectual history of Spanish republicanism in the 1860s and 70s, when republicans plotted against the Bourbon monarchy, joined the revolutionary coalition that governed Spain between 1868 and 1874, and briefly held power during the First Republic that lasted from February 1873 until January 1874. Published more than 50 years ago, this work is still an invaluable guide to the tortuous politics of the era and a limpid presentation of the divisions among republican ideologues and strategists, with a particular focus on one of the outstanding intellectual figures of the era, Francisco Pi y Margall, the Catalan exponent of federal republican ideology (1962).

This period was also one of turmoil and dramatic change in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, Spain's last overseas colonies in the Caribbean and Asia. Several colonial uprisings took place between 1868 and 1870: the *Grito de Lares* [Cry of Lares also referred to as the Lares revolt] in Puerto Rico, the *Grito de Yara* [Cry of Yara] in Cuba, which precipitated the Ten Years' War (1868–78), and the Cavite Mutiny in the Philippines.

- 1 My thanks to Tony Kapcia for the invitation to take part in the University of Nottingham's Cuba Research Forum and for the opportunity to contribute this chapter. Thanks, too, to the participants in the Forum for their questions, comments and conversation.
- 2 Editor's note: This chapter was completed and submitted shortly before the sudden, very sad death of Christopher Schmidt-Nowara; it is published here by kind permission of his family, for which we are most grateful.

Colonial revolts and metropolitan revolution set in motion the dismantling of the prosperous slave complex that had bound Cuba and Puerto Rico to Spain, when most of Spanish America had fought for and gained independence. The slave trade to Cuba was finally suppressed in 1867, after decades of a vast illegal traffic that brought hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans to the island. The political crises of the following year shook the institution of slavery itself, although planters and the colonial state proved adept at postponing emancipation and keeping bonded labour at work on the great sugar plantations. Nonetheless, as slaves fled their captivity to join the Cuban insurrection, the revolutionary government in Madrid acted to pass the Moret Law of 1870 – the first emancipation law – and a few years later, in 1873, abolished Puerto Rican slavery during the metropolitan revolution's most radical phase. Forces on the right were also newly active in the colonies and in the peninsula. This era witnessed the consolidation of the Volunteers as a counter-revolutionary paramilitary force in Havana and other Cuban cities, and the formation of pro-slavery lobby groups in Spain, known as the *círculos hispano-ultramarinos*. These developments brought together Spanish and Antillean economic, political and military elites as a unified force (Maluquer de Motes, 1974; Scott, 1985; Bergad, 1990; Casanovas, 1998; Ferrer, 1999; Roldán Montaud, 2000; Cubano-Iguina, 2011; Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara, 2013).

Cuba and the other colonies were largely offstage in Hennessy's study, but what observations he did make were pointed and relevant. What this chapter aims to do is to begin by addressing those insights, made more than 50 years ago, and then to discuss how the historiography has changed dramatically over the decades, including Hennessy's own contributions, so that our understanding of Spain's revolutionary era and its colonial dimension has become quite different. Now, any history of the period must confront colonialism not obliquely but head on.

## **The September Revolution and the colonial question in the 1960s**

Hennessy's close study of politics in the 1860s and 70s, of the ideas of Pi y Margall, and of Pi's conflicts with the other major republican thinker and leader, Emilio Castelar, is careful and painstaking. It is also sceptical and exasperated, a mood captured in this description of how the republicans inadvertently stumbled into power in 1873:

The First Republic owed its existence to a shabby backstairs political intrigue. For eleven months the Federal leaders lived in the shadow of its origins. They did not come to power on the high-tide of revolutionary

enthusiasm [in contrast to 1931] and, as they could not appeal to a mystique of the barricades, they never escaped from the initial sense of anticlimax (1962, p. 170).

Hennessy argued that Spanish republicanism was aridly doctrinaire, too bound to intrigue and debate in Madrid, and detached from the masses in the rest of Spain. Pi and Castelar and their followers disagreed over important issues: Pi supported a decentralised federal regime and Castelar was a centraliser. Pi, influenced by French socialism, tackled the social question and addressed the inequities created by the market economy, while Castelar was a defender of economic freedom and individualism. But these profound discrepancies had little resonance beyond the Madrid newspapers in which these quarrels were carried out.

Besides the narrow social base, republicans were discredited and disoriented by their alliance with a broad coalition of parties that plotted to overthrow the Spanish monarch, Isabella II, in the mid 1860s. When the revolution finally succeeded in 1868, republicans found themselves in the awkward position of tacitly supporting a new monarchical regime, albeit it a democratic one, with much greater civil and political liberties. Moreover, some of their bedfellows, most notably the evil genius of Spanish conservatism, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, and his collaborators from the Liberal Union, were biding their time until they could either tame or completely undo the democratic revolution. In such company, Pi and the leadership in Madrid found themselves completely out of touch with the much more radical visions of republican revolution that surfaced in provincial revolts periodically during the sexennium. Most have judged Pi's short presidency in 1873 to have been a complete failure, including Hennessy, who opined that: 'when Pi fell from power no one mourned his passing' (*ibid.*, p. 220).<sup>3</sup>

Cuba figured briefly in Hennessy's account of the Democratic Revolution, but his insights were penetrating and have been borne out in the subsequent decades of research, especially his observation about how republican haplessness would affect Antillean attitudes towards reform and revolution. As Hennessy would observe several decades later, 'Both Spanish liberalism and republicanism were broken reeds, either implicated, in the case of the former, in colonial exploitation, or powerless, in the case of the latter, to make fundamental changes' (1992, p. 4). Antillean political leaders, such as the Cuban José Martí and the Puerto Rican Eugenio de Hostos, who were present in the peninsula during the September Revolution, abandoned hope of reform within the colonial framework, given the spectacle of Spanish republican futility and lack of interest in colonial matters. They quickly came to feel they

3 For a still valuable introduction to multiple perspectives on the period see Lida and Zavala (1970). See also Espadas Burgos (1990); Piqueras Arenas (1992).

had no choice but to embrace revolution and independence as the only ways to modernise and harmonise their countries. In the words of the life-long Puerto Rican revolutionary, Ramón Emeterio Betances, ‘España no puede dar lo que no tiene’ [Spain cannot give what it does not have], a judgment that Hennessy shared:

It is true that, studying in Spain at the time of the September Revolution, [Hostos] had said in the Ateneo in December 1868: ‘I am a Puerto Rican: I am, therefore, a federalist ... the bonds of liberty which can still unite us with Spain are federal bonds.’ But when he left Spain in 1869 he did so completely disillusioned with the Republicans and this was later echoed by *La Revolución*, the mouthpiece of Cuban and Puerto Rican exiles in New York, which accused the Republicans of ‘barbaric patriotism and putting Spanish interests before humanity’ (1962, p. 93).

The First Republic’s actions, or lack thereof, in Cuba in 1873 might be said to epitomise this situation. The Republic *did* abolish slavery in Puerto Rico, a notable accomplishment (Cubano-Iguina, 2011). On the other hand, in Cuba, it was powerless in the face of defiance from the Volunteers and its own representatives in the colonial administration. In 1873, the Republic authorised the formation of a branch of the Spanish Abolitionist Society on the island (one already existed in Puerto Rico from 1872) but the Captain-General in Havana forbade it. In the same year, Cristóbal Sorní, the Republic’s Ministro de Ultramar [Minister of Overseas Provinces], travelled to Cuba to gain first-hand knowledge of the colony, the first and only minister to do so while in office. However well-intentioned Sorní was, the visit was a fiasco: the Captain-General and other officials ignored him and, while he was in Cuba, the Republic was overthrown back in the metropole, shortly to be succeeded by the restored Bourbon monarchy in the person of Alfonso XII. Martí, Hostos and other Antillean reformers and revolutionaries probably did not know whether to laugh or to cry.<sup>4</sup>

The incongruence between colonial and metropolitan republicanism is captured in the works of the protagonist of Hennessy’s study, the Catalan Federal Republican Francisco Pi y Margall. He was the predominant figure in the republican movement in the 1850s and 60s, briefly president of the First Republic in 1873, and thereafter a force in Spanish intellectual and political life, who made an increasingly radical and incisive analysis of the colonial regime and its impossibility. Curiously, Hennessy showed that there were important parallels and points of convergence in the thinking of Pi, Martí and Hostos. The irreconcilability of metropolitan and colonial interests, in spite of

<sup>4</sup> On politics in Cuba during the September Revolution, see the cogent works of Casanovas (1998) and Roldán (2000).

occasional ideological sympathy, would turn Pi into one of the lone Spanish opponents of colonial rule (Schmidt-Nowara, 1999).

The consistency of his position can be seen by exploring the intellectual roots in his federalist ideology through Hennessy's study. As a defender of federalism, Pi believed that political sovereignty was based on free pacts among individuals, families, municipalities, regions, and ultimately, national states. Colonialism was a clear example of the archaic and coercive institutions that forced together peoples and polities artificially and against their will, along with the monarchy, the centralised liberal state and the Catholic Church (Pich, 2006).

There were also important parallels, in Pi's work, with Krausism, a peninsular school of thought, based on German idealism, that would have a significant impact on colonial thinkers, as Hennessy noted in several of his writings. 'Unity in variety' (Hennessy, 1962, pp. 11–12), was the key to Pi's federalism and where his thought most resembled Krausism, which posited the natural harmoniousness of human societies that were based on liberty instead of coercion. In the condition of freedom, autonomous social groups could congregate in associations that were the foundation of political organisation (López-Morillas, 1981). Seemingly irreconcilable groups – workers and capitalists, men and women in the peninsular imaginary, and also blacks and whites in the abolitionist and anticolonial vision of society – could join together in unity through association and autonomy.

Hennessy thus saw important intellectual affinities between the colonial and metropolitan left, in the mid-to-later 19th century, because both saw themselves locked in battle against the coercive nature of Spain's liberal, centralised state. Pi, in fact, had reviewed and criticised the colonial regime as early as the mid 1850s, in a chapter of one of his most famous works, *La reacción y la revolución*, where he tried to show that 'we have been bad for America; but America has been no less bad for us. We, and only we, are to blame; we have no right to complain' (1855, p. 282).

His analysis of the tensions between Spanish thinkers like himself and their Cuban counterparts is worth quoting at length because it indicates the possibilities and impossibilities of cooperation and the divergence of political and intellectual horizons:

The sons of Cuba come in large numbers to our schools and universities today. They hear our accents of liberty, are witnesses to our bloody revolutions, read our periodicals, educate themselves with our works, imbibe our ideas, experience our feelings. And then we expect them to return to their country and to suffer mutely and statically the servitude that weighs upon them? They have, like us, the desire to influence the fate of their fatherland; and, not satisfied with closing on them the doors to all employment, we stop them from speaking and writing. We do not give

them the right to represent or to be represented in our parliament. We let them know progress and then we oppose the effort to realize it; appreciate the benefits of liberty, and then treat them as slaves (p. 284).

What jump out of this otherwise shrewd commentary are the limited horizons that Pi y Margall ascribed to those Cubans discontented with Spanish rule. True, many Cubans and Puerto Ricans did study, learn and create in the peninsula, including Martí, Hostos, José Julián de Acosta, José Antonio Saco, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and Domingo del Monte. However, Pi perhaps ascribed too much influence to Spain as he diagnosed the divergence between metropole and colony. As several historians have shown, the Americas were an equal, and probably much greater, source of inspiration and learning, not least the United States, where many Cubans studied, worked and plotted over the decades. In short, Pi was able to recognise the conflicts created by the Spanish colonial system, but he was somewhat blind to the multiple sources of *criollo* [creole] thought and interests that opposed the status quo: Spain was far from being the unique fountainhead of Cuban visions of freedom and enlightenment. In rejecting Spanish republicanism as a source of change, Martí and others could draw upon numerous sources – local, hemispheric and Atlantic – for alternative visions and strategies (Ferrer, 1999; Paquette, 1988; Poyo, 1989; Pérez, 1999; Muller, 2011).

## **Spanish republicanism/colonial empire since the 1960s**

Several generations of subsequent scholarship have revised Hennessy's vision of republicanism and placed the colonial empire more squarely within metropolitan political struggles. This section will briefly summarise more recent understandings of republicanism and then discuss at more length the colonial dimension of Spanish politics.

Scholars such as Guy Thomson and José Álvarez Junco have shown that republicanism had more mass appeal than Hennessy acknowledged in his study of the Madrid-based leadership. In his work on Andalusia, Thomson demonstrates that, in the period between the 1854 revolution and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1875, what happened in Madrid, or around the world, was not so remote from the majority of Spaniards. News and ideas spread to small cities and the countryside through an expanding press and means of communication, such as the telegraph and a variety of political networks; some legal, others clandestine. Most sectors of society could glean some information about political events in the capital and other parts of the peninsula, as well as struggles in much more far-flung locales, such as India during the Mutiny, Italy during the battles of the Risorgimento, and the United States during its civil war. In Loja, the hometown of the great



conservative *espadón* [swordsman] of the mid 19th century, Ramón María Narváez, the life-long republican Rafael Pérez del Alamo came to be known as the ‘Spanish Garibaldi’ because of his commitment to revolution and his skill at antagonising his powerful neighbour (Thomson, 2010, p. 2). Given this context, the clashes between Pi and Castelar over strategies and goals were more consequential than Hennessy believed. Thomson’s findings about the depth and breadth of republicanism square with the seminal work of Álvarez Junco, who explored republicanism and populism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Álvarez Junco also placed at the centre of the research agenda an aspect of republicanism that Hennessy addressed only briefly: anticlericalism as a culture of the left. Studying the culture of republicanism – political language, gender, rituals, spectacles, sociability – now takes historians far beyond the formal ideas spelled out in Madrid newspapers (Álvarez Junco, 1990; Townson, 1994; de la Cueva, 1996; Radcliff, 1996; Sanabria, 2009).

The greatest sea change has come in the study of the 19th-century colonial order and its impacts on the metropole. This chapter will emphasise that historiographic development in exploring three areas of research: the role of the colonies in the metropolitan economy; the inscription of colonialism into the foundations of the Spanish liberal state; and the scale of Cuba’s slave plantation complex, understood in not only a colonial, but also an Atlantic, framework.

Since the publication of *The Federal Republic in Spain*, historians have given a more global and detailed account of the colonial system that emerged from the Spanish American revolutions and the conflicts over constitutional government in the peninsula. Hennessy captured important aspects of these revisions in the lucid reviews that he penned for the *New Left Review*. For example, when reviewing Ronald Fraser’s study of the Peninsular War, he noted the many ways that the war transformed colonialism and its role in the accumulation of wealth in the metropole:

Whatever the verdict on the War’s significance for Napoleon’s rule, there can be no disputing its centrality to Iberia, as Spain – and to a lesser extent Portugal – lost much of their empires in its aftermath. For Spain, these losses were drastic: all its colonies gained independence except Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The first of these became an El Dorado for Spain, thanks to the sugar revolution and slavery, which lasted until 1885 [sic]. Cuban wealth stimulated a flow of immigrants from the metropole, to the extent that there was scarcely a Spanish family without a relative on the island. Indeed, Spain became to a large degree a remittance society – hence the initial but short-lived enthusiasm that greeted the outbreak of war against the United States in 1898 (2010, pp. 136–7).<sup>5</sup>

5 These comments were similar to the observations in his review (2007, p. 138) of J.H. Elliott’s *Empires of the Atlantic World*.

By the time he wrote that review, Hennessy could refer to several decades' worth of research that had shown how deeply and broadly Spanish society was involved in colonial exploitation. For example, the studies of Jordi Maluquer de Motes demonstrated that leading economic sectors in Catalonia benefited from direct involvement in the slave trade to Cuba, and the control of banking and commerce there and in Puerto Rico. These activities created powerful vested interests in Barcelona and other urban centres that aggressively mobilised to defend the colonial status quo in moments of crisis. Maluquer de Motes's findings were echoed in research on other regions of the peninsula, where colonial capital and remittances played an important role in economic development and the formation of interest groups within the liberal state (Maluquer de Motes, 1974; Fradera, 1987; Piqueras Arenas and Domingo, 1991; Bahamonde and Cayuela, 1992; Cubano-Iguina, 1993; Rodrigo y Alharria, 2013).

In addition to the social and economic commitments to colonialism, understanding is now more fine-tuned as to how colonialism was inscribed into metropolitan constitutionalism and liberalism from the foundational moments. The liberals gathered at the Cortes [Courts] of Cádiz, and authors of the 1812 Constitution sought to incorporate the colonies into the new regime while maintaining peninsular pre-eminence in the economy and political decision-making, efforts that tended to exacerbate the division between Spain and the Americas during the crisis opened by Napoleon's overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy in 1808. The colonies would receive representation in the new constitution and legislative assembly but peninsular framers schemed to preserve metropolitan control, much to the dismay and disgust of *criollos* who desired if not independence then significant devolution of political and fiscal power. That hope quickly fizzled in the face of royalist and peninsular intransigence.<sup>6</sup>

The loss of the mainland colonies by the 1820s was not the end of the story for Spain as a colonial power and did nothing to resolve the questions opened at Cádiz about how a liberal state would govern an overseas empire. The contested answer, given by the Spanish liberals who consolidated constitutional government in the peninsula in the 1830s, was to rule through the state of exception: incorporate the remaining colonies into the constitutional order so that constitutional governance could then be indefinitely suspended and emergency powers vested in the office of the Captain-General. This solution functioned in the short term, but ultimately it provoked decades' worth of tension and conflict between the metropole and different segments of colonial society. Indeed, the question would remain unresolved until the very end of

6 The literature on this topic is now vast and expanding but I would especially signal Stein and Stein (2014) for insight into the tensions at play in Cádiz and the colonies.

Spanish sovereignty (Fradera, 2005; Roldán, 2000; Naranjo Orovio, 1996; McCoy and Scarano, 2009).

Finally, it is now clear that what created both the bonds of adhesion and the constant friction between Spain and Cuba was the exceptionality of the Cuban slave plantation system, understood within the broader history of the Spanish colonial empire. Beginning in the 1960s, historians such as Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Laird Bergad and Dale Tomich called attention to the huge capital investments, technological prowess, spatial extension and productivity of this regime. Its lifeblood was the transatlantic slave trade, from which Spain had remained aloof for centuries but then entered into energetically at the end of the 18th century, as slavery and the slave trade began to wane, or perish altogether, in rival colonies such as Saint Domingue and Jamaica. By the middle of the 19th century, Cuba was the biggest producer of cane sugar in the world and its plantations were worked by hundreds of thousands of enslaved African workers (soon to be joined by tens of thousands of Chinese indentured workers transported between the 1840s and 70s). Keeping the slave trade flowing to Cuba, in spite of bilateral treaties signed with Britain to abolish it, was a major preoccupation for colonial governors, planters and slavers until the era of the American Civil War (Moreno Fraginals, 1978; Murray, 1980; Scott, 1985; Bergad, 1990; Tomich, 2004; Zeuske and García Martínez, 2013).

Recent research into the literature, culture and politics of mid-19th-century Spain has shown that the Cuban plantation revolution, part of the Atlantic world's 'second slavery', in Tomich's phrase, had a much greater resonance than heretofore understood. Spaniards and Cubans in the peninsula made calls for abolition and mounted vigorous defences of slavery in the press, in the Cortes, in banquets, in the theatre, and in novels, stories and poems. These debates were especially visible during moments of political crisis, like the War of Independence against France and the September Revolution, but the latest research, especially in the field of literary history, has demonstrated that preoccupation with colonial slavery and conflicts with Britain over the illegal slave trade were never absent from the metropole's intellectual and political life (García Balañá, 2013; Davies, 2007; Almeida, 2011; Cowling, 2013; Surwillo, 2014; Martín Casares and Perriñez Gómez, 2014; Schmidt-Nowara, 2016).

Taken together, these perspectives on Cuban slavery, the structure of the colonial empire, and metropolitan society and culture make the period that Alistair Hennessy so carefully reconstructed look very different to us, a shift that his later writings acknowledged. The colonies were not at the margins of metropolitan politics, in spite of concerted efforts to marginalise them, but always present in the struggles over the nature of the Spanish state, the getting of wealth, and the understandings of freedom and equality in an era of democratic aspirations. However, one of Hennessy's basic insights from *The Federal Republic in Spain* remains pertinent: that, while Spanish and

Cuban republicans might converge in their attacks on the centralised state, consolidated in the 1830s, their ideas about how to free themselves from it almost always diverged. The belief in colonial/metropolitan harmony that briefly animated revolutionaries in 1868 would invariably founder against the violent efforts to defend and to reassert the status quo.

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## 2. Rethinking pathways to the Cuban past

*Louis A. Pérez, Jr.*

The principal trajectory of historical inquiry in Cuba has long adhered to a well-marked course, orienting from a distinctive intellectual wellspring, given principally to a master narrative of the nation, a chronicle of liberation in the form of a sustained political project and successive armed mobilisations: a celebration of collective resolve and homage to individual valour. In the aggregate, it has developed as a historiography of the heroic, the chronicle of a people to whom is ascribed indomitable will, confronting intransigent adversaries determined to thwart Cuban strivings for national fulfilment. Two principal narrative subsets of change were derived from this: against colonialism (Spain) and against imperialism (the United States).

As a 19th-century project and a 20th-century programme, the narrative of nation, and its principal corollary attributes of national sovereignty and identity, has loomed large in shaping the course and content of historical knowledge about Cuba. The history of its people has been understood principally as a process contingent on and contained within the course of national formation: historical knowledge organised largely around a paradigm that privileges the place of the nation – almost to the exclusion of everything else. The history of women, for example, has obtained validation largely as a narrative of women vis-à-vis the project of the nation. So, too, with much of the history of slavery and race relations, as well as biography and the history of ideas, and much of the development through time of art, music and literature. Readers coming for the first time to the historical literature of 19th-century Cuba could easily be forgiven for concluding that there was none outside of the *manigua* [mango].

The process of national differentiation in the 19th century proceeded along many fronts, in many directions, and in many forms – and not all the ways by which Cubans arrived at an acknowledgment of self-awareness and appreciation of self-worth conformed exactly to the problematics of the nation. Some of the most significant transformations were experienced not as a matter of political circumstance but as a cultural condition, of normative systems being dissembled and reassembled, change that preceded and indeed served to give decisive form to what *lo cubano* might look like.

Deepening disaffection with the status quo was a far more complicated condition than political discontent; it was at once cause and consequence of cultural forces that wrought havoc on the very normative structures upon which the existing social order depended for its stability – and indeed required for its very continuity. It was a system that could reproduce itself only as long as it possessed the means to command credibility and sustain the capacity to inspire confidence. By the late decades of the 19th century it was failing at both.

Cubans in the 19th century lived with and within circumstances of change as a condition of daily life. They carried out routine tasks, largely absorbed by private and personal matters, seeking to negotiate the dictates of the prevailing wisdom of the times as best they could, doing what they had to do to make do and get by. Vast numbers responded routinely to everyday demands, making a living and planning for the future. They went to work every day, they played and danced, they commemorated birthdays and observed anniversaries, they adhered to the conventions of courtship and marriage, engaged in sexual conduct and enjoyed the pleasures of friendships, they celebrated the birth of babies and mourned the death of loved ones: life continued to be lived the way it always had been. Almost . . .

In fact, changes of other kinds were let loose on the land. Within seemingly ordinary and commonplace practices, within those arrangements of daily habits and patterns of everyday routines, the lives of men and women were adjusting to the condition of life as lived, as a consequence of personal decisions and private choices. Such alterations in the course of their day-to-day customs more than adequately prepared the way for the future to which they aspired.

These circumstances have led to new ways of thinking about the Cuban past, to seek a more nuanced understanding of ways that change is effected – or not. They perhaps also suggest new pathways and new paradigms to redirect thinking concerning the 19th century and probe deeper in the interstices of a social system in the process of disintegration.

Sugar catapulted Cuba into the swell of global capitalism. The reach of market forces extended relentlessly across the island, almost everywhere overtaking and overturning established ways of daily life at almost every turn. An economy previously languishing within a system of 18th-century colonial mercantilism expanded in form and function around 19th-century market capitalism. Its far-flung international trade links were now organised around an emerging agroindustrial production system driven by the logic of new technologies, new markets, new distribution networks and new modes of transportation. Market forces arrived, accompanied by multiple and multifaceted paradigms of progress and modernity, having to do with science and technology, trade and commerce, manufacturing, credit, finance, transportation, communication

and production. They reached into a host of cultural forms and social practices, thereupon to call into question the relevance of the moral systems upon which they were based.

Discernible moral shifts were occasioned by transitions from colonial mercantilism to market capitalism, informed by paradigms of progress and modernity, and the intellectual vogue of Manichean allegories by which humanity was divided into the civilised Us and the uncivilised Other. Cubans most assuredly believed they were among the former – and this too implied the need to reimagine those normative systems by which claims associated with civilisation could be plausibly realised. To be susceptible to cosmopolitan impulses necessarily propelled Cubans into realms of invidious comparison with, and emulation of, other ‘civilised’ societies, as a matter of model conduct and moral imperative.

A new society was in the making and a new social class was emerging under circumstances of continual adaptation to the transformations wrought by powerful market forces. The received wisdom of a generation, the very moral knowledge to which a people were heir and with which they were expected to negotiate the world of their times, seemed to lag further and further behind the cultural change overtaking Cuban society.

The accompanying moral turmoil could not but serve to introduce into the body social a vague disquiet, the sources of which few could identify and the consequences of which no one could foresee: men and women, going about their lives without necessarily being conscious of the fact that they were themselves changing, and in the process were themselves being transformed into agents of change. This was a society breaking down even as it was building up, implicating very different subsets of the population: one defending the past, the other celebrating the future. Certainly not everyone in Cuba was party to or a participant in this parting of the ways, but many were and the side one identified with determined the pessimism or the optimism with which one anticipated the future.

Peoples who live through times of cultural transformations are most assuredly altered, but often experience change as a deeply personal phenomenon to which they rarely attribute larger social significance. Unlike the great collective political projects that tend to expand outwards and proclaim the intent to change the world, individual moral transformations tend to turn inwards, content to change the personal – up to a point.

This was a time when it was possible to admit doubt and acknowledge scepticism, to look askance at received knowledge and act in defiance of conventional wisdom, a time too when the old truths lost their power to comfort and their capacity to convince. More men and women were more

disposed to dispute what they were taught, distrust what they were told, and doubt what they heard.

All in all, developments occurring at the precise moment that Cubans were contemplating the moral determinants of nationality would fuse into an all-encompassing metaphysics of being Cuban to give decisive form to the attributes of what came to constitute *lo cubano*: a paradigm of modernity as the basis of a culturally coherent and cosmopolitan middle class, one which embraced the idea of progress and civilisation as the dominant representation of *lo cubano*.

Specific developments merit attention, and perhaps none more than market forces and how they affected women of the emerging creole middle class. *Criollas* [female creoles] experienced these circumstances as conditions of contradiction. *Criollas* who, simply by looking about, discerned anomalies inscribed in prevailing gender norms, women who chafed under the obvious contradictions between social privilege and moral constraint. People imbued with a sense of privilege often serve as a powerful force for change when moral practice acts to thwart the presumption of social entitlement.

Transformations occasioned by market forces and the rearrangement of the material conditions of daily life could not but change – or challenge – almost everything. This was a social system in the throes of a values crisis, where cherished beliefs and time-honoured practices no longer ‘worked’, that is, its moral circumstances were out of step with changing cultural conditions, were increasingly irrelevant and, worse, were perceived to be obstacles to achieving almost everything that appeared to have acquired a new importance for Cubans. Women availed themselves of multiple modes of self-expression and self-awareness and forged multiple means of agency. This new sensibility could be articulated in the form of higher aesthetic purpose, such as poetry and painting or musical composition and performing arts.

Fashion too increasingly provided an opportunity for creative self-representation as a means of self-assurance – and vice versa – precisely to project a persona of choice, within a world of fabrics and style, of cosmetics and perfumes, of jewellery and accessories. These developments offered new opportunities for public presence, occasions of display in a context of expanding consumption possibilities – at dances, the theatre, *tertulias*,<sup>1</sup> and *liceos* [lyceums], and when promenading in *plazas* [squares] and *alamedas* [malls].

*Criollas* moved into public spaces with enhanced confidence, imbued with a sense of purpose. They seized the opportunities that market-borne change offered, and in so doing expanded realms of personal agency and individual autonomy. To acquire consumer commodities implied more than possession of

1 The Spanish-language word for a literary soirée.

material objects. It intimated too an awareness of goods possessed of powerful social meaning, and suggested dominion over the persona that criollas themselves had created as a way of realising the promise of modernity. In summary: acquiring commodities as an expression of selfhood, incorporating material goods into a personal cosmology, and thereupon contemplating the possibility of a new way of being seen, which is to say, a new way of seeing one's self, and eventually a new way of being.

Significant developments in 19th-century Cuba were the subjective individual's deepening self-awareness and recognition of the possibility of an autonomous personhood. In the realm of gender relations, the latter implied that women were beginning to come forward to advance the claim that they were responsible for themselves. There was an inexorable logic at work here within the universe occupied by the middle-class criolla, in which the privilege of class and the prerogative of nationality could not but suggest the privilege of self, and call into question the privilege of being male.

The backlash was not long in coming. Many received the proposition of female agency in 19th-century Cuba as a threat to a social order already under stress. The historical literature about that century is rich with awareness of racial tensions. The same was true of similar references to the deepening antagonism between peninsulares [residents of Cuba] and criollos [male creoles].

But the historiography is utterly silent on the mood of misogyny that settled over late colonial Cuba, one of the last gasps of a way of life facing extinction, a panicked animus against the criolla who seemed to threaten the very moral order upon which traditional social arrangements depended. Female agency, situated within and characterised as *coquetería* and *coquetismo*, was associated with a 'type': *la coqueta*, who was thereupon subjected to unrelieved scorn from those defending the existing order of things. Only perhaps the intensity of racial antagonism in the 19th century surpassed the gender enmity directed at the coqueta. Rebuking women as coquetas developed around highly malleable discursive forms, readily adaptable to multiple circumstances: at times to discredit behaviour or to deprecate appearance, on occasions to disparage character, but almost always loaded with the premise of deviance, the embodiment of the fallen woman whose public demeanour and – presumptively – private conduct served as a manifestation of a larger social malaise. She was at once held to be cause and consequence of this disquiet: the social type of woman as the female Other.

The narrative of rebuke was designed as a means of social control: to discourage, dissuade, or otherwise deter *coquetería* and, failing in this, to disgrace and discredit women given to that kind of behaviour. This was intended to induce guilt, threaten shame and warn of social ostracism. 'In our view', pronounced columnist Angélica, '*coquetería* is synonymous with

impertinence . . . with treachery, impudence, and disloyalty' (1894, p. 4). The coqueta was the object of unremitting scorn:

- 'You are shunned/You are despised/ Disgraceful and immoral/Ignorant and mean-spirited', pronounced the poem 'La coqueta vanidosa' (Gabriela, 1855, p. 216)
- 'hated and despised by all', affirmed Joaquín Valentín Riera (1856, p. 59)
- worthy of 'nothing but contempt', scoffed Juan Bautista Pons (1852, p. 20)

The despised coqueta was depicted as a victim of conceit, whose clarity of mind and purity of soul had been corrupted by the vice of vanity. The narrator in Teodoro Guerrero's novel, *Anatomía del corazón* (1856), observes that the coqueta 'does not permit anything to come between her and her vanity' (p. 88). *Diario de la Marina* columnist Teresa wished for suffering to be visited on the coqueta, so as to experience 'the consequences of her deceit', and also desired that,

after having passed her best years deceiving and being deceived, having reached the advanced age in which the charms of the young woman no longer provide pleasure . . . she would find herself completely isolated from society, without flowers, without perfume, without love . . . [to] purge her faults with her tears, and desperately surrender herself to repentance (1851, p. 2).

Affirmed one critic: 'The coqueta lacks dignity and talent, and harbors in her soul only foolishness and the most despicable vanity. A woman of true integrity is honorable and pure, and harbors in her soul magnificent modesty and sublime virtue. The [coqueta] induces pity, revulsion, and contempt; the [woman of true integrity] inspires pure affection, noble passions, and warm feelings'. The writer (Jaime Torrens) then addresses himself directly to the coqueta to warn:

Poor coqueta! How many disappointments you will suffer because of the misconduct of your criminal conscience – yes: criminal, for from the moment in which you ceased to have honor and virtue, your conduct was eminently deserving of censure and rebuke . . . No woman of true integrity can be a coqueta, for she can never confuse her warm feelings and affections with futile vanity and thoughtless stupidity. The life of the coqueta lasts only as long as her beauty endures, after which she remains sorry for not having received forgiveness for her past misconduct. Poor coqueta! Pity her (1880, p. 137).

The attack on the criolla assumed visceral form, and uncommon acrimony and virulence. Coquetería was decried as a scourge let loose upon the land, and its practitioners depicted as vectors for its dangerous pathogens: carriers of disease

that corrupted the moral character of women, characterised as a contagion, rising to the level of pandemic proportions to threaten the wellbeing of the body social, and for which a remedy was a matter of urgent social concern. The metaphor of coquetería as a disease took hold early and served as the principal narrative structure through which to pathologise 'deviant' female behaviour. A 'malignant influence that has extended to all classes' and the 'source of incalculable harm', pronounced one columnist writing under the name Por una Señora, in sum: '*una plaga moral* [a moral plague] that has invaded society with notable pernicious effects on honorable customs' (1847, p. 93). Matilde Troncoso de Oiz also used the metaphor of the invasive disease – 'the cancer of the century', she pronounced, and thereupon proceeded to warn each woman against sacrificing 'her days, her wealth, to place in jeopardy the tranquility of *la paz del hogar* [the home] – the most legitimate of all pleasures and duties – in order to obtain applause, to arouse envy and to seek admiration, is true madness of the worst type for which there is no remedy' (1913, p. 157). The conservative Matanzas daily *Aurora del Yumuri*, of 28 August 1881, chided young men and women of means, cautioning that 'when corruption begins at the top, the social gangrene is incurable' (Castillo Faílde, 1964, p. 151).

Narratives of coquetería expanded into highly-charged attacks against the conduct of *la cubana cosmopolita*, whose expanded public presence represented a threat to the moral order upon which society depended. To contemplate female agency as a danger to existing normative systems serves to suggest the depth of disquiet coursing its way through the body social, suggesting something of a moral panic and revealing a social system in the throes of crisis. 'Coquetería', *Diario de la Marina* despaired as early as 1851, 'has an influence so great that, notwithstanding its absurdity, has all of society reeling from its effects' (Teresa, 1851, p. 2).

Coquetería appeared as a spectre, something of a confirmation that prevailing moral systems seemed to have gone badly awry. The coqueta evoked a phantasma who foreshadowed the imminence of social disorder, a looming existential threat to a way of life, a metaphor deployed as portent and premonition of impending social collapse – the 'chaos' predicted by the weekly *Revista Villaclarena* (1892, p. 2). This was the coqueta as an embodiment of transgressive female behaviour: the criolla as wanton and wayward, a 'public woman' associated with promiscuity. *Diario de la Marina* columnist Teresa alluded to sexual overtones inscribed in the idea of the coqueta, drawing distinctions between lovers and suitors. 'When I say *amantes* [lovers] I do not mean *pretendientes* [suitors]', she taunted. 'A woman could have one thousand suitors without her being a coqueta. On the contrary, this is perhaps a sure confirmation that the young woman is being seriously courted, and indicates that her moral qualities are well recognised and appreciated, and that men are

in competition to possess her' (1851, p. 2). Admonished poet Federico Rosado y Brincau:

La niña egoísta  
 que no se contenta  
 con solo un amante  
 y muchos desea,  
 jamás es dichosa,  
 pues jamás se aprecia:  
 su vida es un lago  
 de graves miserias  
 y lágrimas muchas (1897, pp. 245–6).

The attack against the coqueta had less to do with a type than with conduct and comportment. Behaviour associated with the coqueta represented shifting gender arrangements in a moral environment into which a brooding disquiet had entered, revealing itself in the form of a social phenomenon: an uncertainty articulated as acute anxiety, not quite at the level of mass hysteria, to be sure, but most assuredly on the scale of deepening collective social tensions.

The attack against the coqueta was in fact a condemnation of those cultural practices that creoles had adapted as a means through which to fashion a national temperament, a rejection of the larger cultural shifts attending modernity – what Cubans had embraced as 'progress' and 'civilisation': all in all, evidence of a deepening social anxiety that served to set in relief an existential threat to the very logic of the prevailing order of things – in almost every respect.

Critics themselves serve as one of the principal informants through which modernity is experienced: men and women bearing witness to a value system unravelling in plain sight, and hence peculiarly well situated to give narrative structure to the behaviour that produced collective angst, the conduct that drove critics to distress (since they presumed to exercise authorial prerogative to represent the behaviour they found objectionable).

What was the behaviour? A cursory sampling of the contemporary literature provides insight into the type of conduct that offended the prevailing sensibilities of polite society. In the short story, 'Dos jóvenes solteras' (1852), novelist Manuel Costales, a self-proclaimed critic of coquetería, represented the protagonist Matilde's voice, and in so doing revealed the source of his ire: 'I am young', Costales had Matilde affirm, 'I have the fervent desire to enjoy myself, I have promising aspirations. I wish to shine, to enjoy myself, and in the process drive a few hearts crazy, and later . . . I will marry a man of my choice'. Matilde refuses to allow herself to be 'dragged along by those maxims these days given to the woman that recommend the domestic household and attention to the family as her *beautiful kingdom*'. She does not reject the conventional appeal of 'the domestic household, family, and everything like



that. I will know how to *la familia sabré consagrarme* [devote myself to the family], but adds: 'Before all that, so much beckons me: the dance salon, the theatre, the elegant youth, the pleasures of life, the world, everything that is so beautiful'. Concerning marriage, Matilde is clear: 'Why think at such a young age about something as sober as marriage? Why should we concern ourselves with the stress of a long journey before we enjoy the pleasures that presently surround us? If I am to have a good husband, fate will present him to me, whether I think about the obligations of marriage or not'. Whereupon Laura scoffs at Matilde's attitude and cautions her that 'behind the joys of beauty and seduction there is sorrow, there is disillusionment, tedium and boredom, and a thousand dangers for the youth of our sex. The woman was born for the family; she attains social status in marriage'. Laura warns Matilde: 'You are too far advanced in your ideas: even a heroine of Balzac or George Sand would not think like that. I always feared that the provocative descriptions of those novelists would corrupt your powers of reasoning and cause you to go astray'. And she cautions further: 'Do not rely on fate to present you with a husband. Our destiny almost always depends on ourselves. A well-educated woman, guided by principles of rectitude . . . and her soul strengthened with prudence and tolerance, with the knowledge of the importance of her duties, will make a wonderful wife and a good *head of family*' (emphasis in original). Laura exhorts Matilde to 'embrace your future with a domestic household, with the peace of marriage, with educating your children, with that immense world of marriage' (1852, pp. 127–32).

Novelist Miguel Garmendia presumed to write the 'memoirs of a *matancera*' [female from the city of Matanzas], in which the protagonist affirms 'the pleasure of the paseos, the theatre, and the salons, to be the object of attention, to captivate others with my beauty and talent', but hastens to add: 'But never, I can assure you, did I experience that silly satisfaction that vulgar coquetas feel by arousing intense passions, to fall into that bottomless abyss of naivete to which they are given . . . I did not aspire to be the enchantress Lorelei who, in the darkness of the German forests, subjected her chosen victims to her spell and charms' (1893, p. 5).

And what did critics see when they looked upon the coqueta? 'Look at her', enjoined one columnist writing under the name of Una Libre Pensadora, 'all her efforts are given to adorn her body, to study ways of smiling so as to present herself to society, to please men, and cause the envy of all the other women. Frivolous in her conversations, she speaks only of fashion, of apparel, of fashionable adornments, and indulges her vanity . . . Her world consists of jewellery, of brooches, everything else does not matter' (1901, p. 8). The narrator in Teodoro Guerrero's novel, *Anatomía del corazón* (1856), denounced

the woman who frequented the salons in the belief that ‘luxury, perfume, and wealth confer on her an estimable value’ (Guerrero y Pallarés, 1856, p. 172).

What they saw was a consumer. Indeed, consumer activity associated with material aggrandisement produced anguished indignation, and criollas developed into the focus of moral revulsion. Rita Felski’s observation of the destabilising repercussions of consumption in Europe – with ‘disturbing and unforeseeable effects’, revealing ‘conflictual and ambivalent attitudes’ – is indeed relevant to 19th-century Cuba. Felski adds:

The growth of consumerism was seen as engendering a revolution of morals, unleashing egotistic and envious drives among the lower orders and women, which could in turn affect the stability of existing social hierarchies . . . The increasing influence of a new ethos of self-gratification could have problematic and unforeseen consequences for the natural relationship between the sexes (1995, pp. 161–2).

Women served as symbols of the economy of consumption in its function as a threat of encroaching modernity. The *coqueta* assumed a highly malleable discursive form in the popular imagination: at times as a matter of behaviour, often as an issue of appearance, frequently as a personality, but almost always loaded with the presumption of deviance and danger: woman as villain corrupted by materialism and market-induced vanity, as threat to the values of motherhood and wife, and the family – and hence a threat to everything. These were the insidious aspects of modernity that had compromised moral values, Bernardo Costales y Sotolongo warned, adding: ‘The pleasures of the material life are ephemeral’ and ‘however much they appeared to satisfy the senses, they can never gratify the soul’ (1884, p. 10). Cautioned Fernando Domínguez, ‘Experience has demonstrated that neither wealth nor luxury nor ostentatious display offers the happiness that reigns in the domestic household, at the head of which is found a woman of the highest principles, of worthy virtues, of moral beauty and refined taste’ (1860, p. 43).

Sustained efforts were made to dissuade women from succumbing to the lure of fashion. ‘Dress with good taste’, counselled *El Hogar*, ‘with simplicity and with propriety, all of which are signs of distinction. That your attire be appropriate to your age and above all to your position. Never allow yourself to become a slave to fashion’ (1890, p. 294). It was necessary to resist the temptation of fashion trends, *La Revista Espirituana* (Sancti-Spíritus) exhorted,

to start first by agreeing to shed external trappings, for it will not adversely affect the capacity for your graces to shine: you should opt for the adornments of the soul and mind, which will guarantee that you will always be interesting. Develop a *corazón sensible* [sensitive heart] and acquire a positive moral and religious education, and the joys that these

qualities offer will enable you to shine far longer than all the fashion in the world ([A.A.M.], 1864, pp. 15–16).

Concern over conduct represented by the *coqueta* approached something of an obsession and reached deeply to cause havoc in the moral equanimity of colonial society. The possibility of losing control over female sexuality, autonomy and the agency of women who exercised choice to challenge and change assigned gender roles, could not but have further disrupted a colonial normative system already in the throes of crisis.

It also had to contend with the portentous passage in Cirilo Villaverde's novel, *La joven de la flecha de oro*, from as early as 1841, and its allusion to transitions already in progress, as articulated in the retort that protagonist María Paulina offers her mother:

*Mamá*, don't measure the heart of others through your own. You came into this world at a much earlier time than I did, at a time when we hardly had free will, a time in which Havana was still backward in many things: in which the education that was given to us was limited to prayer and confession, in which to protect our honour we had to lock ourselves up and hide from people behind shuttered windows . . . I arrived to a different epoch. I was raised in different circumstances, I grew up in a different society, I learned knowledge from other books. I developed with different ideas and with very different moral needs that women of your time had no knowledge (1962 [1841], pp. 326–7).<sup>2</sup>

The times were indeed different, pronounced Catalina Rodríguez de Morales, the director of the bi-weekly *El Album*. 'The time of obscurantism for our *patria* [homeland]', she mused in 1882, 'those times when the education of women was treated with neglect – those times have passed. Today is a different time'. She urged that the scope of education should be expanded to include arts and sciences 'to improve what is the natural instinct of the woman', and insisted too that fuller educational opportunities promised to strengthen time-honoured institutions:

When the woman is better educated, the marriage has to be happier, for a good education teaches one to think, and one who knows how to think knows how to suffer and learns to understand the duties and demands that the society in which one lives requires . . . The well-educated woman knows well how to manage the household successfully . . . The well-educated woman learns to love and respect more the dignity of her husband and attends with greater care to the education of her children, for

2 As literary critic Teresa Díaz Canals observes: 'María Paulina defends the right of women to marry for love, with a man of her age, and a man of her choice – and not for money' (2002, p. 124).

she understands well the obstacles attending ignorance (1882, pp. 21–3).<sup>3</sup>

Shifting gender norms attributed to the conduct of the coqueta served to deepen the divisions within the colonial consensus, for it wrought havoc inside a moral order inhabited principally by elites, among the very men and women who were themselves the beneficiaries of privilege, and indeed it suggests a larger process in which the normative basis of the colonial consensus was in a state of dissolution.

All through the decades in which many Cubans were engaged in the political, many of their compatriots were involved in the personal (although these acts passed into cultural and moral realms and, as we have come to appreciate, were no less political). Developments like these were occurring all at once – simultaneously – informing and interacting dialectically with one another, often in ways not clearly discerned at the time, and mostly assuming final form at vast temporal distances from the point of origins.

A fuller understanding of the complexities of the Cuban past implies a need to appreciate the presence of historically consequential actors and actions that were not necessarily implicated in the project of national formation, men and women acting independently and summoning a vision of greater individual agency and a fuller collective freedom. These were years where culture mattered, where, in fact, culture served as one of the principal realms in which men and especially women found voice and exercised volition, where consciousness of being Cuban emerged in multiple forms of actionable knowledge as highly textured and deeply personal visions of a society accommodating the wellbeing of all.

At issue, and the larger point, is to rethink approaches to the Cuban past, to shift our understanding of change as an outcome of conditions of obvious discontinuities, to alter as a function of circumstances of seeming continuities. This approach should involve paying attention to the quotidian, to daily life as lived, and to how meeting the needs of everyday life has produced the circumstances that shaped the people Cubans have become.

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3 The author subsequently expanded on these themes in *Libro de las niñas* (1892).

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### 3. The origins of Cuban socialism

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As happens so often with studies of the past, this analysis deals with more than just one topic and covers a period of Cuban history spanning over 80 years. Furthermore, it aims to help fill a gap in contemporary thought by examining the nature of both Cuban and Latin American socialism and the problems they now face. Here in Latin America, it has become necessary to label socialism and Marxism as ‘Latin American’, because both originated in Europe, a provenance always associated with their appearance in this region. That characteristic is not of course exclusive to them; rather, it reflects what has happened generally in the region in respect of the majority of the fundamental currents of social organisation, social thought and beliefs in each country. As a result, one key concept forms an essential starting point: colonialism.

This chapter will not, however, discuss violence, genocide, destruction of ways of life and cultures, subordinations and self-deprecations, ecocides, nor indeed a combination of these crimes of the past, nor the transformations and continuing presence of the domination patterns always implied by colonialism. Historically associated with the realm of money and power, colonialism has always been effected in the name of civilisation and progress. But its most lasting crime has been the colonisation of the minds, feelings and lives of people, of their social space and of their ideas about social mobility. It has thereby seriously affected their motivations, actions and projects. Readers should continually bear this in mind because its influence has always been powerful and on many occasions a decisive factor in historical events.

However, this is not the only reason why these movements have to be qualified as ‘Latin American’. Across the world, socialism and Marxism have long been important expressions of the conflict, resistance and rebellion of the oppressed and exploited. On numerous occasions, they have proved capable of unleashing anti-capitalist revolutions and of guiding attempts to organise life and society in an alternative way – with more justice and liberty for the majority. They have also tested new societal projects that might liberate these societies from all forms of domination. If Marxist socialism has proved to be

1 Editor’s note. This chapter was completed and submitted shortly before the very sad death of Fernando Martínez Heredia; it is published here by kind permission of his family, for which we are most grateful. We would also like to thank his translator, Isabel Story.

an important path to triumphing over colonialism and launching a way of steadily eliminating all the consequences, it is precisely because its ideas, its propositions and its practices are directed against the principal source and strength of colonialism, that is, the capitalist system, and against its mature form: imperialism.

Nevertheless, the history of socialism and Marxism, up to the present day, has also included diverse and persistent currents of adaptation and subordination to capitalist domination, and of participation in its hegemonic system. Those currents began to develop towards the end of the 19th century, when systematic global colonisation was completed and capitalism was beginning its new imperialist phase. European Marxist socialism's mainstream adapted itself to this domination and even played roles within its system. This all meant that the genesis of the form of Marxist socialism which appeared in Latin America contained its own special complexity and was soon embroiled in ambiguities, confusions and contradictions. On the one hand, it became a new instrument of extraordinary importance for thinking, planning, acting and participating in the search for both national and social liberation. However, it also brought with it a new way of understanding Latin American realities, needs, actions and projects, through perspectives and ideas brought in from the European world, but then trampled under by the colonialist spirit, or at least deeply influenced by it, with often really negative consequences for the still colonised left. This second position has been at the heart of many serious errors, often with disastrous (and even tragic) consequences for the popular struggle, and also at the heart of adaptations that were subordinated to the control systems already found in the countries of those adapting the ideas.

At the beginning of the 20th century's third decade, two ideas of European socialism clashed. One postulated the possibility that the development of capitalism would bring rational, and more human, social changes, via a democratic liberalism, and would finally bring into being the dawn of a socialism that would bring civilisation, evolution and progress to the world. Reformism was the general stance of that period. The other idea, which negated the first, was born from the victory, survival and strong state-formation triggered by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, followed, in 1919, by the creation in this new field of an international group of organisations calling themselves communist. The Comintern had a double character: on the one hand, it was a significant step forward, the universalisation of a Marxist revolutionary socialism that would confront imperialist globalisation; on the other, it carried the negative traits of great haste, forced homogenisation and iron-clad authoritarianism.

This somewhat long opening point – not really an introduction – is deemed necessary here for a particular reason. The first meaning of the word 'Cuban' in the chapter title may seem contradictory, because socialism's ideal state and



broad project have both always been international and internationalist. The second meaning, however, arises from the fact that Latin America is a concept that responds to the perception of essential traits and problems common to numerous spheres shared by its different countries; yet, each one is in fact vastly different in many ways specific to it alone, and this too has been a determining factor in the development of socialism in each country. So, having made these clarifications, the chapter proceeds to the problem of Cuban socialism's origins.

Socialism in Cuba has been subject to some significant paradoxes. Since it was important there from early on, becoming fundamental after 1959, its presence as both a collective representation and a political discourse has been a constant; however, only at certain moments has it publicly opposed, or stood apart from, other socialisms. In both general and political education systems in the revolutionary period, its specificity, and its special role and efficiency, have been all but excluded, and historical research hardly ever touches upon it. The reasons – which have not always meant the same thing – are ideological and political (Martínez Heredia, 2005), something which has significantly prejudiced understanding of Cuban history. It is therefore vitally important that the issue is both known and employed, in order to tackle the problems and the options facing contemporary Cuba. At this point, however, the chapter's focus is the era of socialism's origins.

It is important here to draw attention to a fundamental event in Cuba's history: the 1895–8 Revolution. Through the praxis of a revolutionary war and massive sacrifice, the people succeeded in overthrowing colonialism, and in overcoming, neutralising or diminishing classes, regionalism and racism. They delegitimised the 19th century's appalling social order, which had combined colossal material advances and ideals (linked to the export of production modes at a consumption level available only to the 'elite' minorities) with extremely harsh and despicable worker exploitation. This social order had preferred to oppose independence in the century's first quarter and to deny political and social rights to the majority, while accepting the abstract idea of European liberalism, a social order which also opposed the independence wars at the close of the century.

The majority of the population underwent a profound transformation via their revolutionary praxis: people changed and became different from other peoples in the world. The revolution's participants developed particular skills, self-confidence and political experience; they learned to demand a republic, total equality, the right to exercise citizenship and a democratic system, while winning their freedom fighting or dying en masse. Meanwhile, the poorest sectors of the Cuban population played a leading role, while social awareness of politics spread, and the number of people involved in intellectual activity or becoming consumers of it also grew. The national epic was what created

'Cubans', integrating the previous cultures into a single national culture and founding a republican democratic nation-state in 1902.

A movement like this implies a deep radicalism, without which neither the call to arms nor its realisation would have been effective. The most radical aspect of the revolution, organised and led by the exceptional political thinker, José Martí, and Antonio Maceo, went beyond the possible political solutions that could confront the conflicts and circumstances of the time; the same was true of their proposed change regarding the hoped-for reconstruction of social life. This tendency, although it could not take a commanding position during the course of the war, was inscribed into the national tradition as both an example and a project.

In the Cuban Republic, a nationalist patriotism was by far the dominant ideology: a powerful unifying factor – although never really afflicted with xenophobia – but also one used in the hegemony of domination. Social and racial activism, whose growth was without a doubt an achievement of the Republic, were condemned when they became necessary in the name of national unity. The Cuban bourgeoisie – those that ultimately could be identified as Cuban – were the dominant class, but had severe limitations. First and foremost, the United States was the controlling force exerting its power at the same time as the political system, which was to some extent autonomous and did see some significant economic growth, was in the hands of the old revolutionaries of 1895. Moreover, that bourgeoisie never managed to appropriate the national epic or its symbols, of which the working classes retained ownership, seeing them as the nucleus of their identity, significantly influencing their social and political behaviour. In other words, both the nation and nationalism were a battleground.

The neocolonial relationship with the United States, already gestating for decades, was sealed by the military occupation of 1898–1902 and by the status of the semi-protectorate established as a result. A new and enormous boom in sugar production, with full employment and 1.5 million immigrants, economic liberalism, bipartisan electioneering and social conservatism, completed the first Cuban Republic's complex picture. Throughout this period, the image of the United States and the ex-revolutionary politicians' leading role was being eroded.

In this respect, it is important to address here Cuban workers' identities, demands, struggles and organisation. The predominant production modes in Cuba in the 'long century' of 1780–1930 needed two things: firstly, huge contingents of manual workers – the majority slaves – in a manufacturing sector that promised to become extensive; secondly, salaried skilled workers in factories. A myriad of small and medium enterprises was formed to accommodate the needs and businesses associated with the type of modernity implanted on

the island. Early trade unionism on the island was urban, restricted to a few economic sectors and progressing from mutualism to a greater sectoral-racial-national-proletarian identity and to the struggle for rights. Union organisations and federations grew with the Republic and differences in national origin lost their importance; unions turned to pressure tactics, negotiations and strikes to achieve their demands, and began shaping a worker's identity within a national identity.

A moderate or reformist current was particularly prevalent; its organisations became particularly strong in some sectors and in many cases succeeded in pressurising, negotiating and having their demands met, and also in providing services and building a sense of worker identity among their members. Governments and political parties had somewhat mixed relations with these unions, ranging from manipulative to open clientelism. Anarchism was long the most dominant current among more radical workers and anarcho-syndicalism was their preferred organisational form; to differentiate themselves from reformists, they tended to call themselves revolutionary syndicalists. They were tenacious fighters and propagandists, believing in classical education, individual liberty and the need to use violence in the social struggle, and, from 1919, they staged a great many strikes. These libertarians were the forbears of the organised militant workers' movement that led to the Federación Obrera de La Habana in 1920 and then to the Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba in 1925, the revolutionary antecedent of the largely reformist Central or Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba of 1939. They greatly sympathised with the Bolshevik revolution and postulated that only one central union should exist in the country, and their ideas and actions were key elements in the foundation of a Communist Party in Cuba in 1925.

Here, I comment briefly that neither anarchism nor syndicalism – both of the utmost importance in understanding the history of struggles for social justice in the 20th century's first quarter – nor the communism which, based on Comintern canons, was so influential over the following decade, ever succeeded in understanding sufficiently the nature of the revolutionary Cuban legacy referred to above. Furthermore, they had even less success in establishing themselves as its rightful heirs, with a claim to continuing to realise the national project.

In the early 1920s, during Alfredo Zayas' corrupt, democratic government, which was always subordinate to imperialism, the economic boom and full employment persisted, but the sense that the republic's ideals had been frustrated became ever more widespread and pronounced. Several prominent personalities published scathing criticisms of the republic: the famous thinker Enrique José Varona, for example, wrote: 'no se puede ser buen cubano sin ser antimperialista' [You cannot be a good Cuban without being anti-imperialist].

Significant sectors of Cuban youth broke with the independence generation and proclaimed their contempt for the politicking, corrupt ex-revolutionaries.

Most important of these was Julio Antonio Mella, the founder of Cuban socialism. From 1922 onwards, this young law student led a reform movement from the University of Havana, founding the *Federación Estudiantil Universitaria* (FEU) and quickly embracing radical ideas harshly critical of the government and imperialism. He also mobilised students, published widely and created a People's University for workers, putting it all into practice with tireless energy. However, that same FEU marginalised him in 1924 for being too radical, and Machado's new government included him in its programme of selective repression, while the university suspended him for a year. In November he was imprisoned as a suspected terrorist.

What turned Mella into such an outstanding revolutionary at just 22 years of age? Above all, his personal characteristics. With some funds to his name, but lacking any hereditary wealth, this handsome young man – a strong and capable athlete, mischievous and intellectually brilliant – could have become a renowned sportsman, an elegant gentleman, a student trailblazer of the kind that would go on to political leadership, or anything from a charlatan to a bourgeois achiever. With the weapons available to him, the young Mella instead took on the world, and himself, in what was a time of great disbelief and questioning: in order to become a revolutionary, he had to make himself the rebel angel who questioned things the most.

Long-standing ideological rigidity, on the one hand, and successful contemporary efforts to advance collective leadership of various social and political processes, on the other, cannot avoid the reality that some outstanding individuals do play an enormous part in shaping the course, projection and success of those self-same initiatives. Mella's presence and appealing personality, his fiery and effective oratory, and his personal courage and fearlessness, all constituted a powerful and attractive force, harnessing his defiant youthfulness as a symbol of the world that could be. His intellectual and political qualities completed the picture and when he was at death's door during his prison hunger strike in December 1925, a tremendous outpouring of sympathy was sparked across the island which even had repercussions abroad.

But everything comes out of something. Mella learned how to separate the discrediting and the historical failure of the former revolutionaries from the revolution itself that had given birth to Cuba. He then moved on to a new task. His brief text, *Glosando los pensamientos de José Martí*, revealed a profound understanding and exaltation of, and adherence to, José Martí's radical ideology at a time when, in the midst of a revolution and even after 1935, the island's communists simply repeated tired understatements and clichés about the national hero and writer. In a magnificent synthesis, the name of

the publication produced by Mella's organisation (founded in 1928) was *¡Cuba Libre! (para los trabajadores)* [Free Cuba! (for the workers)], declaring thereby that the socialist revolution in Cuba was based on national liberation, and would be the only path open to its followers really capable of realising the latter. At the same time, Mella came into contact with organised worker radicalism, and while still a student contributed to the ideal of workers' education, took on some of their ideas, and then urged them to move forward through a political organisation inspired by Bolshevism and the aspiration of seizing power. In a pamphlet, *El grito de los mártires* [The cry of the martyrs], published in 1926, the anarchosyndicalists were also addressed, including the greatest workers' leader of the age, Alfredo López, who had been murdered only a month before. Mella said of him: 'Guerrero, no tengo palabras para ti. El autor de estas líneas se siente hoy huérfano. Bisoño en la lucha, fue con tu ejemplo, con tu acción, que él adquirió experiencia ... a pesar de tu desaparición, seguirás siendo el maestro del proletariado cubano' ([1925] 1975, p. 8).<sup>2</sup>

The position that Mella carved out was heir to two radical revolutionary traditions: national independence and labour rights. From that base he built his political position and ideas, which came to the fore in countless concrete ways. On the day that the Communist Party was founded, his motion that the new organisation should not participate in electoral politics was rejected; then, throughout the year-and-a-half that the Cuban Communist Party was determined to penalise him for his hunger strike, Mella became the heart and soul of the Liga Antimperialista, a broad-fronted and extremely radical civic movement that recognised him as its leader.

In his far-reaching attempts to revolutionise the university, Mella came up against the limits of the student movement: namely, it could only criticise and act as a civic conscience. He therefore took the decisive step of becoming part of a wider current, focusing on achieving radical change in society, which would make the workers the protagonists. He became a communist, because he understood that the socialist revolution would be the vehicle both for satisfying the demands and identities of different social groups, and, simultaneously, for bringing about greater and deeper transformations. In order to be able to transcend his immediate environment, he had to undergo a complex apprenticeship and take an unknown path: that was the real lesson of history, one so often disparaged or glossed over by the different interpretations and versions made of it.

Mella immediately came up against a crucial question: what kind of communist should he be? Aware of the reality in which he lived, the world of colonised and neocolonised countries, he was able to give a precise initial answer,

2 'Warrior, I have no words for you. The author of these lines today feels orphaned. A novice in the struggle, it was through your example and actions that he acquired experience ... despite your disappearance, you will continue to be the teacher of the Cuban proletariat.'

guided by a basic principle and a single idea: anti-imperialism would only be viable if it was anti-capitalist, and communism was the most advanced ideology one could adopt to think of the future. But that definition was insufficient on its own and could only be the starting point in the midst of society's diversity and of the contradictions created by imperialism and its variations. He was one of those revolutionaries who asked questions such as: How could people break free from subjugation to capitalist modernity in the course of their struggle for liberation? What paths and priorities would be the correct ones to follow? How to raise awareness, to organise, to lead? What was the key – defence of the nation or an anti-capitalist perspective? Who would be the protagonists in the anti-imperialist struggle? With whom should one form alliances? What were the immediate tasks and which tasks were better postponed? These and other questions offered immediate challenges to both thought and action; people could not wait for long debates to be decided before acting. As he observed to Gustavo Aldereguía: 'Cualquiera que sea el futuro de Cuba [...] tenemos el deber de plantear el "problema nacionalista" para unos, el "social" para otros, pero antimperialista para todos' (1975, p. 259).<sup>3</sup>

Political action was the greatest challenge at that time, and the best way for Mella to achieve this was to take the crucial step of putting theory into practice. A communist revolution, he argued, had to be national; revolutionaries had to learn to live and internalise the people's desires for liberation as though they shared them deep down; it had to win over the exploited and the downtrodden and guide them well. It also had to create a revolutionary vanguard capable of daring to lead the people both to victory and then to exercising power, and not to settle simply for demanding and negotiating partial reforms, or to live out their 'purity' and sectarian pride in the solitude of the misunderstood. It had to achieve the construction of an historic bloc in which the wretched and the poor, the marginalised and the carriers of socially useful interests, nationalism and libertarian ideals, would all coincide: a bloc whose action would itself be a school in which all could learn that only if united would they have the chance of triumphing and surviving, and that social justice and socialism are the path and the method that make liberty viable.

In a text written in 1925, *Imperialismo, tiranía, soviét* [Imperialism, tyranny, soviet], Mella expounded questions that went to the heart of Latin America's imperialist system of domination: the native most powerful classes; the need to fight against both at the same time; the political conjuncture for the region and its ideologies. On nationalism he argued:

Existe el nacionalismo burgués y el nacionalismo revolucionario; el primero desea una nación para vivir su casta parasitariamente del resto de la

3 'Whatever the future of Cuba ... we have the duty to raise the "nationalist problem" for some, the "social" for others, but anti-imperialist for all.'

sociedad y de los mendrugos del capital sajón; el último desea una nación libre para acabar con los parásitos del interior y los invasores imperialistas, reconociendo que el principal ciudadano en toda sociedad es aquel que contribuye a elevarla con su trabajo diario, sin explotar a sus semejantes ([1925] 1975, p. 39).<sup>4</sup>

Mella defended internationalism and stood out for his solidarity with the struggles of Sandino and Venezuela. He demanded that his comrades consider themselves Latin American: 'Hay que dejar de ser cubanos, con los vicios de España y las ambiciones de los Estados Unidos, para ser americanos, es decir, hombres de vanguardia en la acción y en el pensamiento' ([1925] 1975, p. 222).<sup>5</sup> He lived in Mexico after being expelled from Cuba at the beginning of 1926 until he was murdered in January 1929; but, in early 1927, he went to Europe, participating in the Anti-Imperialist Congress in Brussels and spending several weeks in the Soviet Union, where he took part in various international activities and experienced life there and also the different interpretations of Bolshevism. Within the Mexican Communist Party, he was a central committee member, an organiser among peasants, workers and youth, given responsibility for agitation and propaganda, and also, in summer 1928, interim general secretary.

The main focus of his life and action was Cuba, however. At the beginning of 1928, he created the political organisation, the Asociación de Nuevos Emigrados Revolucionarios de Cuba (a name clearly echoing Martí), the first in Cuban history to propose unleashing an armed uprising to bring about a popular revolution and seize power with socialist objectives. It was based on the idea of forming a united front with everyone willing to engage in struggle, the very line that the Third International would reject at its VI Congress that same year. For Mella, the island's communists would have to earn their leadership during the course of a revolution. Aware that Mella was involved in a number of conspiratorial activities, the dictator Machado set in motion the plan that would cost Mella his life. Although expressed in many mostly short publications, Julio Antonio Mella's political writing was crucial in this first historic phase of socialism in Latin America. He thought through the revolution that he sought to initiate: he addressed the real and essential problems from the correct starting points, contributed a wealth of ideas but always with creativity and originality, and articulated the fundamental problems, expressing all of

4 'There is bourgeois nationalism and revolutionary nationalism; the former aims to create a nation to allow its own class to live parasitically from the rest of society and from the crumbs thrown by Anglo-Saxon capital; the latter wants a free nation to get rid of internal parasites and imperialist invaders, recognising that the main citizen in every society is the one who contributes to its improvement through his daily work, without exploiting his fellow men.'

5 'We must stop being Cubans, with the vices of Spain and the ambitions of the United States, to be people of all the Americas, that is, men in the vanguard of action and thought.'

this in a clear, thought-provoking, sophisticated and educated style. He learned how to go well beyond his environment and comfort zone, while arguing that praxis would be capable of surpassing the limits of the possible. Militant and irreverent at the same time, he was always a champion of the revolutionary's personal freedom and harshly censorious of all mediocrity or authoritarianism. Since Cuba was still far from being in a revolutionary situation when he died, he had played a pioneering role, but in his life, work and qualities, he left the best possible example for the revolutionaries that would come after him. He was the real founder of Cuban socialism.

The second historical moment most relevant to the origins of Cuban socialism was the revolutionary crisis of 1933–5. The end of the 1920s saw the end of the 150-year long period of continuous growth in sugar export production and mass influxes of foreign workers. The United States had strengthened and taken full advantage of its neocolonial domination of the new republic, but an inevitable phase of transformation now began, as the great global economic crisis aggravated a crisis in Cuba triggered by the collapse in sugar price and sales. Employment and wholesale prices plummeted, the whole economy contracted, and poverty grew.

In 1927, the Cuban political system, created at the beginning of the century, lost its legitimacy as a result of an arbitrary act of power, which extended executive and legislative mandates from four to ten years and abolished the traditional bipartisanship. The existing authoritarianism, reacting to the rising level of worker protests and to growing opposition from certain sectors, now became an open dictatorship, relying on both repression and support from the imperialist United States. However, around the end of 1930, a more active opposition began to emerge, comprising three different elements: one led by political liberals and conservatives, united by their exclusion from power; a second made up of those workers organised by the Communist Party; the last a student movement, determined to fight and agitate. The first group wished to leave the system of domination untouched, while the other two opposed it, albeit to different degrees and with objectives that were poles apart. Then, between 1931 and 1933, other organisations opposed to the existing structure emerged. Although economic crisis has never been a revolution's deciding factor, it is certain that this was the only time in the four Cuban revolutions that this type of serious situation had coincided. In the political sphere, the delegitimation of the system implied a huge potential risk to its continuing domination, although the heterogeneity of the opposition and their different proposed political paths could easily lead to a range of different solutions. Hence, as always happens in any historic movement, it was organised and conscious political action that would be the decisive factor.



Here, without entering into a detailed narration of events, I sum up broadly that this was the moment that Cuba's third revolution began, ending in the first few months of 1935. In its first three years, the common objective was to overthrow Machado, but, after 1931, the old political class lost its prestige. The two other groups, and their members, pooled their experience and decided to go further than overthrowing a tyrant, a belief which spread to large swathes of the population. The highly generalised and imprecise idea of 'a new Cuba' began to be the norm, and the rejection of US imperialism found expression among the masses, as did the notion that the bosses and the government were both to blame for the social disaster.

The combined weight of widespread popular repudiation of government crimes, the blows struck by revolutionary violence, the high level of protests and strikes in the streets, and growing civil disobedience finally undermined the dictatorship, which was in serious crisis by the end of 1932. In May 1933, the United States sent a 'mediator' to Cuba to intervene, in order to achieve a changeover of governments and thus avoid a more radicalised revolution; this example of interventionism caused a clear – and, to my mind, positive – split in the opposing camp, between those who were complicit with the United States and those who opposed the idea of that world power yet again dominating Cuban events. The revolutionary camp won, and in keeping with its nature, profoundly altered the expected evolution of society.

During the second half of 1933, the dictatorship and the majority of the First Republic's institutions collapsed in quick succession and conflict escalated to a degree not seen since 1895. This was the zenith of the revolutionary crisis, although, in the period between January 1934 and March 1935, the magnitude of the revolutionary protests and mobilisations, and the refusal to obey orders, was also significant.

This chapter focuses only on factors concerning the origins of Cuban socialism, while warning against the dangers of not properly appreciating their nature and conditioning and drawing awareness to other equally feasible possible outcomes, some strong enough to finally prevail. Marxist researchers – like those coming from any other way of thinking – should take care not to reduce historic revolutionary processes to a simple retelling of the actions of socialist heroes and selected popular annual celebrations.

The Communist Party (PC) and the organisations led by it gained considerable influence during the years of the aforementioned process; however, some of their characteristics and the party's obedience to a central body prevented it from becoming the Revolution's protagonist and from seeking to become socialist. The PC considered itself a workers' party and reiterated that the organised working class would be the historic vehicle for the transition to socialism in Cuba. It followed rigidly the organisational norms and conduct of

the Bolsheviks and fulfilled the guidelines issued by the Comintern. Marxist-Leninist ideology was its theoretical base, but above all it chose to invoke this in order to support its political line, to engender a common faith and to guarantee that the future would be socialist. The policy of 'class warfare' promulgated by the Comintern's VI Congress turned out to be extremely damaging to the PC, which, in a revolutionary context, felt obliged to be profoundly sectarian, to reject alliances, to condemn anything revolutionary that was foreign to the PC, and to denounce all other politics or suggestions as complicit with the system, including nationalism and what they called the *petite bourgeoisie*.

The PC did achieve some notable successes in organising the workers and providing them with a capable vehicle; it also demonstrated a self-sacrificing anti-capitalist commitment, was always hard-working and disciplined, and was always prepared to sacrifice itself for the cause. It was correct in judging the Cuban bourgeoisie and imperialism to be the enemy, and also in reading the First Republic crisis to be imminent; but it failed to assume a central political role, never sought to become or offer a serious alternative to power, and never seriously considered the question of insurrection. The PC substituted these vital needs for abstractions about an 'agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution' which should realise what 'tasks' would pave the way for socialism, one that would give rise to a period of 'democratic bourgeois character'. However, in spite of this character, the revolution would be guided from the beginning by a proletariat that refused to form alliances with any intermediate sector, and would triumph thanks to an undefined but great social rebellion; victory was not near, they said, but it was historically inevitable. The PC, in other words, existed apart from and against party politics and the system, but supported an absurd strategy, committed tactical errors, and caused serious confusions.

One young revolutionary who never belonged to the PC was Antonio Guiteras Holmes, who adopted the positions and ideals of Cuban socialism and offered the most advanced ideas and practice during the revolutionary crisis. Aged 20, he led the *Directorio Estudiantil* of 1927, a new and highly radical body that emerged from the university against the dictatorship. However, he immediately left that role for more modest work that allowed him to relate to ordinary people, particularly those in Oriente. Guiteras then became a conspirator who interwove relationships and subversive groups, all of whom admired him greatly for his determination and personal qualities, despite the fact that he was a 'man of the left' while many of them still believed in conventional oppositional politics. Revolutions are, after all, born from the same medium that they try to change and destroy. The middle class, comfortable with his social origins and cultural education and admiring his quiet bravery, tried to make him their own, but instead he gravitated towards the popular insurrection of 1931, organised by the old politicians with the

people of Oriente. In prison, he secretly read the Soviet Constitution and the work of the Bolshevik revolutionary Nikolai Bukharin, alongside that of German Marxist August Thalheimer, Cuban historian and economist Ramiro Guerra, and Jean Jaurès, the French socialist leader. He had, however, arrived at socialism through praxis and a belief in insurrection, a combination he would maintain throughout his intense political life.

In 1933, he created his own clandestine organisation for the armed struggle, the Unión Revolucionaria (UR), with its base in Oriente and with links to Havana and Santa Clara. Guiteras presided over its central committee and termed the cells 'radials'. He tried to form a Frente Único Revolucionario in Oriente, together with the Directorio Estudiantil Universitario, the Unión Nacionalista, and other groups, but the old politicians blocked it. To prepare for a general insurrection in Oriente province, the UR feverishly recruited members, held organisational activities, sought out arms, explosives and resources, and expropriated, indoctrinated and produced propaganda. In the end, the capture of the San Luis barracks and other armed actions in April 1933 had a big impact on the nation.

For Guiteras there were two fundamental political questions: the revolution's power and its reach. A *Manifiesto al pueblo de Cuba* he edited reveals the UR's programme and strategy and allows us to get a close impression of its author's entire project. It called for a broad insurreccional front, however different groups' ideologies might be, but, as the aim was to create a new regime, it proposed a programme that would serve as a 'aspiración común al pueblo de Cuba' [common aspiration for the people of Cuba] (Cabrera, 1974, p. 461). It also set forth a large number of concrete measures – the justification for each being easily defensible – but they went so deep that they implied a transformation at the very heart of Cuban society, something that would be unacceptable for the bourgeoisie and imperialism. The contents of that plan were analogous to what the Revolution of 1959 achieved in its first 18 months, although the word *socialism* was not used in either of those two cases.

Guiteras was one of the leading opponents of the US 'mediation'. Without ceasing his activities, he began to prepare a new phase: the capture of the Bayamo barracks, with 62 armed men, followed by the formation of a strong guerrilla force in the Sierra Maestra. War is politics. At that point, the Machado regime fell, the whole country refused to accept the new government imposed by the United States, and Guiteras became a real political force in Oriente. On 4 September, the soldiers and non-commissioned officers deposed their officers and overthrew the government; a Provisional Revolutionary Government was formed of anti-interventionists who then invited Guiteras to the Moncada barracks to ask him to be the new interior minister. He accepted, broadening the role a few days later to include the post of war and navy secretary, soon in

effect becoming prime minister of a government that was unheard of in Cuba before 1959, and one that lasted just 125 days.

The strike as a political weapon had become a mass phenomenon; however, in that summer of 1933, it unleashed a true social rebellion, in which the workers and unemployed united and shattered the old order, occupied businesses, terrorised the bosses, formed their own committees all over the country, and thought in terms of the overthrow of the First Republic. But that rebellion had clear limits: its actions were spontaneous, its organisations only local, and its objectives limited to so-called immediate demands. By October, the wave had subsided, in part because the demands had been met and in part because the repression had already begun. The Communist Party, the workers' party with more work ahead of it than anyone in this field and with the struggle for social justice the lodestone of its strategy, failed to lead the rebellion, or to drive it to transcend its goals towards proper ends. But Cuban socialism never managed to unite with that rebellion, with a clear delay evident in joining together the ideas of liberation with social justice. There are almost no historical studies of this formidable social movement.

This chapter will now focus solely on Guiteras, who from September 1933 until the revolution ended in 1935, tried to turn it into a socialist revolution of national liberation. First, he used the power he wielded to enact laws that favoured the workers, the peasants and the poorest. Moreover, he fought imperialism and the counterrevolution head-on, campaigned for profound changes, and tried to form a leftist revolutionary bloc. As a radical leader and the major collaborator of nationalist president Grau San Martín, he carried this unique experience in Cuban history through, by creating actions and motivations which favoured socialism's subsequent implantation in Cuba. He tried to offer a revolutionary option in the face of the coup that overthrew the government in January 1934, and when that coup proved victorious Guiteras returned to subversive action.

In the final 16 months of his life, he enjoyed enormous prestige and was the main opponent of Fulgencio Batista, head of the army running the new dictatorship in the service of the United States. Guiteras advocated the seizure of power through armed insurrection, in order to liberate the country from foreign domination and carry it forward to socialism. With those aims, he founded the political-military organisation *Joven Cuba*, which numbered thousands of members nationally and wielded a significant level of influence. But soon afterwards, on 8 May 1935, Guiteras died in battle at El Morillo, Matanzas.

From August 1933 until his death, he always clearly expressed his radical anti-imperialism, his stance and socialist ideals, along with his aspiration for the country to achieve socialism. I suggest that he believed raising the level

of political awareness of revolutionaries and of the people by developing an effective policy and practice was the most important thing he could do. He therefore felt he should seize that moment violently, although he continued practising the politics of the 'united front'. He tried to form an alliance with the Communists and to bring arms to them, but the Comintern prohibited it, and the party, victim of its own sectarianism, immediately attacked him and thereby forfeited the chance of connecting with Cuban socialism and forming an alliance with it. However, in 1933, Guiteras declared that the government should seek to create a 'state socialism' and, in the daily newspaper *Luz* of 20 December 1934, he argued that it was necessary to take on

la inmensa tarea de la Revolución Social, que a pesar de todas las dificultades, de todas las resistencias, se avecina, rompiendo todas las barreras que la burguesía ha levantado para impedir su paso. [...] Actualmente estoy en la oposición y lucharé por el establecimiento de un Gobierno donde los derechos de los Obreros y Campesinos estén por encima de los deseos de lucro de los Capitalistas Nacionales y extranjeros<sup>6</sup> (p. 1).

Two months later, he set forth his ideas in a brief but profound text, 'Septembrismo', published in *Pensamiento Crítico*, on 1 April ([1934] (1970)). A protagonist at the heart of an historic event, he nonetheless succeeded in making an extraordinary Marxist analysis, without recourse to the usual concepts, which distilled the essence of the facts and events, the nature of the new necessary political organisation and its problems, the political subjects, and the role of praxis. On the basis of what he saw as the revolutionary potential of Cuban national culture, he defined the revolution that the island would need to carry out, the obligation to unite a consistent anti-imperialism with the struggle to establish socialism, and the functions of revolutionary power. He valued the significance of a Cuban government that had openly confronted the United States and legislated in favour of the people, and ended by prophesying that 'la revolución que se prepara' would consist of 'una profunda transformación de nuestra estructura económico-político-social' (p. 287). That document was one of the most important in Cuban thought, although an understanding of the ideas of this great Cuban communist can also be gained from Joven Cuba's programme, some interviews and his correspondence.

Antonio Guiteras created political organisations dedicated to armed struggle that would take power and implant socialism through a revolutionary

6 'The immense task of the social revolution, which in spite of all the difficulties, and all resistance, is coming, breaking all the barriers that the bourgeoisie has erected to prevent its passage ... I am currently in the opposition and will fight to establish a government where the rights of the workers and peasants are placed above the national and foreign capitalists' desires for profit.'

dictatorship. He tried to make the social and political education of the masses advance in leaps and bounds through praxis, and in the process created a real experience of both radical anti-imperialist government and social justice to benefit the majority of the exploited and oppressed. He also attempted to create the means of forming a social conscience for a socialism of national liberation. Guiteras's legacy was essential in contributing to understanding how it became possible to think of Cuban socialism when the insurrection and revolutionary process triumphed in 1959.

Overall, socialism in Cuba in its first phase proved able to establish itself and persist because the specificity and essence of the island were at its base, and its members understood how to write that into the broader project and ideal of the movement. It discovered the ways that would allow it to set out on the path: unflinching anti-imperialism, the communist ideal, radical patriotism, armed insurrection, a revolutionary front, and, in conflicts, winning the right to lead the revolution. In the conditions created by the First Republic crisis and the 1930 Revolution, it managed to unite the culture of and struggle for national liberation with the culture and the struggle for social justice and socialism. From these practical experiences and ideas were produced, which combined to form a political culture that greatly contributed to Cuban socialism's next phase with the objective of carrying out a socialist revolution aimed at national liberation.

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## 4. Persuading parliament: Rafael María de Labra, Spanish colonial policy and the abolitionist debate (July 1871)

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In his chapter, 'Moments in a postponed abolition', Josep Fradera asks why Spain, 'a country dealing with major internal upheavals but with liberal institutions in place since the 1830s' made so little headway with an abolitionist movement 'until reformers on all sides realized, following the Civil War in North America [1861–5], that slavery was in its death throes' (2013, p. 283).<sup>1</sup> This question was also asked at the time in Spain, and particularly by Rafael María de Labra, who devoted his life to the abolition of slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico. As Fradera points out, the window of opportunity for pushing forward with an abolitionist programme came with the Sexenio, the six-year period of liberal government that followed the Spanish Revolution of 1868, *La Gloriosa*.<sup>2</sup> It was then that open confrontation between the Spanish abolitionists and their opponents came to a head.

To fully understand the obstacles which delayed the emancipation of slaves in Puerto Rico (1874) and Cuba (1886), it is important to follow the rocky road of the Spanish public and parliamentary antislavery campaign. Launched in Madrid in the mid 1860s, it was sustained by a broad coalition of centre-left abolitionists: Spanish free-traders (Luis María Pastor, Joaquín María Sanromá, Laureano Figuerola), republicans (Nicolás Salmerón, Estanislao Figueras), liberals (Salustiano Olózaga) and colonial reformers (Julio Vizcarrondo, Labra). Abolitionism was not a free-standing issue but, rather, the lynchpin of a broader programme of Spanish colonial reform. Opposition to reform was strong, due mainly to vested interests in Cuba and Spain, but best understood

- 1 For further details on Cuba and Spain in this period see Corwin (1960), Scott (1985), Schmidt-Nowara (1998; 1999).
- 2 Interestingly, the Sexenio (1868–74) corresponds exactly with Gladstone's first ministry in Britain. In this ministry, and in that of 1880–5, Gladstone put through major reforms for Ireland, including the Secret Ballot Act of 1872 and the disestablishment of the protestant Church of Ireland. The mid 1860s were the heyday of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Fenians, in Britain, and Richard Congreve's *Ireland* (advocating home rule) was published in London in 1868. These developments in Britain, whose global empire was the most extensive and successful at the time, provided the Spanish liberals with examples of colonial policy and of reform often cited in parliament and in the press.

in the context of a metropolis still adjusting to loss of empire and rapid decolonisation elsewhere in the Americas.

The broader context of Spanish colonial policy towards Cuba and Puerto Rico in the mid 1860s to mid 1870s was the relatively recent experience in Spain of rapid decolonisation in the Americas, loss of empire, and postcolonial policy towards the newly independent Spanish American republics. By the 1860s, the Spanish American republics had enjoyed some 40 to 50 years of self-government, but the loss of the Americas was still uppermost in the minds of the Spanish parliamentarians (including Labra), many of whose fathers had been involved in the independence wars.<sup>3</sup> In some ways, the position of Spain in the late 1860s and early 1870s was similar to that of Britain in the 1990s. The process of Spanish decolonisation in the Americas had lasted 20 to 25 years, from 1810 to 1830–6 (Spain recognised Mexico's independence in 1836). The main thrust of British decolonisation also lasted some 20 to 25 years, from 1945 to 1965–70. The perspective of the Spanish government in 1871, reflecting on decolonisation and loss of empire 40 to 45 years earlier, is the equivalent of British governments looking back at British decolonisation during the Major and Blair governments in the late 1990s–2000. Postcolonial Britain is experiencing the kind of post-imperial break-up of the metropolitan nation-state experienced in Spain, which in both cases remains unresolved. However, whereas in the 1990s Britain had few remaining colonial headaches, Gibraltar and the Falklands perhaps being the exceptions, in the 1870s Spain had one massive headache to resolve: Cuba. So great was the problem that few governments were prepared to tackle it head-on. But this was to change following Labra's maiden speech, delivered to the Cortes [Spanish Parliament] on 10 July 1871: speaking in parliament for the first time, and catching all the *diputados* [deputies] unawares, he provoked an impassioned and unprecedented debate. It was inordinately long and acrimonious, and almost led to a vote of no-confidence in the newly elected liberal government, but its long-term effects were indisputable, as Labra recognised in his later reflections published in his book *Mi primer discurso parlamentario. La cuestión colonial 1871* (1915).

## Spain and Cuba 1871

The decade 1865–75 was especially important in Spain for several reasons. The four-year American Civil War ended in 1865, the year of the last officially recorded slave voyage to Cuba. The Spanish Abolitionist Society was established in 1865 and the pro-colonial reform *Revista Hispano-Americana*, launched in Madrid in 1864, intensified its publication (Davies and Sánchez, 2010b).

3 For example, Admiral Juan Bautista Topete, who initiated the 1868 Revolution with Prim. His father, Juan Bautista Topete y Viaña (d. 1847), had been Commander of the Spanish fleet in Mexico and Cuba.



However, the sergeants' uprising in 1866, led by progressive General Juan Prim and supported by the democrats, brought down Leopoldo O'Donnell's Liberal Union government (O'Donnell had been Captain-General of Cuba 1843–4) which had agreed to discussions with an elected Cuban commission (the idea of Antonio Cánovas del Castillo). In 1866, a reactionary government came to power, under General Ramón María Narváez, who allowed the commission to meet government ministers but refused to act on their proposals or to discuss the matter further: 'The reform movement of moderate men and rich planters cracked. They no longer had any solutions to offer' (Thomas, 1971, p. 240). Despite this shift to the right, the Liberal Union's criminalisation of the slave trade, the *Ley de represión y castigo del tráfico negrero* finally came into effect in 1867 and the Spanish slave trade was abolished, even though slave importations into Cuba in 1859–61 (80,000) had been the highest in 40 years. On the international scene, the British North America Act of 1867 marked the independence of Canada – a self-governing dominion which eventually remained a member of the Commonwealth. The Act gave Canada autonomy in internal affairs but its defence was still controlled by Britain. This example of powers devolved to overseas territories was not lost on the Spanish reformists who, like Labra, argued for Cuban autonomy.

The Spanish Revolution of 18 September 1868 forced Queen Isabel II to abdicate and brought in a revolutionary provisional government under Prim. This was the beginning of the Sexenio, during which period the foundations were laid for the abolition of slavery in Cuba (starting with Moret's Law, 1870), and the complete abolition of slavery was achieved in Puerto Rico. Weeks later, on 10 October 1868, Cuban planter Carlos Manuel de Céspedes liberated his 30 slaves and declared the *Grito de Yara* [Cry of Yara – now commemorated as a national holiday] the next day. Thus began armed insurrection in the east of Cuba against the military and civilian authorities, later known as the Ten Years' War of Independence. In Spain, the Constitution of 1869, Spain's first democratic constitution, was drafted and approved. It enshrined the principles of national sovereignty, universal male suffrage, and democratically elected representatives accountable to parliament.<sup>4</sup> Article 1.1 stated that 'All those born on Spanish territory are Spanish', applying *ipso facto* to all those born in Cuba, including slaves. A range of political and social rights were guaranteed for Spaniards, as well as a clear division of powers, freedom of the press and association and, for the first time in Spanish constitutional history, freedom of religion. A final article in the Constitution proposed political decentralisation for the overseas provinces but, crucially, was deferred until Cuba and Puerto Rican MPs were elected to the Cortes. In Cuba, Captain-General Domingo

4 Elections took place in Spain in January 1869 and the constituent assembly sat from February 1869 until January 1871. The first elections under the new king, Amadeus I took place in March 1871. This second parliamentary term ran from April 1871 to January 1872.

Dulce attempted to introduce these constitutional reforms in January 1869, but was forced out of office six months later by the island's reactionary anti-separatist militia, known as *voluntarios*.

The abolition of slavery was high on the new government's agenda. In the summer of 1870, the Minister of the Colonies, Segismundo Moret y Prendergast, put through parliament his Preparatory Law for the Abolition of Slavery. In accordance with this new legislation, children born of slave mothers after 4 July 1870 were free; all children born between 17 September and 4 July 1868 were to be bought by the state from their owners, at 125 pesetas each, and then freed. Slaves who fought for Spain in the insurrection were freed, and owners who had not joined the insurrection would be compensated; slaves over the age of 60 were declared free and could remain with their owners if they wished; slaves owned by the state (for example, on public works) were also declared free. The children of slaves aged one and two remained under the patronage of their mothers' owners, after compensation, and were to be clothed and receive medical attention and education. In this system of *patronato* [patronage], the *patrón* would act as a kind of tutor and could demand unremunerated work until the child reached the age of 18. Thereafter the *liberto* [freed slave] would be paid a salary, half that of a labourer in the relevant trade, until the age of 22 and from then on a full wage. Patronage ended if the slave married or was abused by the *patrón*, and was transferable. A census would identify all slaves over 60 and any who fought for Spain – they could return to Africa or put themselves under the protection of the state. Punishment by whipping was to end, and both mothers and children under 14, and also husband-and-wife couples could not be sold separately.

Prim meanwhile attempted to secure peace in Cuba by introducing autonomous government on the island, modelled on that of Canada, but the insurgents rejected this plan. In late December 1869, Prim was assassinated, possibly by a pro-slavery faction, and the government of Cuba passed into the hands of conservative captains-general, such as General Valmaseda, who took control of the island in December 1870. The war was at a stalemate, with each side committing atrocities. By 1871 fighting had lasted almost three years. More than 7,000 Spanish regulars were posted in Cuba, and at least 9,000 *voluntarios* fought to defend the local population and put down the rebellion.<sup>5</sup> The Spanish troops were mainly forced recruits from Galicia and other rural parts of Spain, whereas many of the *voluntarios* were Basques and Catalans, regions exempted from conscription. In July 1871, the month of Labra's speech, the insurgents, led by General Máximo Gómez and Colonel Antonio Maceo, invaded the Guantánamo region. Crack Spanish units fought

5 Thomas (1971, p. 249) gives a figure for the *voluntarios* of 20,000 infantry and 13,500 cavalry.

a war to death there, and violence and reprisals escalated. On 27 November 1871, five months after Labra's speech, events took a turn for the worse when Valmaseda ratified the execution of four medical students (aged 16–18), arrested for defacing the tomb of the founder of the pro-Spanish newspaper *La Voz de Cuba*, who had been killed by rebels. In short, during the six-year revolutionary period (1868–74), the liberal government of Spain and its overseas provinces was fighting planter insurrection and hard-line reaction in Cuba and traditional conservatism at home.

## Who was Labra?

For over 25 years, Rafael María de Labra led the lengthy and eventually successful public and parliamentary campaign to abolish slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico. He founded the Spanish Abolitionist Society with Puerto Rican Julio Vizcarrondo in 1865. He wrote over 140 books, 100 newspaper articles and 130 speeches and pamphlets on the subject of abolition, for example the book discussed below which examines abolition in relation to the economic order (1873). In fact, he dedicated his entire life to abolitionism, to colonial reform and, after 1898, to strengthening relations between Spain and the former Spanish Antilles.<sup>6</sup> Born in Havana in 1840 to a Cuban mother (Rafaela González Cadrana) and a Spanish father (Ramón Labra), who was a military officer stationed in Cuba since 1836, Labra lived, between the ages of five and nine, in Cienfuegos. His father was an enlightened civil and military governor there but was erroneously implicated in Narciso López's filibustering attacks on Trinidad, so the family left for Spain in 1849 (Davies and Sánchez, 2010a).

The antislavery campaign intensified its activities once restrictions on assembly were lifted, following the September Revolution. The mass meetings were widely reported, including in the British press; an article published in *The Daily News*, on Tuesday 27 October, 1868, refers explicitly to Labra:

From our special correspondent. 'The Revolution in Spain'. Madrid, Oct. 23.

The meeting of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery which was held yesterday afternoon in the Circus Price, under the presidency of Olozaga, was perhaps the largest the most unanimous the most enthusiastic that has ever been held in Madrid. I do not think that there can have been many less than 5000 persons present and they all of them belong to those ranks of society which in England we are accustomed to include under the general term of the middle classes. The proceedings which lasted more than four hours were not confined to the delivery of orations. Several

6 'Forty-five years of constant labour in favour of the same political and social ideas' (1915, p. 7). See Domingo Acebrón (2006), Laguna Ochoa (1991) and Simón Palmer (1986) for further details.

poetical compositions bearing upon the question of slavery were recited by two ladies and served at once to relieve the monotony of continuous speechmaking and to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience on behalf of the negro. The principal topics which were dealt upon by the various orators will naturally suggest themselves to the mind of the English reader who has been accustomed to discussions of this sort: the unsoundness and iniquity of any system of slavery, its injustice to the slave and the corrupting influence which it must exercise upon the slave holder; above all its entire incompatibility with democratic institutions and the element of danger which it contained.

Senor Rafael Maria de Labra advocated more sweeping measures and contended that the principles of the revolution required the immediate emancipation of the Negroes of Cuba and Porto Rico, adults as well as children and their admission to all the rights and privileges which were enjoyed by their white fellow subjects ... both these gentlemen [Nicolás de Azcárate and Labra] repudiated in the strongest terms the notion that the Cubans had any desire to maintain slavery or would oppose obstacles to any measures which the government of Spain when regularly constituted might adopt for its abolition. ... Some of my friends whose opinions are, I fancy, informed rather under the influence of impulse than of reason, confidently assert that the result of the adoption of any scheme of emancipation will be that the Cubans will throw themselves into the arms of the Americans and that Cuba will at last be annexed to the United States.

## **Labra's speech in parliament, 10 July 1871**

On 10 July 1871, towards three o'clock in the afternoon, Labra stood up to give his maiden speech in the Spanish parliament. Just 31 years old, he was an independent member of parliament, representing the small town of Infiesto, in Asturias (achieving 3,100 votes from an electorate of 7,881), elections having been held the previous March. The debate which followed his speech was one of the most incisive in that particular legislature and certainly the most significant with respect to the question of Spanish colonial policy and abolitionism. Labra later recalled the moment as one of the most important in his life (1915, p. 7).

The coronation of the new king, Amadeus I (son of Victor Manuel II, House of Savoy), had taken place in January 1871. The parliamentary term ran from April 1871 to January 1872, with progressives Práxedes Mateo Sagasta and Olózaga as *presidente de gobierno* [prime ministers]. This was a centre-left government, with an overall majority; many of the leading figures had instigated or taken part in the 1868 Revolution. The parliament addressed by

Labra comprised the governing coalition of Progressives (with Prime Minister Sagasta), Radicals (led by Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla), Liberal Unionists (led by Francisco Serrano) and Democrats (led by Nicolás Rivero): 253 MPs out of a total of 391. The opposition on the left were the Republicans (headed by Pi y Margall, although he was not present on 10 July), with a total of 52 deputies, and on the right, monarchists of various persuasions who had proposed different candidates to the vacant throne: the Carlists (who had supported Isabel II's uncle, Charles VII, and his absolutist tendencies, then in exile in Austria), the largest party on the right, with 51 deputies; the Moderates; the Conservatives (led by Cánovas de Castillo), supporting Isabel's adolescent son, Alfonso; and the Montpensierists (Liberal Unionists), who supported Isabel's brother-in-law, Antonio de Orleáns, Duke of Montpensier. In addition there were 19 Independents, one of whom was Labra. The 34 MPs representing Puerto Rico and Cuba had yet to be elected. Following Labra's speech, on 24 July, Sagasta was replaced by Radical Ruiz Zorrilla as prime minister, and the government swung to the left.

Contravening the advice of Deputy Prime Minister Olózaga, presiding over proceedings that afternoon, and defying the sweltering heat (33°C; 91°F), Labra's speech was long and impassioned, though courteous and correct. Parliament listened in attentive silence;<sup>7</sup> his argument, in a nutshell, was that Spain had no colonial policy to speak of and the Spanish revolutionary government's response to the uprising in Cuba was not only misguided, irresponsible and counterproductive but, with respect to slavery, immoral. Labra reminded parliament of the string of broken promises made to the Cubans, dating back to 1837, when the Spanish Constitution reforms of that year were not extended to the island. He strongly attacked the government's current military response, drawing attention to the parallels between Spain's mishandling of the situation in Cuba and also of the insurrection in continental America, 50 years earlier leading, ultimately, to the loss of Spanish America.<sup>8</sup>

Labra's speech lasted about an hour and the subsequent debate ended at 6.45pm. However, parliament was recalled to an evening session and the debate began again at 10pm, not ending until 2.30am the next day, thus lasting eight hours. The motion that Labra tabled read: parliament 'declares that it is dismayed to see the serious attacks on the principle of authority in Cuba and the failure to observe the laws and decrees passed since 1870 to bring the democratic spirit of the September Revolution to the oversea provinces' (*Sesiones. Congreso de los Diputados*, p. 2497). He then embarked on a lengthy preamble (*ibid.*).

7 *Diario de las Sesiones de las Cortes: Congreso de los Diputados: legislatura de 1871*, vol. 3, no. 27, p. 2497; no. 28, pp. 2536, 2539 (Madrid: Imprenta de J.A. García).

8 Labra expanded on this theme in *La pérdida de las Américas* (1869).

He ironically apologised for raising the topic of the overseas provinces, a subject of no interest to politicians for whom colonisation meant little more than the securing of markets for Spanish products, ports for ships, space for emigrants, employment for the unemployed, and a surplus for the treasury. Although Spanish colonial policy had never been discussed in parliament, he reminded his audience that Spain's duty was to protect, encourage and foment the overseas provinces, which were populated by the 'blood of our blood, spirit of our spirit' (p. 2498). In addition, Spain should strengthen its ties with the independent Spanish American nations, where the bonds with the mother country were still strong.

On the subject of slavery, Labra urged parliament to protest vehemently against such a 'scandalous situation [...] that wounds every sentiment of this great nation' (ibid.), and to protest against the absence of Puerto Rican and Cuban MPs. He could not believe that none of the members present had spoken up against slavery, neither the republicans nor the conservatives, not even the priests among them 'who cannot remain deaf to the screams and moans of our brothers who die exhausted in a mire of vice, in the depths of barracoons or in the hell of the plantation under the crack of the whip' (p. 2499). The only way to end the conflict in Cuba, while maintaining national integrity, was to abolish slavery. Moret had attempted to start the process, and his law would have freed 56,000 slaves in Cuba and 4,000 in Puerto Rico; but the law had not been implemented. In fact, it was annulled in the former and the captain-general was forced to make the law effective only three months later. It was then suspended, so that in the end only 200 slave children were liberated; nothing was done for the 60,000 slaves over 60 years of age. The result was that the slaves of the rebels were free, whereas slaves loyal to Spain remained in servitude (p. 2510).

Labra argued that Cuba and Puerto Rico should be governed by parliament, not by a ministerial appointment. Adelardo López de Ayala, the overseas minister, should have resigned because his policies had resulted in the outbreak of war in Cuba; immediate extension of the 1869 constitutional reforms should have been his priority.<sup>9</sup> Appealing to the spirit of the Revolution, Labra called repeatedly for an enlightened, coherent colonial policy: 'Men of 1868! Revolutionaries of September' be guided by 'the spirit of civility and equality' against all forms of theocracy (in the Philippines), slavery and despotism (p. 2499). He attacked the voluntarios, the so-called patriots in Cuba who had threatened him, comparing them to wild beasts.

9 Adelardo López de Ayala (1828–79) was overseas minister [Ministro de Ultramar], on and off, between 1868 and 1872, and 1874–7. Although a constitutionalist, he shifted his political allegiances. He was most celebrated as a playwright, with successful comedies, tragedies and operettas performed from 1851 on. Very little has been written about his literary career and even less about his role in parliament. See Coughlin (1977).

Recalling the experiences of the independence wars in Spanish America, he argued that force was not the answer. In the 1820s, Spain's repressive policies had led inevitably to the loss of the Americas. Labra cautioned, 'Always, always the enemies of freedom in America have been the enemies of freedom in Spain. Learn from that; be warned; be logical' (p. 2512). He continually compared Spanish colonial policy with respect to North America with Britain's: in the latter country, the arguments of Edmund Burke and Lord Chatham (William Pitt the Elder) were, he argued, ignored, and repression had resulted in the loss of the British American colonies. However, Britain, unlike Spain, had learned the lesson and, following the 1855 Indian Mutiny, its parliament had introduced reforms, resulting in a strengthened British empire in India.

The Spanish parliament, he argued, was ignorant of the Cuban situation; Cuba remained 'an enclave of absolutism' (p. 2501) and its people believed the new Spanish government would sell their island to the United States, hence their hostility. The cause of such misunderstanding and misinformation was the lack of free press or free discussion in Cuba. The silence in parliament merely assisted the pro-slavery traditionalists who wanted to keep Spain in a state of alarm to undermine the revolutionary government. How could this government, he asked, the result of a liberal revolution, renege on the principles of representative government and modern democracy?

After this lengthy preamble, Labra marshalled his main arguments in favour of colonial reform. Since the 1820s, the many delays and broken promises in introducing reforms in the overseas provinces had made the Cubans suspicious that their interests were at the mercy of party political rivalries in Spain. The constitutional government had lost control in Cuba: it faced, on the one hand, the insurgents and, on the other, the ultra-conservatives who appropriated 'patriotism' for their own ends. Three problems needed to be resolved urgently: race, labour and autonomy. Labra condemned the uprising wholeheartedly – it was unjust that 300,000 innocent hardworking people had to face havoc, violence and hatred – yet he understood it. Parliament should reach out to the insurgents, negotiate and impose governmental authority. In the crucial months between the revolution and the first constitutional government (September 1868 to January 1869), the Spanish Constituent Assembly should have negotiated with the rebels and implemented reforms immediately, especially Article 108: 'The Constituent Assembly will reform the current system of government in the overseas provinces, when the MPs for Puerto Rico and Cuba have taken their seats, to extend to the same, with any modifications deemed necessary, the rights enshrined in the Constitution' (p. 2503). The government did not do this; instead, the captain-general did not even allow the locally elected representatives in Cuba and Puerto Rico to take up their posts. The reason was

endemic corruption, material gain and greed: in Cuba 'the golden calf rules over the altar of conscience' (p. 2508).

How effective was Spanish law in the overseas provinces? 'In Puerto Rico the laws have been deliberately misinterpreted; in the Philippines, they were suspended, and in Cuba they were annulled – this is what Spanish colonial policy amounted to' (p. 2512). Labra called for an end to bloodshed in Cuba: 'the Cuban rebels are our brothers' (p. 2510). In two years, since the outbreak of violence, 5,000 insurgents had been executed outside the battle zone, and Spain had lost 20,000 young men, many to illness and disease. Yet Spain could not abandon Cuba; resolute action was needed. Instead of continuous slaughter and the gradual depletion of the troops, 25,000 or 30,000 men should be sent to the island immediately to end the war within eight to ten months, and reforms introduced forthwith.

The heated responses to Labra's speech were largely critical. First, he was attacked by the Asturian MPs, the majority of whom (12 of 14) were conservatives, for purporting to speak on behalf of the Asturians. He was chided for implying a vote of no confidence in López de Ayala, and hence in the constitutional government. He therefore withdrew his proposal to avoid a government crisis. López de Ayala defended his policy arguing that he had taken the post of overseas minister precisely to put his name to antislavery legislation; he was a poet and the emancipation of the slaves would have been his greatest work. He had introduced freedom of the press and association in Cuba, but these freedoms were used against the authorities to insult Spain. The minister defended the militia, who were merely protecting their homes and property, and argued against autonomy, because Spain would not be sufficiently strong to protect Cuba against US incursions. Labra responded that the press freedoms introduced in the island excluded slavery and religion, and that freedom of assembly had not included freedom of association. In the subsequent debate, parliamentary procedure was queried repeatedly, an indication of the deputies' unfamiliarity with the institution and best practice, and the government was forced to vote against Labra to avoid a crisis. Labra's motion lost by 113 votes (137 votes were cast). The evening session, lasting four-and-a-half hours into the early morning, was noisy, fraught and acrimonious.<sup>10</sup> Former overseas minister, Manuel Becerra, and Sagasta valiantly attempted to keep order, but there were numerous interventions by the conservatives, querying procedure and even the minutes. As Labra wrote in 1915, 'The conservatives and the Carlists lost their composure, they protested, they shouted and the session which ended late was one of the most agitated of that parliamentary period' (p. 20). The Carlists repeatedly interrupted and spoke out of order; deputies

10 *Diario de las Sesiones. Congreso de los Diputados: legislatura de 1871*, vol. 3, no. 28, p. 2527 et sigs (Madrid: Imprenta de J.A. García).



insulted each other as ‘filibusters’ or ‘slavers’ (*Sesiones. Congreso de los Diputados*, p. 2533); the opposition argued that negotiating with the rebels was ‘flying the white flag’ (*ibid.*). Several motions were tabled, but none was voted on, except the government’s, which read as follows: ‘Parliament repeats again its support for the His Majesty’s Government to put an end to the insurrection in Cuba and to implement, taking into account just and appropriate conditions, the September Revolution’s promises overseas.’ This motion was approved by 122 votes to 50. To sum up, all those present agreed that the island should remain a part of Spain (a question of national integrity), but not all agreed that the 1869 reforms should be introduced overseas. The traditionalists did not want to approve the motion that Cuba was Spanish and *therefore* was subject to the 1869 Constitution; they wanted to split the motion into two parts, with two separate votes, but this proposal was defeated by 115 votes to 57.

### **After the speech**

Recalling the events of that fateful day, Labra wrote that his main achievement had been to initiate a free parliamentary debate on colonial policy: ‘The ice was broken in our Parliament’ (1915, p. 15). He remembered: ‘The extraordinary movement that my protest produced in our Parliament’, the ‘fervent and long debate’, the ‘formidable battle’ (*ibid.*, p. 8) against those who wanted the status quo. Over the following months, debates ensued on how to draw up the legal framework for constitutional government in Cuba, first agreed in 1837. Eventually, the government’s proposals were approved, and Spain committed itself to wide-ranging colonial reforms in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Labra meanwhile, attacked in the press and receiving death threats, was invited by the Puerto Rican deputies (the Puerto Rico Reformist Party was founded in 1870) to stand for parliament, representing Sábana Grande and, as such, was voted into parliament in the 1871–2 session; he was one of the 11 deputies representing Puerto Rico. No Cuban deputies were elected to parliament until 1879. For Labra, the autumn and winter of 1872 marked a turning point: the new parliamentary session was ‘of a radical character’ (*ibid.*, p. 16), and Labra’s programme was accepted by the Radical Party, under the premiership of Ruiz Zorrilla (1872–3). Unfortunately, at that moment King Amadeus abdicated and the Radical Party fell from power. On 11 February 1873, the National Assembly voted in a Republic, the first in Spain’s hitherto monarchical history. It lasted only seven months, from June 1873 until the military coup of 3 January 1874, which restored the monarchy under Alfonso XII.

In Puerto Rico, an immediate effect of the coup was that the liberal Captain-General Rafael Primo de Rivera was forced to step down and the institutions, so carefully created in 1872, were suspended. Nevertheless, it was too late to stop the passage through parliament of the Republic’s legislation for the

immediate abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico without compensation. The law was approved on 22 March 1873, and in 1874 30,000 slaves were freed. The municipal reforms leading to the decentralisation of local government in Puerto Rico and universal suffrage also went through. In one year, 1873, the Republic's achievements included: the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico; the founding of Abolitionist Societies in Cuba; and a review of the Cuban slave census, resulting in the freedom of thousands who were falsely registered. In addition, the first article of the 1869 Constitution was extended to Puerto Rico and a draft law was passed to do the same for Cuba. The powers of the captains-general were at last reduced. A political amnesty was declared in Puerto Rico and confiscating the property of those accused of conspiracy in Cuba was completely halted; all confiscated property was returned. The judiciary in the overseas provinces was reformed; tensions with the United States over the *Virginus* conflict were resolved;<sup>11</sup> and negotiations with the Spanish American republics, so that they would not officially recognise the Cuban insurrection, were successful. In late 1873, Santiago Soler y Pla, the overseas minister, set sail in his role as the first Spanish government minister to visit Cuba and Puerto Rico. He was to oversee the reforms personally, but the Republic fell just after he arrived.

It was the legal framework set in place for the government of Puerto Rico which enabled General Martínez Campos to negotiate the Treaty of Zanjón in Cuba. The first article of that treaty stated that the political and administrative reforms introduced in Puerto Rico would be extended to Cuba. However, lamented Labra, its terms were not fulfilled, despite the 'the noble, clear and eloquent letters from Sr General Martínez Campos' in its defence (1915, p. 230). Universal suffrage was replaced in December 1878 by a restrictive electoral census that favoured the conservatives. In 1915, Labra harshly criticised 'the stupidity and blindness of the Spanish Government' (*ibid.*, p. 230), led by Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (who died in 1897) who should have been called to account for the subsequent disasters in Cuba.

### ***La abolición de la esclavitud en el orden económico, 1873***

Two years after his first parliamentary speech, Labra published his most important book on the subject of abolition in Cuba: *La abolición de la esclavitud en el orden económico*. Although completed in January 1873, in Amadeus's reign,

11 In 1873, during the Federal Republic, the *Virginus*, a fast ship built originally in Scotland for the Confederates but now owned by Cuban separatists based in New York, was plying arms to Cuba under a US flag. On one of its several voyages, it was captured by the Spanish authorities. The entire crew of 53 were shot, including several Irish and Irish Americans, notably Unionist General William Ryan. This created a diplomatic episode which was resolved only when the Spanish government apologised to the United States, paid an indemnity and agreed to punish the military officer in charge.

it was not published until December 1873, by which time Spain was governed by a Federal Republic. The military coup, less than one month later (3 January 1874), brought it down. Despite these political upheavals, Labra kept up the pressure. In this seminal study, he presented three convincing arguments for the immediate abolition of slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico: human rights, politics and economics. He was certain there would be no objection to abolition on the grounds of human rights: the general consensus in Spain was that slaves had rights, but not everyone agreed that the slave owners also had rights to compensation for the expropriation of their property. The political argument was that abolition would end the war in Cuba; some 6,000 to 8,000 slaves and Chinese indentured labourers were fighting against Spain for their personal freedom, not for Cuban independence. On the other hand, Labra conceded that the destruction caused by the emancipation of slaves in Saint Domingue and Haiti might cause some to fear this course of action in Cuba, but he explained that the problems in Saint Domingue were not caused by abolition in 1793, but rather by Napoleon's reimposition of slavery in 1804.

The economic argument for abolition was that Cuba, a third of the size of Spain with a tenth of its population, provided a quarter of all Spain's trade. Total income from Cuba was 201 million pesos; yet government expenditure on the island was only 137 million pesos, of which 45 per cent was military and naval (Labra, 1873, p. 280). Obviously, Spain wanted to protect this industry. Labra argued that Cuban planters realised that the economic conditions were right for contract labour to replace slave labour. Sugar production rates in Cuba were low, in comparison with Jamaica, Reunion and Barbados: according to Juan Poey's report of 1873, production rates in Jamaica were 5,755 *arrobas* per *caballería* (4,360 lbs per Cuban acre; c. 2 tons per acre), in Reunion the figure was 7,425 (2.8 tons per acre) and in Barbados it was 9,609 (3.6 tons per acre). In Cuba, the production rate was 2,109 *arrobas* per *caballería* (three-quarters of a ton per acre) (*ibid.*, p. 10).<sup>12</sup> The question was not whether to replace slave labour but how to make the transition. Labra's answer was to use steam-powered machines, imported from the US, and he challenged the belief that slaves were needed on the plantations. In Puerto Rico, there were 31,000 slaves, but only 20,000 of them worked on the land, and of these only 11,500 were working-age men. In Cuba, according to the 1862 census, there were 76,000 domestic slaves, plus 292,300 slaves on plantations, of whom 183,200 were men. Was the solution then only to abolish domestic slavery? Clearly not (*ibid.*).

Using figures obtained from the *Annuaire Encyclopédique* (1866–7) and volume 17 of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (1871), Labra compared the effects of abolition on sugar production in the British and French colonies (abolition dating from 1834 and 1848 respectively) and in the United States (from

12 1 *arroba* = 25lbs; 1 *caballería* = 33 Cuban acres.

1865). In the French colonies, sugar production fell by 55 per cent the day after abolition, but rose within a year: the highest production ever was achieved between 1852 and 1857, although there was a great variation between Reunion, which saw the huge economic benefit of rapid abolition, and Guadeloupe, where abolition was gradual. In 1843, sugar imports to Great Britain from the British colonies had fallen by a quarter since abolition: there was a large reduction in imports from Jamaica, but production remained steady in Antigua. Sugar exports from Barbados, Trinidad and Antigua grew by 26 per cent over a period of 13 years (1830–43), and any reduction in production was compensated by higher prices and greater demand. In the United States, sugar production was badly affected until 1872, but was compensated by the increased production of tobacco, maize and rice. Labra's conclusion was that the immediate and simultaneous abolition of slavery and the rapid switch to contract labour were far better for sugar production than the gradual introduction of contract labour. Furthermore, conditions in Cuba were right, because the Cuban-African population was well-educated and well prepared to make the transition to freedom: in 1851, the literacy rate among Africans in Cuba was 11.5 per cent, compared with just nine per cent in the Canary Islands and in parts of south-east Spain. Indeed, illiteracy in Spain (75.54 per cent) was higher than in Cuba (74 per cent) (Labra, 1873, pp. 320–1).

Labra remained a deputy until 1898, representing Puerto Rico or Cuba, throughout the Republic and the reigns of Alfonso XII (1870s), Alfonso XIII and the Regency of Queen María Cristina (1880s and 1890s). He campaigned for the abolition of slavery in Cuba until it was finally abolished in 1886. He was one of the strongest defenders of Cuban autonomy (or home rule), and an autonomous government came into effect in January 1898, but too late to put an end to the warfare or to avoid US intervention three months later. As Rafael Tarrago argues, 'It was the Cuban insurgents who, by refusing to make peace with the Cuban autonomous government and by welcoming U.S. intervention, legitimized the presence of the United States in Cuba, and confirmed the American claim that war with Spain was a liberal crusade and not a land-grabbing operation' (1998, p. 528).<sup>13</sup> For Labra, Cuban autonomy had been achieved 'on the basis of the same political and civil rights in Spain and the Antilles for all colours and classes, and representation of the Antilles in the Spanish Parliament' (1915, p. 27). However, after the loss of Cuba in 1898, 'broken in body and soul' (*ibid.*, p. 29), Labra withdrew from public life for two years. He returned to parliament as a Democratic Republican Senator, representing the Cuban Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País, and was elected six times.

13 See also Castellanos (1960) and Bayron del Toro (2005).

In 1915, three years before his death at the age of 78, Labra drew a direct connection between his first speech in parliament and what he considered to be a favourable outcome for race relations in Cuba. In comparison with Jamaica, Santo Domingo, Martinique, Guadeloupe and above all the United States, he argued, the successful outcome of emancipation in Cuba and Puerto Rico was exemplary. Labra was proud of his contribution; in the Spanish Antilles, against all expectation, there had been no black-on-white violence, sugar production had hardly been affected and great cultural and economic progress had been made by Cubans of African descent, who enjoyed the same civil and political rights as whites. There were many African-Cuban local and national politicians, writers and public intellectuals, and numerous African-Cuban social and cultural centres and organisations working harmoniously with Spanish and other Cuban centres. For Labra, ‘The insuperable success of the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico and Cuba is the work of Mother Spain, supported in an incomparable way by the blacks and whites of those two beautiful Antillean islands’ (*ibid.*, pp. 34–5).

Labra was, of course, over-optimistic in this respect. He makes no mention of the founding of the Cuban Partido Independiente de Color (1908), the subsequent race war of 1912 (May to August) led by Evaristo Estenoz, or to its brutal repression during which white-on-black violence greatly exceeded levels recorded even after the abolition of slavery and the independence wars (Helg, 1995, p. 234). Like the most influential Cuban black politicians and activists of the time, in particular senator Martín Morúa Delgado and Labra’s friend Juan Gualberto Gómez (whom trained lawyer Labra had legally defended during Gualberto’s exile in Spain in the 1880s), and indeed José Martí himself, Labra had bought into the foundational national ‘myth’ of Cuban racial equality (*ibid.*, p. 268). This position favoured a black political elite but not the Cuban masses of African descent. A third of the island’s population during the Republic was black, and of this only three per cent could be considered privileged (Pappademos, 2011, pp. 71, 226). Even the African-Cuban veterans of the independence wars were excluded from employment and economic and political influence. This situation, Labra might have argued, was in large part the result of the segregationist policies introduced by the first US government in Cuba. However, the strategy pursued by the black republican elite, who strongly condemned political violence and the outlawed Partido Independiente de Color, was one of leadership, compromise and negotiation. They endorsed W.E.B. Du Bois’s view of the need for a ‘Talented Tenth’, a black educated vanguard which would prove that the ‘negro race can improve itself through education’ (Pappademos, p. 143). Pappademos dates this political demand for encouraging black education, opportunity and improvement to the late 19th century, between 1880 and 1895 (*ibid.*, p. 146), when (though she fails to

mention this) Cuba was still governed by Spain. The impetus for the rapid advancement of African-descended Cubans came as much from Spain as it did from Cuba, and was largely due to Labra's life-time campaign. It is about time his contribution was recognised.

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## **5. Ethnic whitening processes and the politics of race, labour and national identity in colonial Cuba: a case study of Irish immigrants, 1818–45**

*Margaret Brehony*

Racial demographic patterns, ethnicity and the supply of labour in 19th-century Cuba were crucial to colonial wealth and the political economy of the Spanish empire. This chapter will examine the presence of Irish migrants in the context of colonial strategies to whiten the labour force through European immigration. In the early decades of the 19th century, revolution, independence struggles and pressure to abolish slavery in the Atlantic world resulted in the escalation of slavery and a strengthening of Cuba's colonial relationship with Spain. At the same time, a boom in sugar production saw the number of imported African slaves double between 1811 and 1820, as well as an increase in the number of free blacks. Colonial authorities, anxious to control the majority black population, sought to curtail the dominance of free blacks in the skilled trades by replacing them with white workers. They particularly feared alliances between free blacks and rebellious slaves, and set about promoting colonisation strategies to deliberately 'whiten' (and Europeanise) the colony. Driven by fear of a black majority, the planter class in Cuba, some of whom were of Irish extraction, persuaded the Spanish Crown in 1818 to promote white immigration by allowing Catholics who were not Spanish subjects to enter its colonies.

Cuban officials began to target European migrants, and recruited emigrants in Baltimore, New Orleans and Philadelphia. Little is known about these processes, which saw hundreds of Irish families form new settlements in coastal areas around Cienfuegos, Matanzas and Havana, along with newly arrived colonists from France and the Canary Islands. Based on an examination of the records of the Comisión de Población Blanca and other understudied sources in Cuban archives, a reconstruction of selected case histories of this early Irish diaspora throws light on their sociolegal relationships with the island's majority African diaspora, their position vis à vis labour and class processes, and their identification as Spanish subjects.

Two migration flows are examined here, illuminating the different ideological underpinnings of immigration and colonial labour, as they were determined

by rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions in Cuba. The 1819 migration occurred in the context of imperial policies of colonial settlement and security; the experience of Irish families who became part of these first 'white colonies' in a frontier context is contrasted with the later arrival of more than a thousand Irish railway workers in 1835. At that time of abolition in the Atlantic world, importing cheap wage labourers was conceived of as a substitute for slave labour in addition to increasing the white population.

The central questions under consideration here are: how did Irish immigrants conform to colonial strategies, first in the plan to whiten the black population in Cuba and, secondly, as a solution to the crisis of cheap labour under mounting pressure to abolish slavery? The idea of whitening appealed to opposing political positions: for *criollo* [creole] planters who wanted to maintain slavery, a white/black demographic balance went some way to allaying fears that slaves would revolt. Paradoxically, reformists who wanted to abolish slavery in favour of free labour advocated white colonisation, as did independence-minded planters, who feared that a large slave population jeopardised the possibility of political independence from Spain. They were not prepared to share power with people of African descent. The Spanish authorities, on the other hand, distrusted the project of whitening and European immigration 'seeing it as expression of separatist tendencies' (Schmidt-Nowara, 1999, p. 9).

Irish Catholics began to flee colonial subjugation in Ireland after the Napoleonic Wars and crossed the Atlantic in ever greater numbers to find economic and political refuge in North America. They moved between the British and Iberian imperial systems at a critical juncture in the development of capitalism in the Atlantic economy. In this age of abolition, how did they negotiate changing race and labour relations? Those who migrated to colonial Cuba at a time when slavery was at its height found themselves caught up in colonial strategies to whiten the black population. To demonstrate their role in these events, this chapter examines their relationship with the African diaspora and asks: where did they stand in relation to slavery or abolition in the emerging system of free wage-labour in Cuba? With whom did they compete for work, for instance? Did they form alliances across colour lines? On the question of Spanish rule, did the Irish identify with pro-Spanish loyalism or the *criollo* desire for independence?

## **Irish migration to the Caribbean**

Over the course of the 18th century a diverse cross-section of Irish society circulated within the Caribbean region. Catholic and Protestant gentry and merchants became planters or administrators, or held high office in the colonial service; however, a greater number of these Irish were landless and poor, transported to the West Indies under a system of coerced labour. There they

made up the lower echelons of Caribbean society, alongside enslaved and free people of African descent. Irish merchants used trade and kinship networks in the British West Indies and also availed themselves of Spanish patronage to take advantage of the relatively late economic revolution in Cuba, based on African slavery. Though they settled predominantly in the English-speaking colonies, their successful integration with the Cuban oligarchy marked a break with Spanish suspicions about the Irish in the Americas, where 'the Spanish clearly believed that their co-religionists had been tainted by a history of co-operation with the English' (Shaw and Block, 2011, p. 44). Although this group is not the focus of this chapter, they played no small part in the importation and circulation of Irish migrants in Cuba.

Irish labour became part of a highly mobile proletariat in the Atlantic world and, as Karl Marx described it, they were 'suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled onto the labour market as free, unprotected, and rightless proletarians' (Marx, 1990 [1867], p. 876). The demand for labour abroad and land enclosures in Ireland were 'twin aspects of the same process, involving global migration networks, emigrant remittances, capital formation and labour dispersal' (Kenny, 2003, p. 152). This exodus, between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Great Famine, was associated mainly with colonisation ventures or opportunity in the New World. Evictions, enclosures and agrarian conflict saw ever greater numbers of Catholic emigrants joining the trans-Atlantic flow. An estimated 1.5 million emigrants left in the pre-Famine period, becoming the most significant outflow from any European country.

It is well established by diaspora scholars that, within the British empire, the Irish were 'both subjects and agents of imperialism' (Kenny, 2004, p. 93). Given the diversity of their position in Cuban society, the same could be said of the Irish diaspora within the Spanish empire: Irish criollo families were actively imperialist in their support for a colonial system where property rights and race and class hierarchies ensured that they profited from slavery right up to the end of the 19th century. In turn, they played an active part in strategies designed to increase the white population, in which Irish settler families and migrant labourers could be construed as 'passive' agents of these ideologies. Yet, as political changes and the struggle for independence evolved, Irish criollo families also came to support a break with Spanish rule.

The question of Irish immigrants' embrace of whiteness and their contribution to structural processes of white dominance in the Cuban context will be considered here through an examination of the socioeconomic transformations associated with slavery and with abolition in the Caribbean region. With respect to the planter class, their contribution to shaping colonial structures of white privilege is relatively unambiguous; however, the question

of racial or ethnic alliances by a poorer class of immigrants is not as clearcut, given the ideological underpinnings of white colonisation which brought them there in the first place. The question in relation to an immigrant labouring class might be more usefully framed as: what was the significance of the 'wages of whiteness' (Roediger, 1999)<sup>1</sup> to Irish settlers and 'free' labourers in the context of race and class politics in Cuba? Categorised as free or wage labour, Irish workers ostensibly represented the epitome of modernity, where chattel slavery represented the polar opposite; but, as this chapter will show, white/European pitted against black/African was a much more complex and nuanced process in the island, where slavery on a massive scale, juxtaposed with other forms of labour, was the key to capitalist development.

The exodus of Catholics from Ireland coincided with changing laws in the Spanish empire, permitting Catholics who were not subjects of Spain to migrate to the colonies. In 1826, Agustín Ferrey, Intendente of Havana and the senior colonial administrator on the island, recommended the 'urgent promotion' of white Catholic immigration to Cuba. As part of his plan to import two thousand colonists, he viewed Catholics from Ireland as a particularly worthy and prolific source, expressed by him in correspondence with Tomás Romay, on 28 March 1828.<sup>2</sup> In a well-worn pro-slavery polemic, his *Memoria de la Isla de Cuba escrito por el Intendente Agustín Ferrey* (Madrid, 1826), he proclaimed that 'our slaves on this island, generally speaking, are infinitely happier than the wage workers of Europe, and especially the degraded masses of Irish Catholics' (cited in Pérez Murillo, 1987, p. 275).<sup>3</sup> On these grounds, he assured the Spanish court that many would jump at the opportunity to emigrate: 'whole *parroquias enteras* [parishes] from Ireland would transport themselves to a country where they were assured an honourable living and could openly profess the religion of their forbearers' (ibid). In this instance, the historically close relationship between Ireland and Spain, based on religious ties, was complicated by developing capitalist relations in 19th-century Cuba. The promise of an 'honourable living' in the Catholic colony was motivated by the need to increase the white population. As this chapter will demonstrate, class and race would define more their experience in the 'peculiar mix' of labour relations in Cuba, regardless of religion or ethnic origin.

## The Irish-Cuban criollo planter class

The origins of the Cuban sugar oligarchy can be traced back to 'distinguished ancestry' in 'Spain, France, Portugal, Ireland or the Low Countries', but the

- 1 David Roediger, in his study of the US working class, suggested that the history and politics of race are crucial to understanding the formation of working-class consciousness.
- 2 Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento (ANC RCJF), 185–8341.
- 3 See Archivo General de las Indias (AGI) Sección de Santo Domingo, legajo 1157.

majority of them came to Cuba in the 18th century (Knight, 1977, p. 235).<sup>4</sup> Prominent individuals in the O'Reilly and O'Farrill clans joined the aristocracy through marital ties with established wealthy families, such as Arango, Peñalver and Calvo. They came to dominate Havana society and government up to the mid 19th century, in a system where office-holding, military service and wealth converged in the centres of colonial power. As owners of vast properties, their family and political positions, as Knight points out, 'provided the opportunity to fashion laws which further reinforced their situations' including control of the slave trade and restriction of land acquisition (*ibid.*, p. 253).

Consistent with Bourbon reformism, the new liberal Spanish state introduced military, fiscal and institutional changes to renovate the imperial enterprise and stimulate trade. The Crown modernised the old Royal Consulado (an institutional part of the Spanish American colonial administration and defence structures), to become the Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, an official organ of empire adapted to control all aspects of the sugar industry, financial, technical and human labour (Moreno Fraguas, 1976, p. 47). In the absence of parliamentary representation for the colony, planter elites used these institutions as vehicles to advance their interests, privileges and prosperity, while paying revenue to the Spanish Crown. The Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País was set up in 1793, as an academy to develop the most modern Enlightenment ideas on agriculture, industry and progress. Don Juan José O'Farrill, a descendant of Irish nobility from Longford, was a founder member and deputy director, representing the interests of planters.

The close ties between Ireland and the Iberian world, as already noted, were rooted in the exchange of religious and political loyalty for protection from the Spanish Crown (Villar García, 2000).<sup>5</sup> For elite Irish refugees in 18th-century Cuba, the exchange involved a relationship with empire that guaranteed prosperity and the opportunity to exert influence and power over the liberalisation of the slave trade. Irish criollo elites at the heart of the Cuban aristocracy played their part in consolidating property and wealth and embedding attendant racial hierarchies. They supported allegiance to the Crown throughout the political upheavals that resulted in the first black independent republic in Haiti in 1804 and the independence revolutions in South America. Concessions from the Spanish Crown, used precisely to quell insurrection, secured the loyalty of Cuban planters for the time being. Consequently, advocates of colonial rule argued that the island needed Spanish

4 These families fulfilled the Spanish requirement of *limpieza de sangre* [purity of blood] by pledging the family's unflinching adherence to the Roman Catholic religion, and the absence of any trace of Moorish or Jewish blood through at least four generations on either side.

5 Fernando Ortiz Fernández wrote a lengthy 'Prólogo' to the 1930 Cuban edition of O'Kelly (1930), citing Irish connections with the Cuban oligarchy through Catholic courts in Europe and Irish brigades in the Spanish army.

troops to protect the social-economic order based on slavery; therefore it could not become an independent nation (Ferrer, 1999, p. 8). With a massive increase in slave imports, even more 'progressive' criollos, who favoured sovereignty, consented to the presence of imperial troops to quell slave rebellions. The planters remained loyal to their colonial masters as a form of self-defence, which was 'mostly pragmatic' knowing that 'colonialism perpetuated their wealth' (Kapcia, 2005, p. 28). Despite their 'uneasy relationship' with the metropolis and their fear of being overtaken by the black population, Cuban planters 'readily used to their own advantage the structures and resources of the Spanish Empire' and rapidly became the wealthiest colony in Spain's diminishing Empire (Dal Lago, 2009, p. 397). By 1830, Cuba was the world's largest producer of sugar and the United States, with the fastest-growing population, became its major trading partner.

## Haiti and white colonisation

The proximity of a zone of liberty for slaves in Haiti was used by the colonial authorities to create, in the minds of the slave-holding elite, a perpetual fear of slave or black agency as a threat to the social order. As Cuba's black population increased, to outnumber whites, their presence posed 'a real, not imaginary threat to the public order', to the existence of plantation slavery and the colony itself (Mildo Hall, 1996, p. 74). The spectre of Haiti became the driving force of white colonisation strategies throughout the 19th century (Naranjo Orovio, 2005, p. 91). The authorities in Cuba attempted to balance racial demographics and the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País devised new strategies to increase the white population. The Sociedad became 'the seed-bed for enlightened thinking and eventually separatist thinking in Havana' and, with that, 'the most important institution for the formation of an elite criollo identity' (Kapcia, 2005, p. 43). As a civic institution, it had a wide influence on socioeconomic developments in the colony, applying the new science of political economy to questions of agriculture, new technologies and labour, population and ethnic composition. A prominent member of the Sociedad, Francisco Arango, viewed the island's integration into the changing conditions of the Atlantic economy as dependent on the ability of the market to maintain a 'happy equilibrium' between unrestricted slave imports and agricultural exports. The coexistence of slavery, free-trade ideology and enlightenment thought was 'regarded as at once a defining feature and a central paradox of the 19th-century Cuban slave regime' (Tomich, 2005, p. 58).<sup>6</sup> In January 1792, Arango petitioned the Spanish Crown to promote the settlement of white

6 Francisco Arango elaborated ideas on political economy in his well-known *Discurso sobre la agricultura de la Habana y medios de fomentarla* (1793); this programme of social and economic development and reform was written in the midst of the slave revolt in Haiti.

families in towns along the coast and to create villages in convenient places 'as a powerful check on the seditious ideas of rural slaves' (Corbitt, 1942, p. 282).

At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Britain drew up new measures with Spain to end the slave trade within five years; it was agreed to pay to Spain one million pounds to fund the migration of Canary Islanders to the Spanish Caribbean and to indemnify slave-owners to the tune of half a million pounds (Naranjo Orovio and García González, 1996). In 1818, the colony secured the right to free trade. The Spanish Crown endorsed new immigration schemes, 'provided that they were from the right place and professed the correct religious sentiments' (Corbitt, 1942, p. 280). In this context, the oppressed masses of Irish Catholics were viewed as a useful cohort, who might be tempted by the idea of religious freedom in Cuba.

In the 20 years between 1790 and 1810, the island's population almost quadrupled, with the biggest increase attributable to the number of slaves introduced during this period. These critical demographic changes resulted in the royal *cédula* [identification card] of 1817, giving new impetus to the search for white immigrants.

Cuba at this time was very much a 'sugar frontier' (Tomich, 2005, p. 61) and unprecedented expansion of the plantation system responded to demand on the world market. As more land was given over to sugar production, new security strategies concentrated on a parallel expansion of population centres, by creating agricultural colonies close to ports in coastal areas. The first white colonies were on lands along the eastern shore, a short 50 miles from Haiti, and on the southern shore, only 80 miles from Jamaica. Responsibility for white immigration schemes was taken over by a newly-formed Comisión de Población Blanca (CPB).

The CPB, set up in 1817, was made up of influential landowners (José Ricardo O'Farrill, Juan Montalvo, Andrés Jáuregui, Antonio del Valle Hernandez and Dr Tomás Romay, who presided over it) who raised money to fund the schemes. A royal *cédula* imposed a tax of six pesos on every male slave landed in Cuba over the next three years to fund immigration – lucrative, given that 56,000 slaves were shipped to Havana during this time (Corbitt, 1942, p. 290). In the plans to establish rural villages, strict rules confined settlers to frontier life and the colony to which they were assigned for the first five years. On completion of their contracts, provided that they had no debts, they were entitled to purchase land and slaves and become naturalised Spanish subjects; in return, the colonist was obliged to defend the island against invasion or revolt by the slave population.<sup>7</sup> Besides laying down conditions for the control of religious and race association, the royal *cédula* of 1817 also listed the type of workers they required: labourers, carpenters, stone-breakers, brick masons

7 ANC Real Ordenes y Cédulas (ROC), 67–340.

and coopers (Naranjo Orovio, 2005). A register of foreign residents compiled by the CPB, lists 166 Irish colonists who arrived with their families in 1818–19; one example was Dionisio (Denis) O'Reardan, a Catholic ironmonger, accompanied by his wife and four children, all natives of Ireland, who was employed to work in a foundry in Alquizar. Applications for domicile were sponsored by owners or administrators of coffee farms, cattle ranches and artisan workshops.<sup>8</sup> Within two years, more than 10,000 colonists entered Cuba under these conditions, with almost half going to Nuevitas on the north-east coast (*ibid.*, p. 99).<sup>9</sup>

### The 'white colony' of Cienfuegos (1818–25)

Irish migrants were, along with French and Canary Islanders, some of the earliest European settlers in Cienfuegos, one of the first white colonies founded on the southern coast. Don Luis De Clouet, a native of Louisiana, successfully petitioned the Spanish Crown to set up the colony and then used Catholic church networks to recruit immigrants of European origin in Philadelphia, Baltimore and New Orleans (Rovira González, 1976). Promises of grants of land, accommodation, seeds and livestock had enticed about 845 settlers by 1823, including 18 Irish families; there were 19 Spanish families, 11 German, 2 Portuguese and 84 French families (*ibid.*, p. 35). Besides enticing white Catholic settlers to develop a rural economy based on smallholdings, the scheme also insisted on female migration, to reproduce the desired ethnic group.

De Clouet was provided with funds for colonists, amounting to three-and-a-half reales a day per adult, and half that for anyone under 15, for the first six months of their time in the colony (Edo, 1861, p. 21). As with the conditions of indentured service, colonists were obliged to repay this money, plus the cost of their passage to Cuba, if they abandoned the colony before the five-year contract was up. Families were housed in tents for between six months and a year, until they cleared the densely forested land and completed the construction of public buildings and homes. The colony was beset by friction, calamities and discontent, as the hardship and insecurity of frontier life became intolerable at times. There were two outbreaks of cholera in 1819 and 1820 and a devastating hurricane in 1825.

8 Applications for residency, made to the Governor-General, were all signed by José O'Farrill, who oversaw the process on behalf of the Junta de Población Blanca. Residency applications can be seen in ANC RCJF, 190–8559.

9 Exact figures for Irish immigrants are not available. The Sociedad Económica provides a breakdown of immigrants in Matanzas in 1818: over eight months, 517 foreign and national colonists with skills settled in the area – 44 per cent were Spanish and just over 7 per cent of the rest were Irish (see *Memorias de la Real Sociedad Económica de La Habana*, La Habana, 1819, p. 84).



Hundreds of colonists petitioned the CPB to release settlement funds promised to them by the Spanish Consul in Baltimore. Close to a thousand petitions by European colonists are held in the records of the CPB, mostly from the Canary Islands: 369 were made by Irish families.<sup>10</sup> Letters authorising the release of funds were signed by Juan O’Farrill on behalf of the Comisión.<sup>11</sup> One petition by four Irish coopers, with their families, described how the positions promised to them did not exist and how they were ‘reduced to the most extreme misery and forced to beg on the streets’.<sup>12</sup> Owen O’Reilly, a native of Ireland, who came with his wife and four children from New Orleans, blamed their destitution on ‘not being able to find work and not having the language of the country’.<sup>13</sup> Contracts were frequently abused by property owners more used to a system of slavery and they refused any burden of care for immigrant white workers who were not their property. In Cienfuegos, disputes over land between local landowners, the authorities and De Clouet, led to settlers being evicted and having to re-establish themselves elsewhere. In January 1820, discontent led to rebellion against the founder, in which colonists accused him of violence, verbal abuse and unjust treatment.<sup>14</sup> By February, up to 76 French immigrants had deserted the colony; many more became disillusioned with the situation and, being artisans and not peasants, they drifted towards urban areas to find wage-work.

Sugar and slavery transformed Cienfuegos and other plantation areas up to the mid-century; huge advances in steam-driven technologies radically improved production and transport. By 1838, the slave population in and around Cienfuegos was estimated at over 4,000, with a ratio of three slaves for every white worker. A growing community of free blacks also began to emerge, through manumission and migration from Trinidad and Havana (García Martínez, 2008). Plantation slavery escalated during the sugar boom and, by 1845, the population of Cienfuegos had reached 33,428 (Edo, 1861). There were gradations of social status in black and white communities, depending on legal status, access to credit and property ownership; of course, ultimately social mobility was based on the privileges implicit in the racial hierarchy of colonial Cuba. The colony of Cienfuegos grew from a small population of immigrant indentured labour, clearing virgin forests for contraband trade in hardwood,

10 The names of Irish families in the *Cartas de Domicilio de Extranjeros* (1818–19) can be seen in ANC LM, 1210.

11 Petitions to the *Junta de Población Blanca* can be found in ANC RCJF, 191–8566 and ANC RCJF, 191–8567.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 Accounts of De Clouet’s treatment of colonists and their reaction to him can be seen in ANC Gobierno Superior Civil (GSC), 633–20006.

and developed perfect conditions for the expansion of sugar production and an illegal trade in enslaved African labour.

For those who survived the initial hardship, it is likely that they took advantage of the opportunities that arose during the sugar boom and the rapid economic growth of Cienfuegos, contributing to laying the foundations of the town's middle class (García Martínez, 1977). Irish names, such as Carr, Collins, Reilly, Boyle, Owens and Byrne, listed in the early records for the colony, appear up to the end of the century in civil and parish-church records. Between 1820 and 1857, records of marriages and baptisms show double-barrelled Irish-Cuban surnames.<sup>15</sup> Nineteenth-century Cuba did not outlaw mixed unions but relied on, and reinforced, Spanish ideas of *limpieza de sangre* [blood purification], because social stability in an expanding slave society depended on maintaining strict racial hierarchies. Hostility to mixed marriages or family formation was often registered by white family members who generally objected to the union in terms of 'absolute inequality' or the 'remarkable and transcendental stain' on their reputation (Martínez-Alier, 1974, p. 17). In one instance of a bride who was rejected because her grandmother was African, Martínez-Alier cites the parents' challenge as follows '[the young man] cannot be allowed to stain the splendour of his family by binding himself to a woman whose origin ... is to be found on the coast of Africa' (ibid., p. 16). One of the purposes of segregated church records or racially marked records was to alert unsuspecting whites to the non-white ancestry of prospective spouses. In order to police the boundaries of race and secure forever, as Zeuske puts it, 'the cultural prison of socially stigmatized blackness', Francisco Arango reassured people that white blood tarnished by the African race would not be covered by dust, but in the 'tradition of parchment'; the inscription of race and the protection of class were assured for generations to come (Zeuske, 2002, p. 213). In this way colonial governance in Cuba could be relied upon to increase division by marking and excluding this category of *gente de color* [people of colour] from the body politic.

The metropolitan push to colonise the countryside with peasant families loyal to Spain never amounted to much. However, they did contribute to laying the foundations of settlement for towns along the coast, and European families, including Irish ones, and their descendants, formed the basis of early populations in Nuevitás, Cienfuegos, Matanzas and Havana. Efforts to socially-engineer the racial balance up to the end of the 19th century were more often sidelined by 'the lure of wealth through slave trading and slave-based sugar production' and efforts to diversify forms of labour exploitation were 'sabotaged', despite fears of slave revolts and the 'Africanisation' of Cuba (Bergad, 1990, p. 245). It was only when slaves revolted, or when rumours

15 This is borne out by my preliminary search of the Índice Bautismos de Blancos 'extranjeros' in Cienfuegos Cathedral parish records and the Protocolos Notariales in the Cienfuegos Provincial Archives in 2015.

of insurgency circulated, that sections of the planter-class mustered some enthusiasm for the promotion of white colonisation.

### **The racial contract – whiteness and property**

The position and status of newcomers to the colony were carefully structured to create a class of poor whites who were spatially and socially segregated from enslaved people. From the outset, the racial contract, legally defined by royal *cédula*, undergirded the relationship between whiteness and property for new immigrants.<sup>16</sup> Property rights and racial status were ‘a built-in and natural product’ of European immigration to Cuba, in order to carve out the distance between poor whites and slaves (Stoler, 1989, p. 137).<sup>17</sup> In the formation of a ‘white buffer-zone’, immigrants had to pledge to oppose slave resistance in the frontier zones where they settled (including by bearing arms). While lower-class Irish immigrants may not have consciously identified themselves as white, and therefore privileged in the racial hierarchy of colonial Cuba, the case of Mary Gallagher, an Irish washerwoman in Havana, demonstrates how the authorities’ control and surveillance of the racial contract structured the relationship between poor whites and enslaved blacks. The British Consul, David Turnbull, appealed for justice on her behalf, believing she was the victim of extortion:

I have the honour to communicate to Your Excellency, the grievous oppression committed to one of my country women ... who is the owner of a slave named Enrique, by birth an African of the Congo nation, about fifteen years of age and therefore a victim of the slave trade; in the purchase of whom she expended the greater part of her earnings. On the evening of Sunday the 26th September last, Enrique was allowed by his mistress to go out to walk; and he was accompanied by another boy, the slave of a Frenchman ... In the course of their walk Enrique picked up in the street a piece of iron with a knob at each end known by the name of a life preserve; and which from what followed was in all probability left in his path for the very purpose of entrapping the unwary ... the two boys were arrested and tied together by the sub commissary of the district of Santa Catalina.<sup>18</sup>

Mary Gallagher was forced by ‘threats and intimidation’ to pay two ounces of gold for Enrique’s release from prison. Before he was returned to her two months later, ‘she was required to attend at the prison and witness the infliction

16 On the connections between property and ‘the pursuit of happiness’ based on whiteness and white privilege, see Roediger (1999).

17 Ann Stoler (1989, p. 137) argues that ‘racism is the classic foil invoked to mitigate such divisions and is thus a critical feature in the casting of colonial cultures’.

18 ANC GSC, 844–28326.

of corporal punishment on the person of Enrique; after which he was restored to her; but not until she had paid the sum of \$16.14 to one of the officers of the prison'.<sup>19</sup> The Slave Code of 1842 stated that 'Any individual of whatever class, color, and condition he may be in is authorized to arrest any slave if he is met outside of the house or lands of his master' (Paquette, 1988, p. 269). Washerwoman Mary Gallagher had the same occupation as many enslaved women, but she was entitled to own slaves; poor whites and free blacks were obliged to 'apprehend' any enslaved person found without permission in civic spaces. Racially oppressive laws extended across the public sphere and across class, affording a presumption of liberty to most whites and authorising superiority by poor whites over any black person whether enslaved or free. Displays of lax control over slave property, or failure to comply with the implicit contract of racial superiority, incurred penalties designed to prevent the risk of alliances across racial boundaries. Poor whites did not always support slavery and, indeed, as Domingo Del Monte reported, 'only the poor speak badly of the slave trade' (*ibid.*, p. 94). Abolitionist sentiment was strongly associated with anti-colonial attitudes; hence the control of the social order was carefully policed by the authorities.

The presence of Irish colonists certainly bolstered Spanish imperial designs to cultivate a white majority for a time in Cuba, but their allegiance to Spanish rule and the pro-slavery lobby was not always guaranteed. The story of the O'Bourke family of Cienfuegos, over three generations, reflects some of the colony's dramatic political and economic transformations, culminating in the independence wars. Don Juan O'Bourke y Burke, a medical doctor from Limerick (Ireland), arrived in Trinidad in 1820; soon after his arrival, he married Nicolasa Palacios and they had five sons and five daughters. The family moved to Cienfuegos in 1830, where Juan O'Bourke bought a sugar plantation and called it 'Nueva Hibernia' (Bustamente, 1931). Some of the family married into wealthy merchant families in Cienfuegos; three daughters and one son remained single but still amassed wealth and property.<sup>20</sup> A decade after Juan's death in 1842, his inheritors sold the land and 37 'negros de ambos sexos de su dotación' [blacks of both sexes of his crew].<sup>21</sup> Although the estate had new owners and the name was changed to San Esteban, Juan O'Bourke Jr. maintained investments in the plantation up to 1860.<sup>22</sup> He also worked in a lucrative position as the administrator of La Carolina, a large estate on the outskirts of the La Jagua colony. Owned by a North American, Guillermo

19 These events are described in Turnbull's correspondence with Captain-General Geronimo Valdes on 6 Dec. 1841, ANC GSC, 844-28326.

20 Records appear in APC, PN: José Joaquín Verdaguier, 18 Nov. 1897, folio. 687.

21 This account can be seen in APC, PN: José Joaquín Verdaguier, 9 Nov. 1852, folio 199.

22 See Appendices nos. 2 and 3 in Rovira González, 'Apuntes sobre la organización de la economía cienfueguera' (1976), pp. 3-97.

Hood, the estate benefited from US capitalist investment, facilitating cutting-edge technological advances, such as steam-power mills and the railway. When Hood's nephew, William Stewart, took over in the middle of the century, the plantation had about 2,000 acres, worked by 500 slaves (Pérez Jr., 2011, p. 24). Members of the O'Bourke family continued to benefit from developments in sugar production and slavery throughout the 19th century.

Plantation owners in Cienfuegos were by and large a conservative force, and support for a gradual abolition of slavery was minimal. By the 1860s, descendants of this creolised immigrant family supported the annexationist cause in 1850, calling for an end to Spanish rule but seeking to preserve slavery through annexation by the United States, and later with anti-colonial forces in the independence war (Fernandez-Moya, 2007, p. 193). Juan O'Bourke Jr. joined local forces supporting the Narciso López expedition of that year, to liberate the Cuban people from the injustices of Spanish colonialism (Rousseau and Díaz de Villegas, 1920, p. 104).<sup>23</sup> O'Bourke was condemned to ten years' imprisonment in Ceuta, along with 19 young Irish emigrants recruited in New Orleans.<sup>24</sup> He escaped, returning to Cuba to join the anti-colonial forces in the Ten Years' War for Independence (1868–87). His son, a dental surgeon from the third generation of the O'Bourke family, 'Juanico' O'Bourke Palacios, then joined the liberation army during the 1895–98 independence war. In July 1897, alongside his brother 'Perico', he was fatally wounded in combat in Cienfuegos.

Marina O'Bourke, a daughter of Nicloasa Palacios de O'Bourke and Irish-born Juan O'Bourke, married a prominent merchant in Cienfuegos, Ignacio María de la Torre. When the Nueva Hibernia estate was sold, Marina retained ownership of Matilde O'Bourke as a domestic slave; Matilde obtained her freedom through manumission in 1871, but she maintained a relationship with the family, borrowing money from them and paying it back, over two decades. In a fascinating account of Matilde's life, Bonnie Lucero describes her as a wealthy property owner in her early 30s. Besides the O'Bourke family, Matilde's credit networks extended to established Spanish merchants in Cienfuegos; in turn, she became a creditor to the Cabildo Real Congo in 1897, a black mutual-aid society. She maintained social connections with the African diaspora at the same time as forging productive credit networks with white merchants. Matilde's economic and social relations at a time of war and economic crisis transgressed racial boundaries and tested the struggle for

23 Narciso López led three expeditions to Cuba between 1848 and 1851, all of which failed due to a lack of support from criollo land owners claiming to support the US annexation of the island.

24 For correspondence concerning the prisoners between British Consul Joseph Crawford, the Foreign Office and the Governor-General of Cuba see National Archives, Foreign Office (NA FO), 73–793.

racial equality and black inclusion in the discourse of a separate Cuban nation (Lucero, 2012). This account does not tell us where the O’ Bourke descendants stood on the question of slavery, abolition or racial equality, but Matilde’s relationship with Marina suggests some support for freedom and economic opportunity for people of African descent by this criollo woman of Irish-Cuban descent. The O’ Bourke descendants may well have been influenced by anti-colonial sentiment, passed on directly from Ireland or indeed from their criollo mother. Some members of the family are commemorated in the history of Cienfuegos for their part in the struggle for independence: one estate near Cienfuegos, owned by descendants of O’ Bourke, was divided into *solares* [lots] after independence, and the neighbourhood is known today as Barrio O’ Bourke.<sup>25</sup>

### Slavery, demographics and free labour

As international pressure to abolish slavery gathered force, the discourse of increasing the white population became one of finding a cheap labour substitute for slavery. Criollo nationalists were beginning to link labour and the formation a ‘Cuban race’ with the emerging imperatives of capitalist development. Until the middle of the 19th century, labour in Cuba was by necessity a system of ‘extraordinary diversity’ and slavery but just ‘one component in a complex labour system’ in which most workers were free people, including blacks and *mulatos* (Bergad, 2007, pp. 138–9). Free blacks dominated the skilled trades, as evidenced by the 1846 census, showing that this group were in the majority in occupations such as ‘butchers, sawyers, masons, midwives, mine workers, musicians, soap makers, stonemasons, tailors, and wet nurses’ (Paquette, 1988, p. 107). They owned property, including slaves, and formed companies of militia.

The formation of *cabildos* [local councils] ensured a reservoir of African culture for a growing population of African-Cubans and provided benevolent aid in times of difficulty for black people, both enslaved and free. Free blacks generally lived in urban areas and created black barrios to buffer the oppression of racism (Lucero, 2011).<sup>26</sup> Their position in Cuban society was more fluid, with greater social mobility than in the United States for instance. Many free blacks were smallholders and some worked seasonally on sugar plantations, holding positions as administrators and overseers.

During the 1830s and 1840s, the authorities considered the free-black population as the greatest threat to the social order; their freedom represented

25 My thanks to Carmen Manuel and Juan O’ Bourke for this information about their ancestors, the O’ Bourke family of Cienfuegos. See also Fernandez-Moya (2007, p. 193).

26 For a detailed account of property ownership by black people, interracial property transactions and the geography of race in Cienfuegos see Lucero (2011).

a contagious desire for liberty amongst the slave population and, in the repression that followed the Escalera<sup>27</sup> conspiracy, thousands of free blacks were either deported or fled Cuba.

Demographics and racial arithmetic were obsessively debated when the 1841 census revealed an increase in the number of slaves, which for the first time was greater than that of whites. The white population reached 41.5 per cent; the black population, with 43 per cent enslaved, combined with free blacks, reached 61 per cent. It is estimated that 36 per cent of the population lived in slavery, many still speaking African languages and having little or no contact with the criollo world outside the plantation (Benítez-Rojo, 1992). African-born slaves were in the majority in the sugar and coffee plantations of western Cuba, where the black population almost doubled that of whites (Torres Cuevas and Reyes, 1986).<sup>28</sup>

The increase in the black population caused alarm among the plantation owners who had, until recently, been indifferent to the CPB's efforts. In a lengthy petition to Captain-General Dionisio Valdes, in 1841, the Junta de Fomento called for an end to the illegal trade on the grounds that 'it appears because of that providential law deducible from these statistical facts that the increase of the servile is destined to prejudice the increase of the dominant race'.<sup>29</sup>

What was emerging among this powerful interest group was not just concern for their economic prosperity; their rhetoric was also changing to consider what kind of nation they wanted. A new generation of reform-minded planters and prominent intellectuals was prepared to consider independence from Spain only by creating what José Antonio Saco described as 'a Cuban nation formed by the white race' (Ferrer, 1999, p. 3). While the discourse of Cuban nationalism now centred on race and nationality, the planter class envisioned a vast labour market of dispossessed workers, both native and imported, who would also tip the balance in favour of whiteness (Moreno Friginals, 1976). Some of the earliest discursive formulations of national identity sought to assuage racial anxieties among the planter-elite, caught between pro-Spanish loyalism and the desire for independence, shared with the other half of the population, of African descent.

27 The Escalera conspiracy was the largest slave conspiracy in Cuba's history, uncovered in 1844; the term '*escalera*' [ladder] describes a form of torture used to extract confessions from slaves.

28 Estimates show that 780,000 slaves were imported to Cuba before the trade ended in 1867, more than twice the number taken to the United States and 8% of all African slaves brought to the Americas. For a comparison of African slavery in the Americas, see Bergad (2007).

29 The petition from the Junta de Fomento to the Captain-General, 1841, can be seen in vol. 1, Mr Turnbull, Jan.–Apr. 1841, see NA FO, 84.

## Abolition, Africanisation and *blanqueamiento*

The Spanish Crown, concerned that the advocates of abolition were also advocates of independence from Spain, continued to turn a blind eye to the illegal slave trade, believing that the fear of another Haiti strengthened the ties of the 'ever faithful island' to the metropolis. The urge for autonomy among liberal criollos was further tempered by abolitionist pressure from Britain, against which Spain offered some protection – slavery was their economic lifeblood and guaranteed wealth and status within the empire. Yet growing discontent among criollo elites and increasing racial tension saw black insurgency become more organised, while anti-colonial sentiment was beginning to surge. In the search for alternatives to slavery and 'surrounded on all sides by abolition', the Junta de Fomento warned the Captain-General that 'the number of your natural enemies within the island is daily increased', and that 'it is on account of the slave trade that the immigration of Europeans has not been increased'.<sup>30</sup>

The fear of cultural contamination of an emerging Cuban identity, or *cubanidad*, prompted some criollo separatists to adopt a discourse of abolition, based on the racist ideology of *blanqueamiento* [whitening] of the Cuban nation, in which the black race would eventually be extinguished. José Antonio Saco, described as the 'earliest apostle' of Cuban nationalism, argued that 'miscegenation was the only viable means' of ensuring that the emerging Cuban nation would become whiter over time (Guevara, 2005, p. 106). As the architect of colonial labour strategies, Francisco Arango had earlier prescribed a social order which moved beyond social and economic racism, to create what Tornero terms a 'national racism' (1987). In order to contain the 'risky' but necessary 'degeneration of whiteness' through miscegenation, Arango was more than alert to the need for 'structures of dominance' in the regulation of colonial labour and racial boundaries. He underlined the economic necessity of interracial unions, but demanded measures to ensure the social and cultural exclusion of black Cubans and that of their descendants (Zeuske, 2002). Cuba's modernising elites conceived of a nation racially and culturally in their own likeness, populated by Europeans and their descendants, making the island the most 'European' colony in Latin America (Gomariz, 2009).

Saco decried slavery, not on any moral grounds, but in unequivocally racist terms, arguing that it was an obstacle to 'progress and civilisation' (Corbitt, 1942, p. 300). Saco's prescription for whitewashing the population, while ensuring the protection of class and white racial purity, would confine such mixing to free-black women and poor white immigrants, 'los que solo pueden alimentarse con pan y plátanos' [those who can only eat bread and bananas] (Portuondo Zúñiga, 2005, p. 164). This is borne out by the records that show a

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



high number of interracial unions between impoverished white immigrant men and free-black and mulata women (Martínez-Alier, 1974). The 'pure white' woman of the criollo ruling class, who stood in contrast to the 'almost white' mulata, would not be contaminated in the creation of a white under-class. The union of 'not quite white' Irish labourers with African-Cubans would not only provide bodies for a substitute labour force, it would also contribute to the nation's racial project of blanqueamiento, while at the same time ensuring a 'class' ceiling, in what Guevara calls the 'ultimate unattainability of whiteness by non-whites' (ibid., p. 106). The colonial category of *mestizaje* [mixed race], as Stoler argues, embodies one of the tensions of empire, that of inclusion/exclusion, which in colonial Cuba turned on criollo/Spanish credentials as much as on racial categories (2001). Included as labouring bodies in the project of nationhood, but excluded from 'white prestige', the boundaries and prestige of elite Cuban (descendants of European) males, were protected.

The project of blanqueamiento was constructed in social and cultural terms, in opposition to Africanisation, and rested on a modernising imperative and the rhetoric of economic progress. Racist attitudes in this kind of nationalist discourse are, in Barbara Fields' terms, 'promiscuous critters', turning up in a discourse of opposites, where black is backward but not expendable and white is the modern nation (1982, p. 155). Conflicting concerns by colonial elites about racial hierarchies, labour and the creation of wealth and nationhood filled the records with a protracted discourse of how best to socially engineer what they considered to be the most profitable and palatable mix of imported white and black populations.

### **The railway and 'wages of whiteness'**

The CPB faded out of existence by 1835, and the project of whitening the nation was submerged in the economic forum of the Junta de Fomento, which advocated the need for a transition to wage-labour. At the height of a sugar boom and at a critical juncture in the development of capitalism in Cuba, the construction of the railway created an unprecedented demand for a cheap and mobile labour force. Some 35,000 white immigrants entered Cuba between 1834 and 1839, and about 70,000 enslaved people during the same period (Corbitt, 1942). Irish and other railway workers of European origin became the vanguard of cheap white labour. Recruited in New York, they became part of a modernising imperative to replace slavery with free labour. In the construction of cutting-edge railway technology, the first in Latin America, the colonial authorities decided to test the risks of wage labour under a system of contract. Transient migrants, dislocated and detached from family or social networks, were ideal subjects in the new experiment of contract labour. Better still, not understanding the language, they might more easily be subjected to coercive

labour practices. Forced to work under brutal conditions, their nominal wages were absorbed in repayments for the passage to Cuba, contractors' fees, accommodation, food and medicines. The contract led labourers to a position of debt-bondage and many did not survive the harsh conditions (Brehony, 2012b).

When Irish immigrants first began to appear in the rhetoric of colonial administrators, they were sympathetically described as Catholic victims of a rival British empire. They were identified as a prolific source of cheap labour, with 'momentous and far-reaching' promise to increase the white population. However, the narrative of the colonial record changed when resistance by Irish railway workers to the coercion of contract labour led to their repudiation by the authorities. In a new discourse of labour, the white immigrant was cast not as a frontier settler or agricultural worker, but as a free labourer working for a wage. However, accustomed as the planters were to owning labour, they could only conceive of free labour in terms like indenture or slavery; they were reluctant to give up the power of ownership and coercion, yet they readily relinquished any burden of care towards workers who were not their property. The authorities maintained the status quo of racial and class division through segregation, different disciplinary practices and preferential food rations for white workers. At the same time, they paid lip-service to the superiority of free workers over unfree workers, a strongly symbolic gesture in the discourse of social relations in a slave society. But what was really at stake in this careful management of racial and juridical categories was a well-founded fear of contagion by a common sense of injustice, spilling across colour lines and threatening the boundaries of race and class.

Irish migrants were already seasoned in the coercions of contract labour in the industrial trenches of the United States and were quick to protest against the intimidations and deceptions of their contracts in Cuba. In a critique of the troublesome Irish recruits who protested against their conditions, Alfred Kruger, the railway's chief engineer invoked what Frederick Cooper terms the 'sanctified concept of the contract' (2000, p. 22). Kruger wrote to the Railway Commission as follows:

Those who are not satisfied with the terms of their contracts and wish to leave the service of this government, are at liberty to do so if they have paid all their debts in relation to their passage and accommodation, and they must leave the island within three days ... and [after three days] they will be treated with all the rigor of the vagrancy laws of the country ... however much the engineers need the services of those workers imported from the north, under no circumstances will they be allowed to work constantly in a drunken state, insubordinate and disobeying the overseers; neither will their requests for more pay be tolerated.<sup>31</sup>

31 Kruger's report to the Railway Commission, see ANC RCJE, 130–6378.

Irish railway workers were intractable in their protest and engaged in a violent struggle to practice an 'imagined freedom' as wage labourers. They drew on a repertoire of protest and resistance which had its roots in the agrarian unrest of pre-famine Ireland, but continued to unfold in the radically different world of industrialising America. In the context of the Hispanic Caribbean, in a system which valorised free labour while relying on levels of coercion which were closer to slavery, Irish workers continued to contest colonial labour systems. From the perspective of planter-elites, with a sense of ownership of labour power, insubordinate workers presented too great a threat to the social order of the colony and they disrupted the discourse and logic of new forms of capitalist labour relations. The authorities were quick to recast the Irish as ethnically anomalous in the rhetoric of free market labour relations:

They were our first exercise in increasing the white population ... even though as 'free labour' we exceeded their contracts, providing the necessities of their accommodation, increased their pay and provided assistance when they were sick; but the incredible drunkenness, of the majority of these miserable wretches ... doubtless, as predicted by the American Consul, many of these will suffer and perish, no matter how they are treated or whatever country they are in; wherever else they bring their excesses, they take the same risk of not being recompensed for their work.<sup>32</sup>

Continuing the search for cheap expendable workers and following the example of the British West Indies, colonial authorities looked beyond the continents of Africa, Europe and the Americas to the next cohort of labour, trafficked from the Asian continent. Cuban planters enthusiastically embraced a legal trade in Chinese indentured labour to supplement rather than substitute for slave labour.

## Conclusion

The 'facts', as presented in the reportage of the colonial archives, represent Irish free labourers as an anomaly in the experiment of wage labour in 1830s' Cuba. This of course is at odds with the earlier anticipation of their 'far-reaching and momentous' potential as ethnic-whitening agents in the project of inventing a separate white Cuban nation. The labour debacle on the railway, as described in the colonial documents, elucidates the violent relationship developing at the time between capital and free labour but it also throws some light on the discursive strategies used by colonial elites who could only conceive of owning labour. Protest and resistance by Irish railway workers disrupted the social order of the colony, foretelling what wage-labour might bring to a transition from slavery to free labour. Irish migrants, no more than migrants from the African continent or the Canary Islands, were far from passive instruments

32 The Junta de Fomento to the American Consul, 15 Mar. 1836 (ANC RCJE, 130-6378).

in the evolving order of labour relations and drew on their own accumulated experiences of adaptation and resistance to constraints which inhibited their freedom, making common cause with the African diaspora in Cuba during the Escalera conspiracy of 1844 to end slavery. A number of Irish immigrants were imprisoned, accused of conspiring against white people and the Spanish Crown (Brehony, 2012a). In the reformulation of ethnicity and labour in the Cuban context, the representation of different ethnicities in the discourse of race and labour shifted according to, as Stoler terms it, the 'common sense' of colonial sense and reason, which, she argues, 'conjoined social kinds with the political order of things' and that was subject to revision and actively changed (2009, p. 9).

Irish planter families integrated themselves into colonial society and were well placed at the top of the hierarchy, as powerful players in the slave trade and plantation economy. White settlers from Ireland, as human capital in a colonial frontier, proved no less sound an investment than any other European immigrants within the 'logic' of white colonisation. The contract labourers and mechanics arriving at the beginning of Cuba's industrial revolution, though applauded as a boon to the white population, were repudiated by the authorities as being recalcitrant to capitalist relations. The Irish had not yet embraced their position as white in the racial pecking order of the United States, where pitting race against class worked to disrupt possible alliances between black, Chinese and Irish immigrants. Incidences of animosity by white railway workers towards enslaved workers do not appear in the records and their swift repudiation by the authorities may well have been a response to the risk of contagion in unleashing black resistance to similar harsh oppression. Racial segregation was policed, thus making solidarity among oppressed groups less easy to read. In Cuba, where there was no anti-Catholic prejudice and no evidence of prejudice against Irish immigrants, whiteness, in the rhetoric of advocates of free labour and a white Cuban nation, certainly privileged the labouring poor over people of African descent in a Spanish colony. Yet the whiteness of the railway workers was immaterial to their condition in between slavery and free labour. The coercion of labour was of much greater concern at the coalface of industrialisation than white racial solidarity or indeed the reproduction of whiteness. Economic imperatives superseded racial anxieties among elites at this juncture in Cuba's troubled colonial context.

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## 6. From Hispanic essays to modern reporting: the evolution of Cuban journalism seen through the figure of Justo de Lara

*Jordi Garrell*

Who really knows anything about Justo de Lara? Arguably, only a few, and those mainly in Cuba. Because of the contradictions and ambiguities surrounding him, Justo de Lara – the pseudonym adopted by José de Armas y Cárdenas (1866–1919) – is a somewhat enigmatic figure in Cuba's history. He is paradoxical because, despite having played significant social roles and having a strong public presence, he nevertheless seems to have passed through Cuban history virtually unnoticed by both historians and historically focused journalists. At best, he is included in the entries listed in Cuban literary criticism compilations, having been one of the foremost international experts on Cervantes and Shakespeare: in 1916, he was the only person from a non-English speaking country invited to serve as a member of the commission responsible for Shakespeare's tricentennial celebration.

Justo de Lara's place in history is thus unclear, since he stood out as much for his literary criticism as for his journalism, and, despite being officially celebrated more as a journalist than a critic, he is most remembered for his literary abilities. However, he lived through a turbulent period, when Cuba saw itself transformed from a Spanish colony into a republic with a constitution effectively amended by the United States – the latter strongly implying that the US would ultimately make all major Cuban decisions and that the *Guerra Grande* [great war] fought by Cubans had ultimately not accomplished the objectives envisaged by the majority of its participants. Justo de Lara witnessed the events of that period, explained them, and participated in them as a journalist: one who could write not just for Cubans, but also for Spaniards, and even for US readers. Yet, curiously, he remains almost completely forgotten.

### **The absence of Justo de Lara**

This chapter seeks to address that absence to some extent by answering the question of whether it is possible to consider the evolution of Cuban journalism

through the figure of Justo de Lara as a correspondent. Taking him as the point of reference in this context necessarily entails an analysis of his writings, from beginning to end of that turbulent period, one which spanned the final years of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th. The aim is to determine whether his articles do indeed represent a critical stage in the evolution of Cuban journalism.

However, although many examples could be examined, most of Justo de Lara's texts are of relatively limited value, as they do not much reflect the crucial transition mentioned above: for Justo de Lara to be a representative of the evolution of Cuban journalism, some personal development would need to be traceable from, say, a Hispanic journalistic tradition to a 'new journalism', the latter originating in the United States in the 20th century, and starting and ending with achieving professional recognition in that role. That is because, hardly any sense of progression is detectable in those writings, either in terms of style, format or topic, beyond perhaps the length. Some kind of evolution might be discernible in some of his publications, in terms of moving towards modernity; but even that is not convincingly demonstrated. Certainly, no cuttings from popular magazines can be found in the available evidence. In the second decade of the 20th century, titles such as *Bohemia*, *Gráfico* and *Social* were the most clearly representative of the new Cuban magazines, 'un nuevo tipo de revista que va apropiándose de los más recientes adelantos técnicos en la tipografía, la ilustración y la composición' (ILLACC, 1984, p. 761).<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, he continued to write solely for newspapers.

A comparison of two paragraphs from articles written at the very beginning and end of his career gives a sense of that lack of evolution. Here is the opening paragraph of his first article, 'La locura de Sancho', published in *La Nación*, 22 June 1882:

Al ver los opuestos tipos de la inmortal novela cervantina, el amo y el criado, pasar por los campos de la Mancha, caballeros en sendas cabalgaduras escualidas, en busca el uno de ilusorias aventuras y el otro de una no muy lejana ínsula, ocurre a cualquiera preguntar, ¿quién es más loco, Don Quijote o Sancho? (Armas, 1935, p. 1).<sup>2</sup>

Set that against the last paragraph from an unfinished article, written on 26 December 1919, two days before he passed away:

- 1 'A new type of magazine that is appropriating the latest technical advances in typography, illustration and composition.'
- 2 'Seeing the opposing characters in Cervantes' immortal novel, the master and the servant, passing through the fields of La Mancha like knights, but each one riding on a squalid mount, one looking for illusory adventures and the other for a not very distant island, does it not occur to anyone to ask, who is more crazy, Don Quixote or Sancho?'

‘Múdanse os tempos, múdanse as vontades’. No era un propósito anexionista el que motivó las simpatías de los Estados Unidos a la noble y patriótica propaganda de Martí. Fue sólo el convencimiento, adquirido por la experiencia en casi un siglo de disturbios, de que España era incapaz de gobernar con templanza y justicia una colonia situada a más de 1.600 leguas de su propio territorio y en la vecindad de un pueblo rico, y lleno de prosperidad (ibid., p. 239).<sup>3</sup>

Between those two extracts lies a period of 37 years of being published in newspapers and journals, yet hardly any change in writing style is discernible. Instead, the paragraphs indicate that he always adhered to the same principles, as explained in this passage:

No cabe, pues, la menor duda ... de que los excesivos adornos del lenguaje perjudican tanto a las buenas letras. La sencillez debe ser por consiguiente, la musa de las artes. [...] las columnas que se levantan solas y severas, sosteniendo, con grave majestad, la arrogante techumbre, constituyen el Partenón griego. La gracia no falta en ellas, por cierto, y son eternas e imborrables (Chacón y Calvo, 1933, p. 18).<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, since Justo de Lara’s output does not appear to demonstrate any kind of progression, in terms of journalistic genres, periods or traditions, the following pages will examine the wider evolution of journalism itself.

## Journalistic genres

In a discussion of journalistic genres, a noticeable lack of clearly defined boundaries between them soon becomes apparent: different authors defend different classifications, making any categorisation an imprecise art. Indeed, that has been true since the English *Daily Courant* (1702–35) was created, generally considered to be the first newspaper. Its editor, Samuel Buckley, was the first to propose a distinction between information and opinion (Guillaumet, 2003b, pp. 38–9). Hence, the question of whether the writer of a piece offers their personal opinion lies at the very heart of this problematic classification, the main division being between what one might call ‘information’ (requiring

3 “‘Change the times, let your wishes be.’ It was not an annexationist purpose that motivated the sympathies of the United States towards Martí’s noble and patriotic propaganda. It was only the conviction, acquired by experience in almost a century of disturbances, that Spain was unable to govern with temperance and justice a colony situated more than 1,600 leagues from its own territory and in the vicinity of a rich and prosperous town.’

4 ‘There is therefore no doubt that the excessive adornments of language are highly detrimental to good writing. Simplicity must therefore be the muse of the arts. [...] the columns constituting the Greek Parthenon that stand alone and severe, holding, with grave majesty, the arrogant roof. Grace is certainly not lacking in them, and they are eternal and indelible.’

objectivity), and what is usually known as 'opinion', which would require an author to be subjective and have their own ideas on the issue. However, there is no consensus among authors on what lies between these apparently clear and opposite positions, nor even on what should be included in each 'pole'.

To mention a few examples, López Cubino et al. (2009, p. 9) add a third category, 'interpretative', which encompasses three forms: the report, the interview and the chronicle. They suggest that these forms combine both the objectivity of news (information) and the subjectivity of the article, editorial, critique or column (opinion). However, Miravalles (1983) places opinion and interpretative in the same category, one which includes editorials and articles, and which puts reports, interviews and news together in an 'informative' section. He also proposes an 'eclectic' third group as a home for the chronicle or column.

Martínez Albertos (1974), on the other hand, modifies the Cubino and Sobrino proposal, arguing that to give information means to relate or to tell, that an interpretation is an analysis, and that an opinion piece persuades. Martínez does not place news in any single category but, instead, simply identifies information, together with what he calls an 'objective report'. He then assigns the interpretative report and the chronicle to the interpretation category. His third type, which therefore matches Cubino and Sobrino's, contains editorials or comments, articles, criticism and columns. However, Martínez also adds a fourth group, called 'entertaining, divulgation, literary criticism', in which he places literary articles, fiction narratives, comic strips, poems and personal columns.

Therefore, regardless of this classificatory disagreement, Justo de Lara's texts do clearly appear to remain in the opinion group. This classification would have been particularly significant if his writings had demonstrated any evolution through time, into a more objective or informative genre; but they did not. It could therefore also be said that Justo de Lara's pieces were articles, chronicles, portraits or columns, perhaps even including some interpretative reports – his two interviews with Cánovas del Castillo, both published in 1896, are to some extent closer to the chronicle in style. Indeed, any attempts to find some numerical or objective information in his texts, show that they remain largely in the sphere of judgement and opinion apart from, say, some descriptions of and commentaries on Cuban laws.

Hence, a comparison between Justo de Lara's earlier pieces and his later work does not provide any real clue to identifying a progression, other than to show that, when he was young, he wrote in more of a chronicle style and, when older, in the more succinct style expected of news reports. His articles, however, do not reveal any evidence of the development that might be expected

from chronicle to news, either in the form of a report or even adopting a less interpretative genre.

Despite the fact it is known he wrote in English for newspapers in Great Britain and the United States, the existence and location of these materials remain elusive. It is possible that Justo de Lara's English-published materials might be in a different style from those published in Spanish, but it has not been possible to locate them for this study; moreover, although he may have written news articles in English, and thus possibly adapted his style, it seems highly unlikely, considering the nature of what he produced in Spanish.

On the subject of Justo de Lara's Spanish output, *Ciro Bianchi Ross* explains that:

Todos sus libros ... fueron dados a conocer antes, fragmentariamente, en periódicos y revistas. Por otra parte, es indudable que De Armas, como crítico y ensayista, sabe utilizar las ganancias del periodismo moderno – estilo directo, sencillez, concisión, etc. – pese a escribir en una época en que la prosa española era propensa al énfasis oratorio y a la tendencia altisonante. El estilo de De Armas, con su fluidez y transparencia, será la antítesis de esas características (1990, p. 18).<sup>5</sup>

It would appear from these lines that Justo de Lara was always inclined towards using a clear and concise style, reinforcing the idea that his pieces did not evolve alongside the general progression of and approach to journalism but, rather, that he was probably one step ahead of his time.

## **The evolution of journalism**

As already demonstrated, Justo de Lara cannot be held up as a model in terms of adopting the journalistic styles of the different periods that succeeded each other during his writing career, for no progression from a Hispanic tradition to the 'new journalism' coming from the United States after 1900 can be traced. It can be argued in his defence, however, that he effectively made a living from his work right from 1888 when, aged 22, he started writing professionally for the newspapers continuing almost up to the day he died.

According to *Valverde y Maruri*, 'Armas no podía dejar de ser periodista: era descendiente directo de una familia que a esa profesión se había dedicado' (1923, p. 104).<sup>6</sup> His own words, close to the end of his life in 1916, reinforce

5 'The content of his books ... had appeared before [as articles] in newspapers and magazines. On the other hand, it is clear that De Armas, as a critic and essayist, knew how to use the skills of modern journalism – a direct style, simplicity, conciseness, etc. – despite writing at a time when Spanish prose had a tendency to be oratorical and overblown. The style of De Armas, with its fluidity and transparency, was the antithesis of those characteristics.'

6 'Armas could not stop being a journalist: he was a direct descendant of a family that had been dedicated to that profession'.

the perception that Armas earned his living from the profession: as Justo de Lara, he wrote a letter to a journalist in Havana – Bianchi Ross does not say who that was – in which he revealed his view of the profession he believed he had followed: ‘Sigo siendo un *repórter* llamado con eufemismo *corresponsal*, y donde quiera, Mr. Bennet, he de ir a llenar cuartillas’ (1990, p. 7).<sup>7</sup>

Jaume Guillaumet’s general schema (2003a) provides a valuable interpretation of the evolution of journalism and a broad understanding of the general changes which occurred throughout its history. Therefore, if Justo de Lara were to be regarded as the model to follow in this context, it ought to be possible to see in his texts a progression reflecting those changes. Guillaumet’s schema is divided into three main periods, and also comments on the difficulties that arise in defining their limits, because each country under consideration has a different rate of evolution. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind, Guillaumet points out, that in the early days of journalism, the context made up of the freedoms which accompany western democracies needed to be established so that the genre could emerge: press freedom needed to replace the privilege-to-print concession, one that could only be accessed up to that time with the consent of the monarchy. The story is therefore similar, but different, in each country, because of the different rhythms of their democratic development. Everywhere, the emergence of printing was accompanied by the possibility of expressing a political opinion; and that political character was evident in all the first newspapers.

In general terms it could be said that journalism’s first period corresponds to the original manifestations of newspapers; the second to the creation of the journalism world’s foundations; and the third, to its global development, finally reaching the point it is at today.

Guillaumet calls the first period ‘Old or artisan journalism’. Beginning in 1609, with the appearance of the first weekly *gacetas*, and ending with the French revolution in 1789, this stage provided the freedom to print under the auspices of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.<sup>8</sup> Thus, this first move towards news circulation represented the genesis and initial steps of press development. Guillaumet suggests that these parameters are generally accepted by comparative histories from the main European countries.

Classified by Guillaumet as ‘Modern or liberal journalism’, the second period was marked by a significant differentiation – in the countries he focuses on – between journalistic traditions in terms of unequal developments in the progression of political, economic and technical factors. This prevents the end of the period being clearly identified, especially as the US press was by this time

7 ‘I am still a reporter, euphemistically known as a correspondent, and come what may, Mr. Bennet, I have to fill the pages.’

8 For more information see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-Man-and-of-the-Citizen> (accessed 29 Jun. 2017).

much more advanced than the European one. Guillaumet therefore pinpoints the end of this stage at around the last quarter of the 19th century.

Guillaumet argues that the main traits of this type of journalism are, firstly, that political factors encourage the free circulation of news, and also ‘la creación, orientación y significación de los periódicos y la aparición de la figura individual del periodista como actor social’ (2003a, pp. 42–3).<sup>9</sup> This was a time, he says, when political and economic liberalism was being implemented, contributing to the development of a growing information market, which ‘producirá la primera renovación de la imprenta y abrirá el camino hacia la industrialización de los periódicos’ (ibid., p. 43).<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the third period lasted from the last quarter of the 19th century until the last quarter of the 20th, roughly ending with the internet’s first public appearance around 1994. This, Guillaumet calls ‘Contemporaneous or industrial journalism’, which he associates with three key issues: 1) the predominance of economic factors in newspaper creation, orientation and significance; 2) the appearance of the professional journalist; and 3) the integration of the press as a mass-media industry of growing complexity, diversity and magnitude. During this period the press expanded massively and globally, and radio, television and cinema appeared, with their many variations of journalism, along with the appropriate technologies which enabled the development of this mass media. Most significant, however, in terms of the evolution and figure of the journalist at that time, is that the role clearly became much more professional, going beyond the modern journalism idea of the reporter as a social actor, a view by then already old-fashioned. Curiously, however, this process of professionalisation was what finally gave journalism its socially influential status.

The last notion takes this chapter back to Justo de Lara and to the occupation by which he always earned his living: journalism. It might be argued that, logically, he must have belonged to the third period, when the journalist was required to act as nothing more and nothing less than a professional. Again he might be perceived as being one step ahead of what was then the most common way of working in the newspaper industry in Cuba, that is, combining that type of collaboration with a completely different kind of lucrative activity. Therefore, the fact that there is little reference to Justo de Lara in many political histories of Cuba strongly suggests that his type of journalism was never really associated with the modern or liberal period, that is, he did not play a role as a social actor. Instead, his omission from such narratives seems to indicate

9 ‘The creation, orientation and significance of newspapers and the emergence of the individual figure of the journalist as a social actor.’

10 ‘Will produce the first renewal of the printing press and open the way to the industrialisation of newspapers.’

that he can be more comfortably and perfectly matched to the professional journalist role: restricting himself to sending news anonymously.

As discussed above, it is by no means easy to characterise with any clarity Justo de Lara's writing in terms of given journalistic traditions. Gómez Mompert and Marín Otto give a succinct summary of the North American tradition that influenced him:

se le atribuyen la crónica escueta de hechos, la objetividad, el interés humano, la indagación profunda, cierta investigación y el escaso intelectualismo, con un estilo pragmático y efectista, espectacular, doméstico y de cuento civilizado. [...] uno y otro extremo, del periodismo arrebatado y el sensato (1999, p. 11).<sup>11</sup>

And they see the Latin tradition he always adhered to as 'más politizada y literaria que las otras dos, y en la que predomina la crónica interpretada (antes que los simples hechos desnudos), con un estilo más extravertido que el anglosajón y también más analítico o explicativo' (1999, pp. 11–12).<sup>12</sup>

It seems likely that Justo de Lara refined and adapted his style. That, combined with his vast erudition, was what made him special and led to his realising some of the great literary promise he had exhibited from the age of 18. The style of his texts was always literary and, whatever the topic, was interpreted at length. That is why,

de la tradición norteamericana podemos relacionar con Justo de Lara las características de la sensatez y la indagación profunda, pero no ésta última en el sentido del desarrollo de una noticia y su conversión en un reportaje, sino en el de una erudición profunda forjada en el conocimiento literario e histórico del mundo y de algunas de sus lenguas (Garrell, 2015, p. 88).<sup>13</sup>

## The justification for Justo de Lara

Why, then, has Justo de Lara been selected as the focus of this chapter? As already noted, he cannot really be viewed as the definitive example of the journalistic profession, given its wide range of genres, traditions and time

- 11 'He is credited as a chronicler of facts, objectivity, human interest, deep inquiry, some research and scarce intellectualism [combined] with a pragmatic and effective style [and telling a] spectacular, domestic and civilised story. [...] from one extreme to the other (from rhapsody to the sensible).'
- 12 'More politicised and literary ... mainly providing an interpretation of the chronicle (beyond the simple plain facts), and [written in] a more extrovert style than the Anglo-Saxon one and also more analytical or explanatory'.
- 13 'Justo de Lara [takes from] the American tradition the characteristics of sensibility and deep inquiry, although not the latter in the sense of news development and its conversion into a report, but in that of a profound erudition forged in knowledge of the literary and historical world and some of its languages.'



periods. Moreover, why should he be considered ahead of anyone else? I argue that he should be the first to be put under the microscope because, although other correspondents of the time might be put forward as exponents of the profession, three significant events should be taken into account that led to him earning his place as ‘the professional journalist’ of his time ahead of all his contemporaries.

Firstly, an annual award, established in 1934 by the prestigious department store, El Encanto, was given his name thereby honouring him as the perceived model for journalistic excellence. The Premio Justo de Lara prize, awarded for the best journalistic article of the year, was given out every year until 1957, offered up to 1,000 pesos, and was announced annually on 24 February, the day commemorating the beginning of the third, and final, Cuban independence war. In this way, the department store sought to complement its commercial activities by contributing to Cuban culture and history. According to Germán Amado-Blanco and Yasef Ananda Calderón:

En cuanto a la elección del nombre del premio, todo apunta a que fue una sugerencia de Rafael Suárez Solís, de origen asturiano al igual que los dueños de El Encanto, con los que tuviera estrechos vínculos de amistad, así como de trabajo. En su juventud, Suárez Solís fue compañero de mesa de redacción de José de Armas y Cárdenas, brillante periodista que en sus artículos utilizó el pseudónimo de Justo de Lara (La Habana, 26 de marzo de 1866-La Habana, 28 de diciembre de 1919) (2013, p. 12).<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly, and somewhat anecdotally, the Cuban journalist Ciro Bianchi Ross (1990) argues that the strong ties of friendship were probably because he and the family originated from the same village, Guanabacoa, then on the edge of Havana.

Secondly, it is significant that the edited collection, *35 Trabajos Periodísticos*, published in 1935 by the Cuban Secretaría de Educación's Dirección de Cultura, was selected to form the first volume in the series *Grandes Periodistas Cubanos*. Justo de Lara therefore headed up what was intended to be a series of works written by the biggest names in Cuban journalism: José Martí, Manuel Márquez Sterling, Juan Gualberto Gómez, Gastón Mora, José María Heredia, and Pablo de la Torriente Brau. One might ask why Armas was selected as the foremost representative of his professional field? In line with Bianchi Ross' comments above, the most likely answer is the unofficial one that the reason for it was ties of friendship, this time coming from someone who ‘ha sido durante

14 ‘As for the name chosen for the prize, everything points to it being a suggestion from Rafael Suárez Solís, of Asturian origin, as well as the El Encanto owners, with whom he had close ties of friendship and work. In his youth, Suárez Solís was a writing-desk partner of José de Armas y Cárdenas, a brilliant journalist who used the pseudonym Justo de Lara in his articles.’

varias décadas uno de los críticos más notables e influyentes de la narrativa cubana',<sup>15</sup> the literary critic, essayist, editor and cinema scriptwriter Ambrosio Fornet. He says that in 1935 the director of the Secretaría de Educación was José María Chacón y Calvo, a personal friend of Justo de Lara. These ties are revealed in the extract below, taken from Chacón y Calvo's 'Evocación de Justo de Lara', a lecture given on 3 May 1933, at Havana's Ateneo, which was later published as a kind of prologue to *Cervantes y el Quijote*, a posthumous compilation of Justo de Lara's literary criticism. This extract is taken from *Cervantes*, published by the Ministerio de Educación in 1945, as part of the *Cuadernos de Cultura* collection:

Hablar de Justo de Lara es para mí revivir recuerdos de intimidad, que están en lo más puro de mis afanes y desvelos ... Al cabo de los años, cuando quiero reconstruir dentro de mí la figura del maestro y del amigo, el resplandor que la envuelve, el primero de todos, es el de la bondad, esa bondad ingénita que en José de Armas fue tan fecunda, tan llena de fuerza creadora como varia y cargada de valores humanos fue la proyección intelectual de su vida y hondo y generoso el sentido de su mensaje (pp. 2–38).<sup>16</sup>

In addition, his abilities as a journalist are extolled by Félix Lizaso in the prologue to *35 Trabajos Periodísticos*, who asserted that 'José de Armas y Cárdenas debía iniciar, por indiscutibles circunstancias, esta serie. Ha sido el periodista quizá de mayor devoción a su menester, entre nosotros' (Armas y Cárdenas, 1935, vol. 1).<sup>17</sup> What Lizaso did not make clear, however, is what the *indiscutibles circunstancias* were that made him the prime candidate to be honoured as the outstanding exemplar of the profession.

The third event that pointed to Justo de Lara being a kind of model for the profession took place on 31 March 2008, when the 'Day of Spanish Language Journalism, in honour of Justo de Lara' was celebrated in Florida. On that day, one of the two congressmen who spoke about Spanish journalism, said:

Madam Speaker, I would like to express my sentiment that March 26, 2008, should be designated as 'Spanish Language Journalism Day in

15 'Has been for several decades one of the most notable and influential critics of Cuban literature'. See Ambrosio Fornet's page on the EcuRed website at: [www.ecured.cu/index.php/Ambrosio\\_Fornet](http://www.ecured.cu/index.php/Ambrosio_Fornet) (accessed 4 Jul. 2017).

16 'For me to talk about Lara is to relive memories of intimate and pure friendship, which are always in the forefront of my mind ... After all these years, when I want to rebuild within my mind the figure of the teacher and friend, a glow surrounds it, composed of kindness most of all, the ingenuous goodness that was so fertile in José de Armas, whose creative force was as varied and loaded with human values as his intellectual life [and] the deep and generous meaning of the message [he was putting across].'

17 'It is indisputable that José de Armas y Cárdenas should be first in this series. He has been the foremost journalist among us.'

honor of Justo de Lara'. José de Armas y Cárdenas, who wrote under the pseudonym of Justo de Lara, was a distinguished journalist, poet, and author. As a result of his contributions, the Cuban department store chain El Encanto named their journalism award, the most prestigious award of its kind in Cuba, the Justo de Lara Prize for Spanish Journalistic Excellence. This award was given out from 1934 until Fidel Castro's communist takeover in 1959. His fluency in Spanish, English, Italian, and French and his love for reading and literature fueled his own desire to write. At an early age, he was a prolific author and journalist. He worked during the Spanish-American War as a special envoy for the *Sun* in 1898, serving as an official translator between Cuban General Calixto García and Lt. Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. José de Armas y Cárdenas was also the only person of Spanish-speaking origin named by the Government of England in 1916 to be a member of the commission responsible for the tricentennial celebration of William Shakespeare.

Due to his legacy and example to countless generations, March 26, 2008, should be designated as 'Spanish Language Journalism Day in honor of Justo de Lara', in recognition of the excellence in journalism that José de Armas y Cárdenas achieved during his life and his love of literature, of the excellence in journalism that the award in his honor continued to recognize after his death, and of the hope for such continued excellence today and in the future (US GPO, 31 Mar. 2008).

Although there is little or no evidence of some of the factual detail given in that speech, such as the suggestion that Armas translated for Lt. Colonel Theodore Roosevelt (General Shafter is the more likely, see Valverde y Maruri, 1923, p. 134), or that he was fluent in Italian or French, as well as English, the general picture given of Justo de Lara seems quite complete. Without anyone knowing why, he was the one chosen to honour the day celebrating journalistic excellence, leaving one to wonder why him, and why in Florida, a place where one would expect to find a different perspective?

### **Justo de Lara's life and times as a journalist**

These three events alone, of course, do not necessarily justify the choice of Justo de Lara as the archetypal professional journalist, which is why this chapter also provides a clear summary of his character. This brief biography places key points of this life within the broader context of the history of journalism, mostly – but not exclusively – within Cuba. This should help understanding of Justo de Lara to be deepened in relation to the Cuba of his time and clarify his significance as a journalist and as a Cuban.

Just as it is generally assumed and accepted that the first newspaper in history was *The Daily Courant* (1702–35), it is also accepted that the first Cuban newspaper, *Papel Periódico de La Habana*, was founded almost a century later in 1790. In Spain the 19th century arguably began in the worst possible way with the imminent independence war against Napoleon, but it was in such times of struggle that the seeds of a free press were sown. In Spain, followed by Cuba, the shape and development of the press throughout the following century were directly related to periods of Spanish liberalism, which would thereafter alternate with periods of monarchism. Between 1808 and 1814, the war against Napoleonic intervention saw the creation of the Cádiz Constitution, representing the first moment of press freedom in Spain and coinciding with the first blossoming of political publications in Cuba. Political journalism emerged at that time in Spain and, with it, concepts such as ‘public’, ‘nation’ and ‘public opinion’ entered the arena of debate there for the first time. The period from 1820–3, the so-called Trienio Constitucional, witnessed all kinds of political tendencies in Spain, and in Cuba political journalism was born; the latter also meant the birth of a tendency towards political thought opposed to the Spanish crown and also against supporting the monarchy in the press, a trend that would continue. It represented the desire for the island to have greater decision-making powers, rather than Madrid, and took many shapes, most coming to the public’s attention through the press.

On the other hand, the United States, ‘with a population of four million inhabitants ... entered the 19th century with a total of 17 daily newspapers and 200 newspapers (periodicals) within its thirteen states, in small cities, with very poor circulation’ (Guillaumet, 2003b, p. 73).<sup>18</sup> Just when Spain and Cuba were enjoying those first moments of press freedom, by the 1830s the United States were about to witness a major fall in newspaper prices, thanks to the ‘Penny Press’ phenomenon – so named because it lowered its price to a penny, a sixth of the original cost. This would represent the first major expansion in terms of the population’s access to newspapers.

After the mid 1860s – the time of Justo de Lara’s birth – the US Civil War had ended and post-war reconstruction was taking place. The emergence at that time of the graphic reporter and developments in press photography began to change and reshape the industry and, with it, the ways of reading its output. Press associations grew and information began to circulate in new ways in accordance with economic expansion: ‘El salto al *big business* periodístico estaba servido y las empresas que habían alumbrado la era del negocio de masas cederán el paso a una joven generación capaz de afrontar los desafíos

18 Author’s translation from the original Catalán.

de la nueva época' (García González, 1999, pp. 71–2).<sup>19</sup> This happened in the United States around the 1860s, but a similar development would not appear in Spain until the early 1900s, and Cuba was yet to witness anything similar to an era of mass information in the press.

In Spain, the Sexenio democrático, following the installation of the Republic in 1868, coincided with the beginning of the Ten Years' War in Cuba, the first rebellion against Spain. In 1874, the restoration of the monarchy began in Spain. Looking at it positively, Fuentes and Fernández argue that this latter regime gave Spain a much-needed stability, both politically and economically, which had been lacking. Despite that, however, they recognise it also led to the *turno de partidos*, a corrupt regime of alternation in power (1997, pp. 135–40). Another key moment was the arrival of the Spanish Print Law (1883), which changed how press offences were categorised, making them dependent henceforth on judicial power, rather than executive power; that is, the press was now subject to general law, not to politicians' decisions.

This was the context into which Justo de Lara was born on 26 March 1866, in Guanabacoa, Cuba, two years before the beginning of the Ten Years' War, which mostly affected the island's eastern part. He was 12 when the Truce of Zanjón brought peace to Cuba and, with it, a certain permissiveness within the print industry. It was still not freedom, because censorship remained, but it did at least allow political topics to be published and discussed, even on the question of independence, except where articles were deemed to be inciting readers. This was the time when the formation of political parties was first allowed, accompanied by the opportunity for newspapers to defend the different political ideas held by those parties. A new press landscape was created comprising newspapers adopting three main stances: the *unionistas*, those most loyal to the Spanish crown; the *autonomistas*, the group demanding that self-government in Cuba should hold greater power; and the *independentistas*, advocates of outright independence who were obliged to express their views in illegal publications or abroad.

Throughout the century, conditions for the potential readership improved in Cuba, hence circulation increased slowly but steadily: in 1861, just 19.2 per cent of Cubans could read – 30 per cent of the white population and 5 per cent of the black (US War Department, 1900, p. 45; Cuba, Dirección General del Censo, 1922, pp. 369–70). In 1899, the proportion of literate people over the age of ten had reached 36 per cent of the total (Basail, 2004, p. 84), while, in 1919, the percentage reached almost half of the population, with a 47.6 per cent literacy rate. By comparison, in the US in 1900, just ten per cent of the population were illiterate, which had fallen in 1920 to six per cent, that

19 'The jump to newspaper production as "big business" has been made and the companies that illuminated the era of mass information will give way to a young generation capable of facing the challenges of the new era.'

is, over 80 million of the total population (UNESCO, 1953, p. 150). Cuba's literacy rate had increased by means of such phenomena as *la lectura* (the practice of reading aloud to fellow factory workers – especially the *tabaquerías* [tobacco factories]). However, if that rate compared with the US figure was unfavourable, it was more favourable than Spain's, where 'hacia 1860 un 70%, aproximadamente, de la población de diez años y más no sabía escribir o leer. Dicho porcentaje descendería lentamente hasta el 56,2% en 1900, el 32,4% en 1930 y el 14,2% en 1950, de acuerdo con los datos oficiales de los censos de población' (Viñao Frago, 1991, p. 14).<sup>20</sup> So Cuba and its metropolis had largely similar literacy rates, while the US enjoyed a notable advantage. Other factors can be linked in. For instance, a comparison of newspaper sizes yields an astonishing statistic according to Basail (2004) and Krause (2011). This was that, in Cuba, at the same time as 'un periódico como *La Discusión* se prestigiaba, en 1889, por tener nada menos que a 11 escritores en su redacción' (Basail, 2004, p. 77),<sup>21</sup> the largest paper in the United States, 'Pulitzer's New York "World", employed 1300 staff in the mid-1890s' (Krause, 2011). The print runs of the main papers in Spain and the US are compared by Fuentes and Fernández (1997):

en 1892 circulaban en España diariamente un total de 580.000 ejemplares de *periódicos políticos* ... y en efecto, puede hablarse ya de *prensa de masas* – elevadas cifras, renovación temática, precio asequible, nuevo lenguaje – siempre que no demos a esa expresión un significado demasiado rotundo, que escamotee las enormes diferencias de escala con el *new journalism* de la nueva generación de periódicos norteamericanos, franceses o británicos (cuyas audiencias masivas, gracias a la incorporación de un público nuevo, les permiten alcanzar en ocasiones los 400.000 ejemplares de tirada, e incluso aproximarse al millón, en el caso de la prensa popular parisina).

Los límites de la expansión vienen dados por el modesto desarrollo de dos variables esenciales: la urbanización y la alfabetización (pp. 146–7).<sup>22</sup>

20 'By 1860 about 70% of the population aged 10 and over did not know how to write or read. This percentage would fall slowly to 56.2% in 1900, 32.4% in 1930 and 14.2% in 1950, according to the official data of the population censuses.'

21 'A prestigious newspaper like *La Discusión* had no fewer than 11 writers in 1889'.

22 'In 1892 a total of 580,000 copies of political periodicals were circulating daily in Spain ... and, in fact, it is possible to call this mass media – high figures, thematic renewal, affordable price, new language – provided not too much weight is given to that expression which would obscure the enormous differences in scale achieved by the new journalism of the new generation of American, French and British newspapers (whose massive readerships, thanks to the incorporation of a new audience, allows the 400,000 copies of the print run to be circulated on occasions. ([This figure] even approaches a million, in the case of the popular Parisian press). Expansion was limited by the modest development of two essential variables: urbanisation and literacy.'

Within this landscape in Cuba, Justo de Lara was 16 when he published his first article, 'La locura [madness] de Sancho', in 1882 in *La Nación*, a newspaper by then run by his father. In 1884, he graduated in law at the University of Havana, but never attempted to work as a lawyer; instead, he focused entirely on literary criticism, for which he was praised by leading figures of the time, even including the most prestigious Spanish literary authority, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, 'uno de los cuatro o cinco críticos universales que ha habido en el mundo' (Chacón y Calvo, 1933, p. 8).<sup>23</sup>

From 1888 to 1892, Justo de Lara – as José de Armas – ran and commented on the cultural section of *La Unión Constitucional*, a newspaper that openly defended Spanish interests in Cuba. This was a new addition to his cultural activities, as a wider range of topics were covered in these pages. He married in 1889 and, at the end of that year, probably taking the opportunity for a honeymoon trip, he first visited the man whom he looked on as his beloved *maestro*, Don Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo.

In 1892 after returning to Cuba, Armas began moving away from cultural commentaries to writing about politics. He founded and began publishing *Las Avispas*, in which he began using his pseudonym (a name taken from *El delincuente honrado* [The Honest Offender], a play by Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos), and he 'dedicó todo el periódico a combatir con fina sátira y delicioso humorismo, a los hombres y política locales' (Valverde y Maruri, 1923, p. 106).<sup>24</sup> The articles he wrote for it sought to defend Cubans' rights, rather than those of the Spanish-born *peninsulares* [residents of Cuba], who were, for instance, taking over most of Cuba's public administration jobs.

In 1894, Justo de Lara travelled abroad, trying to obtain a loan for a sanitation project for the city of Havana, but returned empty-handed. However, the designation of this task to him reveals to some extent the status he may have enjoyed at the time.

The final revolution for independence began on 24 March 1895, and Justo de Lara seems to have remained in Havana until January 1896, when he began travelling, first to Key West, then to New York, and later to Europe, visiting London, Paris and Madrid. There, he held two famous meetings, with Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, Spanish Council of Ministers president (that is, prime minister), where he unsuccessfully attempted to purchase Cuba's freedom – just as his father had done many years before with the same result. After that, he published, under the title *La perfidia española*, a record of those interviews, rapidly denied by the Spanish prime minister as ever having taken place, leading to the authenticity of those texts becoming suspect.

23 'One of the four or five world-renowned critics.'

24 'dedicated the whole newspaper to fighting men and local politics with fine satire and delicious humour.'

That year, while living in Madrid, de Lara worked as a correspondent for *The New York Herald*, staying there until the United States declared war on Spain, at which point he returned to the US and began working as a copywriter for *The Sun*. Later, as a *Sun* correspondent, he sailed to Cuba with the US army, for which he acted as contact, between its leader, General Shaft, and the Cuban rebel leader, General Calixto García. From 1900–4, he took up his travels once more, coming and going between the US and Europe.

The year 1906 was a significant one in terms of Justo de Lara's political writings due to his publication of a kind of manifesto, letter or declaration, called 'Los dos protectorados, Observaciones al pueblo de Cuba', openly expressing opinions on behalf of many intellectuals and newspapers (pp. 41–2). It defended the idea that a protectorate for Cuba was the only way of ensuring the life of the new republic, in the belief that another military intervention by the US would seriously endanger the island's survival as an independent nation. This proposal suggested an amendment to the Cuban Constitution's wording taken from the controversial Platt Amendment,<sup>25</sup> rather than arguing for that wording to be suppressed; hence, its acceptance from the ranks of Cuban nationalists could never be expected.

In 1908, Justo de Lara was in Haiti covering the rebellion of Firmin and Jean-Juneau for both the *New York Herald* and the Cuban *Diario de la Marina* (Bianchi Ross, 1990, p. 12). After that, he continued working from Madrid as a correspondent, finally settling there. From 1909–19, the year of his death, Justo de Lara continued contributing to a range of sections in different Cuban newspapers, disseminating through those texts his view of Spanish and European realities, as well as reporting and giving his views on World War One. He kept his position as a *New York Herald* reporter and contributed to *The Quarterly Review* of London.

## The significance and defence of Justo de Lara

Overall, Justo de Lara by the end of his life had contributed to at least 30 different press publications in several countries, including all three involved in the 1895–8 struggle, that being the last Cuban independence war and the Spanish-American war. Being Cuban, he had managed to maintain good terms

25 The Platt Amendment was a bone of contention among Cuban nationalists from 1901 until it was abrogated in 1934. Originally an amendment proposed (by Senator Orville Platt) to a US Congress bill on 2 March 1901, the US government then imposed its wording into the text of the future Cuban republic's draft constitution, as a condition of withdrawing US troops from the island and granting it independence. Once reluctant Cuban agreement had been achieved by a small majority, the wording then became part of a treaty between Cuba and the US on 22 May 1903. This, by including the US's right to intervene unilaterally in Cuba and to lease land from Cuban territory for naval bases, ensured the US's continued direct control of Cuban affairs.



with representatives from Cuba, Spain and the United States, and he wrote for the reading public of all three of these belligerents during one of the most chaotic periods of Cuban history.

Despite accumulating an extraordinary wealth of experience and having all the requisite qualities, it could be argued, however, that he still might not wholly be considered to be a true representative of the professional journalism that was emerging in Cuba at that time. In terms of his press presence, copywriting experience and body of work, he was indeed comparable to other renowned correspondents in Cuba, such as Manuel Márquez Sterling, Manuel Sanguily, Rafael María Merchán, Juan Gualberto Gómez, Gastón Mora, José María Heredia, Pablo de la Torriente Brau, Antonio Valverde y Maruri and Mariano Corona Ferrer. What is more, he earned his living entirely from the profession.

However, the question of why Justo de Lara does not appear in historical compilations still remains, or, in other words, why has he been forgotten or been deliberately omitted from those collections? Perhaps the enquiry should be turned around to form a new question: why is it that those other authors, writers and newspaper contributors do appear in historical compilations? The answer probably lies in how politically important their activities were, compared to those covered in Justo de Lara's work. He often seemed to lack active political links, leaving any assessment to rely solely on his compilations of journalistic – and literary – works and causing him to be remembered, unlike the others, as – paradoxically – nothing more than a professional journalist.

After publishing his first works of literary criticism, which gave him a name while still under the age of majority, Justo de Lara's journalistic itinerary traced a line which placed him in a different ideological arena every time. He began at *Los Lunes de la Unión Constitucional* (1888–92), clearly an ideologically *unionista* newspaper – although he was only responsible for editing the literary page each Monday. After this, he ran his own publication, *Las Avispas*, in which he first discussed politics openly, defending Cubans' rights but without ever advocating independence, a position that could be categorised as *autonomista*. Later, when the independence war had already begun, Justo de Lara published *La perfidia española*, the so-called interviews with the Spanish prime minister, Cánovas del Castillo, from which a certain *pro-independence* position could be inferred, probably as a result of Justo's feeling that the Cuban struggle had no other way out by then. At that point he returned to the United States, and ended up as a *Sun* correspondent and disembarking into Cuba to serve as a link between the Cubans and the US army. Finally, within the Cuban Republic, his political arguments were limited to calling for an amendment to improve the island's limited sovereignty (due to the Platt Amendment), but he never believed there to be any chance of removing that Amendment's wording from

the Cuban Constitution. Again, this position could essentially be categorised as autonomista.

Justo de Lara's decision to spend his final years in Spain could be looked at simply as the natural conclusion to his career, or as a desire to remain where his literary landscape had always really been based: he was, in fact, one of the greatest experts on Cervantes of his time. Indeed, this suggests that, besides his work as a correspondent, one might point to a *pro-Spanish* stance to explain why, even though Cuba was already an independent republic, he lived in Spain for so many years. In fact, that country had always been the cradle of his literary studies and the place where he earned his original success. It is probably this ambiguity that makes Justo de Lara such an interesting figure. Although his texts are perhaps not the most useful tools to use in tracing the evolution of journalism, Justo de Lara's works do nonetheless form an excellent prism through which to examine one of the periods of greatest upheaval and contradiction in Cuban history, and also to understand the main ideological positions taken in both the Cuban struggle against Spain and afterwards against the US's ultimate political domination via the Platt Amendment. He was thus, at one and the same time, a link between the 19th and 20th centuries, between the history of three countries, and between two different eras in journalism. Indeed, he became a remarkable keystone through his journalism and his life as a journalist, one which allows us to explore the evolution of the press and journalism, during the era when big business and commercial publications were born, in that particularly interesting period when most people were still just learning to read.

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## 7. The changing shape of Cuban cinema: a report and a reflection

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In May 2013, Cuba's then new culture minister, Rafael Bernal,<sup>1</sup> announced that the time had come for the film institute, the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), to be 'restructured', a euphemistic term for slimming down, in line with reforms to the island's state-owned economy, announced two years earlier by President Raúl Castro. An official commission was established to explore how to accomplish the task, but also an action committee of filmmakers, dubbed the 'group of 20', which quickly formulated its own agenda of demands for a new cinema law (BBC *Mundo*, 2014). The committee was set up at an emergency meeting, organised in response to the minister's announcement. By all accounts it was an extraordinary event, the first time that Cuban filmmakers of all generations had assembled – old and young, members of the ICAIC and independents – to discuss problems which had been troubling them for several years. However, as this volume goes to press, there has been no official response. This chapter tries to unravel the issues and assess the prospects.

Several different approaches may be taken to explore the history of Cuban cinema, a medium/form which hardly existed before 1959 and which, since then, has been synonymous with state film institute the ICAIC until independent filmmaking emerged following the arrival of digital video. One way of looking at the institute's trajectory is to recount its periodic moments of crisis and resolution. In each case (1961, 1981, 1991) the prerogatives of committed artistic values were successfully defended against opponents, whether liberals (as in 1961) or left sectarians – believers in the kind of old-style Communist Party orthodoxy, who could only think of art and cinema in terms of propaganda (Chanan, 1984). The new crisis, which materialised in 2013, is different, because this time it is more than a sectarian infight but is, rather, a structural problem in what used to be called the film industry. In Cuba, like everywhere else, it has been reconfigured by the technological innovations of digital video into a broader audio-visual sector, but reflects a

1 He left the post in 2016.

systemic crisis for the country as a whole, in the face of inevitable pressures for overall economic change and the concomitant political implications.

The headline version goes like this: Cuba's film institute to be restructured; Cuban filmmakers form an action committee; ¡*Viva el comité de los cineastas!* The story begins in April 2013, with Rafael Bernal's decision outlined above, a still-ongoing process, in accordance with Bernal's statement that it would be carried out carefully and without haste. According to this policy, the state is slated to lose a large number of employees in favour of a larger private sector, including small businesses and greater foreign investment. State enterprises will get more autonomy but if they post persistent losses will, in theory, be liquidated. As new regulations are slowly rolled out, it is hoped to attract capital from sources such as Brazil, China and, following the rapprochement between Havana and Washington announced in December 2014, the United States, where eager investors await the final lifting of the embargo-cum-blockade. However, in the cultural domain, small-scale diaspora capital was already invested, and independent filmmakers in Cuba were already beginning to tap into it, alongside other funding sources, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and European coproducers. Indeed, veteran director Fernando Pérez left the ICAIC, along with some of his key crew members, in order to make his film *La pared de las palabras* (2014) with independent funding.

I first heard about the restructuring during a visit to the ICAIC at the end of April 2013, but little information was then available. Two days after I left, the aforementioned spontaneous gathering of some 60 institute and independent filmmakers took place, on 4 May 2013, at the institute's cultural centre, Fresa y Chocolate (named after the film by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea) to confer on the issues and elect an action committee. The discussions centred on the anomalous status of being independent filmmakers in Cuba – that is, neither legal nor illegal – and the resulting obstacles to their activities (*El País*, 10 April 2014; Plasencia, 2014).

Another interesting dimension was the fact that, due to being featured on the internet, the event was open to everyone, unlike previous moments of institutional crisis when this kind of collective response took place behind closed doors. This is highly apposite because, although Cuba's internet access is very much under par, the advent of digital communication has nonetheless had real impact in certain areas, especially on how cultural politics are conducted. Indeed, back in 2007, a spate of emails criticising a television programme about a forgotten figure of the early 1970s for telling half-truths was quickly dubbed 'the battle of the emails'. Now, it is also possible to follow developments (or the lack of them) from afar on the web. Full documentation about the debate concerning the filmmakers' action committee was posted on a special page set

up for the purpose on the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC) website (although it later vanished) and there are numerous reports on websites like *Diario de Cuba* and *La Jiribilla*, and blogs like 'La pupila insomne' by the redoubtable Juan Antonio García Borrero (2015a and b).<sup>2</sup>

The current situation testifies to a remarkable circumstance: namely that, while official Cuban cinema has largely receded from attention abroad, and the heroic and experimental cinema that first hit the screens in the 1960s is now relegated to film history, an entirely new generation has grown up since then. Its members, despite the island's isolation and economic failures of the 1990s, have taken to digital video just like their counterparts everywhere else. According to one informant, Cuba in 2014 had around a hundred independent producers, who are tolerated without being legal entities. Since 2001, the ICAIC allows them screen space to show their work every year in the Muestra de Cine Joven [Exhibition of Young Cinema] – the 2014 event included 178 titles. This independent sector covers a wide range of production: documentaries, music videos, short to full-length fiction, video art, experimental video, installations. Its members frequently work across different areas. Some are funded by cultural organisations, who commission short items to be shown on television, while independent feature films like *Juan de los muertos* (Alejandro Brugués, 2010), *Memorias del desarrollo* (Miguel Coyula, 2010) and *Melaza* (Carlos Lechuga, 2012), which have won international festival awards, are often supported by foreign NGOs. Nonetheless, the current system marginalises their producers. Again, this flourishing activity demonstrates the same thing that has happened elsewhere: the transformation of film to encompass something that is much more than, and sometimes completely different from, what used to be called 'cinema', and the emergence of independent filmmakers whose work remains marginal to cinema as a commercial institution but gains recognition in today's expanded film festival circuits.

Perhaps it is only an unhappy coincidence that the restructuring was announced just a few weeks after the death of the ICAIC's founder, Alfredo Guevara (and that, a few weeks earlier, of its leading producer, Camilo Vives). Whatever the case, the aforementioned official commission was set up, followed by the filmmakers' action committee, the latter neatly named the 'group of 20' (or 'g20', with a small g, to distinguish it from the big G20), with its own agenda of demands and a much wider brief: the need for a comprehensive law covering film and video production in all its aspects. More than four years

2 The disappearance of web pages, or their reposting elsewhere, and the fact that some of the debate reported below appeared in open emails, makes proper referencing difficult. I list a variety of sources at the end, which were all active when these paragraphs were first drafted in the summer of 2014, but cannot guarantee that the reader will always be able to find them.

later, the report by the official commission is still awaited, a sign that this is a different kind of crisis from previous political clashes.

Cinema, of course, is always a paradoxical and atypical activity in relation to general economic imperatives, being both art and industry, a conundrum inscribed in the ICAIC's very name. On my second visit three months later, I talked to the veteran film director Manuel Pérez, one of the institute's most respected figures, and a member of both the commission and the filmmakers' committee. He believed that the law that created ICAIC in 1959 no longer corresponds to the times. The institute was originally designed as an autonomous but state-sponsored organism for the production, distribution and promotion of film as art, intended to operate in monopoly conditions that no longer exist. As film critic Dean Luis Reyes has put it, a fundamentally Marxist concept – the ownership of the means of production determines the superstructure – has today placed the inherited logic of the film industry in crisis (2015a).

The Marxist filmmakers who created ICAIC had a sophisticated understanding of the double nature of cinema as art and industry. Seeing it as an art form, they demanded respect for creative freedom and autonomy within the Revolution (which is what the crises mentioned above were about). In the most unlikely circumstances, they created a substantial new cinema that became a model, across Latin America and beyond, of political engagement joined to artistic experiment, which challenged Hollywood's hegemonic norms. They also saw film production in terms drawn from Marxist economics, as a problem of the organic composition of capital in an industry that depended on a large dose of aesthetic labour, thus accounting for the high proportion of labour costs in the film production business – even when everything is brought under one roof, high fees paid to stars are eliminated and a more egalitarian pay structure is established. However, with the severe contraction of production during the early 1990s economic crisis, and despite the exodus of many of its members to find work abroad, the institute's workforce became bloated, a problem exacerbated by not being able to sack unwanted workers. Meanwhile, a new generation of digital independents began to flourish as 'lean and mean' desktop operators, since digital video favours a new fluid mode of production with minimal crewing and much lower costs than movies made for the cinema. However, these independents often do not pay for their own labour power and there is a certain disparity between the demands of daily life and their artisanal aesthetic labour. But obtaining desktop video equipment is nowadays within reasonable reach, and, as in other countries, the first factor in creating the truly independent filmmaker is to own one's means of production. Indeed, the equipment in the homes of the independent sector is sometimes more up to date and capable than that used in institutional locations.



While independent production has expanded, ICAIC production has contracted. It is true that the institute has built up a track record of coproductions with foreign partners, and that these have played a large role in enabling its survival, even in the face of losing audiences due to factors like cinema closures and the growth of the DVD. Many homes in Havana are well stocked with pirated editions of American television fare and movies which will never be released in Cuban cinemas. For the last few years, home entertainment has been supplied by the phenomenon known as *el paquete*. A surrogate for broadband internet access, it is a package of movies, music, TV shows, software and what-have-you, a terrabyte of stuff downloaded from the internet, distributed weekly on external hard drives, partly financed by local advertising from other newly emerging businesses, from which people select what they want to download on to their memory sticks. No one I spoke to about it seems to know where it comes from or who is running the business, but it is evidently tolerated by the authorities.

El paquete also represents a surrogate for the disappearance of cinema. The collapse of cinema exhibition in the 1990s economic crisis was particularly steep, with equipment becoming obsolete and plant and buildings falling into disrepair. (It is sad when driving around Havana to see their boarded-up facades – one report states that scarcely a score of cinemas still function across the country.) Nevertheless, in the last 15 years the institute has been involved in over a hundred feature movies, mostly coproductions, both foreign and domestic, not to mention shorts and many hours of animation. The larger part of its income thus seems to come from servicing foreign coproducers, plus rights and royalties; this shifts the priorities away from the institute's foundational aspirations. As one participant in the filmmakers' assembly put it, in an open email after that first meeting, the original ICAIC concept has been inverted: art and industry have become industry and art, in that order, with merchandise first.

Manuel Pérez averred that the institute would not cease to be a state enterprise, nor did he think that the ministry would try to impose strictly commercial criteria on its operation, since he believed that, within state councils making the decisions, those who understand the importance of cultural values still predominate. It would be nice to think so. Fernando Pérez, on the other hand, is not so certain. Interviewed for a blog, he is highly critical of faceless functionaries in one ministry or another who cannot comprehend the special and atypical nature of the film industry – but then, of course, they never have (Rivero, 2014). What is novel in the present situation, however, is the result of the new digital culture which has taken root in Cuba – as it has across the world – despite economic and other problems, and the growth of an unofficial but not illegal audio-visual production sector. This undoubtedly makes certain

people in the government nervous – again universal – but here the nuances are particularly Cuban and have, if anything, intensified over the last few years.

The result is a contradiction: the state wishes to encourage self-employment and small businesses, which means passing laws to allow that to happen, but, when it comes to video producers, it seems to be wary of the consequences. (What the ruling echelons are fearful about is an open question, and it would be erroneous to suppose they do not have their differences, but ‘be cautious’ seems to be the prevailing advice.) So Cuba’s independent and autonomous audio-visual producers, not being ICAIC members, have an ambiguous status in relation to the state: the sector is mostly tolerated but gets no official support, and they exist in an ill-defined no man’s land with no legal status, suffering the resulting bureaucratic obstacles. The new provision for small businesses and *trabajo por cuenta propia* [self-employment] could well provide a new market for audio-visual promotion but is impeded by the legal codes. Moreover, it is full of anomalies: the person selling pirated DVDs on a street stall is a *cuentalpropista*, legally self-employed, but some of what he sells is made by filmmakers who do not enjoy the same legal status. There is no financial support, contracts of employment, investment from firms and companies, and even receiving funds through domestic or foreign banks is problematic. Other complications exist: there needs to be adequate protection against piracy, investment in exhibition and digital screening spaces, and a development and investment fund. In short, for the filmmaking community the objective is much more radical than simply renovating the institute, rather, it implies the creation of a whole new ecosystem, encompassing much more dynamic production methods. This is the main difference between the official commission (whose brief concerns only the ICAIC itself) and the g20, who have revived a call, first made eight or nine years ago, for a new, inclusive and enabling *Ley de Cine* [cinema law].

The general consensus is that the institute’s operations need to be overhauled. So far, the approach has been piecemeal, lacking in strategy and vision; some people call it inertia. It has failed to keep up with changes in production practices introduced by digital video; the necessary conversion of cinemas is not cheap. It has an ambiguous relationship with an independent sector equipped with its own technical resources and increasing skills. The institute works with independent filmmakers, but on an ad hoc basis, though it also houses and hosts the annual *Muestra del Cine Joven*. However, another open email summarised the ICAIC’s problems: the loss of earlier forms of participation in policy and decision-making; unfortunate decisions taken by functionaries without consultation; cases of censorship; chaotic organisation of premieres and programming; insufficient presence in international markets; closure of almost the whole of the country’s exhibition circuit; lack of funds for filmmaking; and technological debilitation.

However, the institute acquired a new president, Roberto Smith, an internal candidate for the post, who had previously worked in distribution, and a high degree of mutual understanding was reported between the independents and the ICAIC. A statement in May 2014 spoke of *refundación* [refounding] film in Cuba and of the g20's imminent submission of its working document to the ICAIC and the culture ministry. Meanwhile, however, the legal status of independent audio-visual producers remained undefined. Informants told me that it was not thought to be contentious, and could be introduced by *decreto ley* [decree law], but nothing has happened.

These provisions would be a beginning, but other issues need to be hammered out. The institute has given guarantees to maintain the animation department, as well as the Cinemateca and the archives (which signed an agreement in 2012 with the French agency INA for restoration and digitisation of the newsreels – the renowned *Noticieros*, supervised or directed by Santiago Álvarez until 1990). But should the ICAIC perhaps cease to be its own producer, in other words, cease to function as a studio? The question has been raised, but not answered. There is also talk of a nebulous film academy, or an overarching audio-visual institute of some kind. In one version, this could even encompass television, which might not even be a bad thing if it meant removing it from the direct control of Communist Party interests, but that seems highly unlikely.

Another proposal is the creation of a state production fund to which independent producers would have access. Manuel Pérez is afraid that, in the present economic circumstances, this is expecting too much. He recalled, as we conversed, the time when as a child he wrote a letter to the Three Wise Men (the Cuban version of writing to Father Christmas), asking for a bicycle, and his elder sister told him that they did not exist and it was really their mum and dad who bought the presents, and they could not afford a bicycle so he should ask for something more modest like roller skates. Another veteran ICAIC director, Manuel Herrera, has a different take. What the institute and culture ministry and others involved are afraid of, he says, is that we are going to ask for resources that the state does not have and is not disposed to give us, but we do not need an oil well to fuel our cinema. Any funds destined for production should be shared with the yet-to-be-authorised independents, although this raises the question of how this would be administered to avoid clientilism.

One of the speakers in a collective interview on the UNEAC website, under the title 'Changing everything that needs to be changed', explained the initial meeting as an organic event which happened because, as Bob Dylan sang, it was 'blowing in the wind'. It happened 'because no-one convened it, so we convened ourselves', because it needed to take place after years of fragmentation and because the generations needed to find a space to come together, 'spontaneously, organically, and in a revolutionary spirit', to compare

and express their diverse concerns. The phrase ‘in a revolutionary spirit’ sounds rhetorical, but is meant to indicate an authentic process within society and not against the state. Fernando Pérez calls it undoubtedly an act of rebellion, but not of rupture. Nevertheless, according to the director Magda González Grau (2014), relations between the action committee and the institute were excellent, with no division of focus between them, which is how everything in the country should work, she said, because that is socialism. In other words, it is not the ICAIC which is the obstacle.

## Reflection

I left Havana at the end of April 2013 with another Bob Dylan line in my head: ‘for the times they are a-changing’. What remained to be seen was how strong the wind was blowing, and whether the island’s filmmakers, and Cuba as a country, can sail close to it and not be blown off course. A couple more visits later that year yielded no further intelligence – meetings were being held and reports being written, but there was no official response. At the film festival in December that year, I participated in a round table on the state of the film industry in Latin America, where a fellow speaker was the astute observer Ignacio Ramonet. In conversation afterwards, he quoted a remark of de Tocqueville, to the effect that the most critical moment for a government is when it begins to reform. An economic transformation had begun, but the difficulties were immense, not least the country’s lopsided dual currency system. No wonder the Cuban government was playing a slow and cautious game.

The patient work of many months of meetings and of drafting concrete proposals had come up against what García Borrero described on his indispensable blog as rumours, misunderstandings, insults and indifference from certain quarters (2015a). Reyes, citing his own experience, reported that while there was profuse discussion on Cuba’s web media, the official media were forbidding any discussion of the topic – he was not even to mention it. He attributed this to the strange and absurd bureaucratic logic with which the uninformed respond to the risk of violating some unknown Party line (2015b). With no constructive developments taking place, the action committee summoned an open meeting to protest against inaction (*La Jornada*, 1 June 2015). A new declaration protested about the suppression of the issue in the official media, which was interpreted as clear evidence of the absence of real strategies for cultural production and consumption in present times.

Then, in December 2014, the wind abruptly changed direction with the ever-hoped-for but never-expected announcement of rapprochement between Cuba and the United States. A central concern of the new dispensation was communications and internet access, about which all involved parties were anxious, but for different reasons. In the crudest terms, for the US government,



*Figure 1. Young people accessing public wifi at a street corner. Author's photo.*

it was a question of soft power; for the Cuban government, it was about keeping civil society safe, say, from the internet's pernicious effects; for ordinary folk, it meant the promise of cheap and easy social intercourse with family and friends abroad; for filmmakers, it meant the infrastructure for the dissemination to the public of independent digital video, which is currently restricted (memory sticks are the favourite means). On my next visit, two years later, I discovered that progress was painfully slow, although the children now gather in parks and at street corners for access to public wifi (which has to be bought from the phone company).

The rapprochement with Washington has led to a loosening of restrictions, and, at the start of 2016, new US Treasury regulations allowed American production companies to shoot scripted shows on the island, previously prohibited under the economic embargo. The 'indies' had in fact already started to do so (*Cuba Business Report*, 2016). The *New York Times* opined that 'A stream of American filmmakers needing to hire Cuban equipment and crews would be a boon to the country's independent production industry' (12 February 2016), and indeed, as recently reported by the *Financial Times*, Hollywood was quick to respond, going off to Cuba to shoot the Showtime comedy series *House of Lies*, the action-fantasy *Transformers: The Last Knight*, and an instalment of the action series *The Fast and the Furious* (Rathbone, 2016). This was a massive

logistical exercise, requiring the cooperation of the Cuban army, a US company hiring a helicopter to fly over the city and permission to be obtained to use pyrotechnics. However, under the subheading 'Locals say the money brought in has bypassed the island's own industry', the *FT* observed that whether this influx will be a boon or a bane for local filmmaking is open to question. It quoted the most dynamic of the new independent producers, Claudia Calviño (whose name it misspells), responsible, among other things, for *Juan de los Muertos*: 'I am all for US film-makers coming here if it helps cinema and Cuba's economy generally', she says, 'but it would be good if the ICAIC reinvested some of those *Fast and Furious* dollars into local film.' Ironically, Patricia Ramos coincided with the *Fast and Furious* production team while shooting her first feature, *El techo* [The Roof] at the very same time and place, and had to arrange her schedule around the helicopters which were ruining her sound. Funded by two foreign NGOs and a couple of small private companies, and with the ICAIC's participation, *El techo* had a minimal budget; she was shooting with direct sound and couldn't possibly afford to post-synchronise dialogue, which is standard Hollywood practice. But what struck her crew the most, she told an interviewer, was when they found the US crew parked in the same street: seeing so many trucks, cranes, technicians, paralysing the district, compared to their own minimal resources. 'It was an almost "anthropological" experience, two ways of making films face to face' (Leyva Martínez, 2016). *Indiewire* quoted Carlos Gutiérrez of Cinema Tropical, a non-profit promoting Latin American cinema in the US, who is also sceptical: 'I don't necessarily foresee a better future', Gutiérrez said. 'What I see is more production companies going to Cuba to make films, but not necessarily coproductions' (Winfrey, 2016). These circumstances make a comprehensive new approach to audio-visual production – the film law proposed by the g20 – ever more urgent.

Returning to Cuba in December 2016 for the Havana Film Festival gave me the chance to update myself on all these issues at a poignant moment – the day before Fidel Castro's burial – and once again to experience the paradox that is Cuba. No one expected Fidel's physical demise (the official phrase) to produce any significant change, and everyone seemed resigned about Trump. What comes, will come, whether applied to film crews or tourists rich beyond Cuban aspirations. But while the government dithers, and the official media stay 'on message', everyone talks freely and openly about this, that and the other. Several people, of different generations, worried about the 'new rich', the small enterprise sector called into being by Raúl's economic reforms, not because they were opposed to private enterprise but because of the economic distortions it created. I also heard many criticisms, coming from different perspectives, of governmental lack of transparency, which, Cuba being a one-party state, also means the Communist Party. The ruling echelons seem closed

off and, in awkward fields like culture, inclined to play possum. Nevertheless, there are signs that procedure on independent production is seen as a political problem. Young independent filmmakers I spoke to in the days after the burial, mostly film school graduates but making highly personal works outside the system and also millennials who clearly would not call themselves *fidelistas*, said they felt offended when hardliners referred to them as 'the enemy'. They readily expressed their respect for the *fidelismo* of their parents and grandparents, even if they tend to see the governance of his brother, Raúl Castro as something like a holding operation, struggling to keep control. Their films, in general terms, have taken a turn away from established political frameworks to focus on more individual, and sometimes also metaphorical, themes. What the hardliners see is perhaps a lack of political commitment which they interpret as an opening for 'the enemy'.

The authorities' nervousness became evident when anonymous decision-makers made arbitrary moves, like closing the private video salons which showed 3D movies, in 2013, or censoring *Regreso a Itaca*, a foreign film shot in Cuba by the French director Laurent Cantet under the auspices of the ICAIC, which was scripted by the popular Cuban author Leonardo Padura. It was withdrawn without explanation from the 2014 Havana Film Festival, a blunder that was repeated at the 2016 festival, this time in the case of an independent Cuban film, *Santa y Andrés*, produced by Claudia Calviño and directed by Carlos Lechuga, which the ICAIC had supported and which had already been seen at festivals abroad, including Toronto, Chicago and San Sebastián. The previous year the script had won the Havana Festival's award for *guión inédita* [unpublished screenplay], but now it was deemed an unacceptable slur on the Revolution. The issue first became public on the internet through an exchange of open emails. These began with Reyes demanding to see the film, forcing defensive replies from the ICAIC and the culture vice-minister. It became the subject of outspoken public comment two days before the Festival, at the launch of the 200th edition of the ICAIC's house magazine, *Cine Cubano*, presented by Fernando Pérez. Going through the issue article by article until he reached the inside back cover, which carried an advertisement for the film, Pérez, Cuba's most respected director, spoke authoritatively about the unacceptability of suppressing the film. His speech led to many people agreeing that withdrawing the movie had been a foolish decision. Apart from giving the film extra publicity, they joked that even though no one in Cuba had yet seen it, they soon would because it was sure to turn up on el paquete.

In response to charges of censorship, the ICAIC president, Roberto Smith, defended the decision on the grounds that the film was 'una expresión de intolerancia y violencia contra la cultura; hace un uso irresponsable de nuestros símbolos patrios y referencias inaceptables al compañero Fidel' (Smith

de Castro, 2016).<sup>3</sup> He also said that the decision to withdraw the film had been taken before Fidel's death. There is no reason to suppose this was not true, but it suggests that, as his death appeared to be imminent, the higher echelons of the state were nervous about what the effects would be. In any case, reviews of the film, which had quickly appeared on the web after its Toronto première, offer a different reading of the film, as a thoughtful and deeply humanist portrayal of an early 1980s encounter between two politically opposed people from the social margins, who start off suspicious of each other but then draw closer (Holland, 2016; Alvarez, 2016; Espinosa Mendoza, 2016; Campos, 2016). For my part, I was able to view the film after leaving Cuba and returning home, and can only concur with a review in *Hollywood Reporter*: 'never preachy, Lechuga's script keeping the focus tightly on the quiet human drama as both characters struggle internally with the system's effects on them' (Holland, 2016). Set in 1983, somewhere in the east of the island not far from the sea, dissident gay writer Andrés, whose work has been banned, is now impoverished and living alone in the countryside after eight years in prison. Santa is a woman from the nearby village whom the local Party has sent to keep watch on him while an international peace conference is taking place nearby. There are moving performances by Lola Amores and Eduardo Martínez in the title roles, excellent hand-held cinematography, slow assured pacing and sparing use of music. The film is stylistically completely different from many of the other new Cuban films shown at the Festival, which – apart from *Ultimos dias en La Habana*, the latest by Fernando Pérez himself – strongly lean towards sentimentality or 'feel-good'. In short, it is easy to see how this would cause upset especially as Fidel did not die as soon as expected. It is not prohibited to show the penury of contemporary Cuba – all the new Cuban films I saw at the 2016 festivals had plots foregrounding, or at least referring to, the lack of money among the poorest, and the unedifying effects of this scarcity – but to focus on past intolerance is to sully revolutionary history. Fernando Pérez responded for everyone when he said that it was a difficult, distressing and complex subject, but that it was imperative to have open dialogue about the past (Marqués Dolz, 2016).

The accord with Washington has concentrated attention and intensified the problems. Reyes and García Borrero have been debating the term 'independent' (García Borrero, 2015b; Reyes, 2015a). For Reyes, the roots of a non-institutional cinema can be traced back to the emergence of amateur cine in Cuba in the 1940s, while García Borrero asks 'independent of what?' Of the ICAIC as the authorised producer? Or, in a more fundamental sense, independent of established and sanctioned filmic discourses? In fact, he says,

3 'an expression of intolerance and violence against culture; it made irresponsible use of our patriotic symbols and unacceptable references to *compañero* Fidel'.



not many of today's independents seem concerned with challenging the dominant models of representation, and he prefers to speak of a 'submerged' cinema. The problematic of independence is not a new one, but now appears in new guise; I am reminded of similar questions, raised when the Independent Filmmakers Association (IFA) was set up in the UK in the 1970s. Neither commentator mentions a significant Cuban contribution of that time, Julio García Espinosa's polemical manifesto 'For an imperfect cinema', which called for films that eschew the model of cinema as spectacle, the dream screen that lulls the audience into a semi-comatose state, but instead seek to stimulate and galvanise the viewer. He also, in a visionary moment, pondered the likely effects on artistic culture 'if the evolution of film technology (there are already signs in evidence) makes it possible that this technology ceases being the privilege of a small few' (García Espinosa, 1983).

This, having now happened, has completely changed the rules of the game. The issues now are those raised by Gustavo Arcos Fernández Britto, in his response to the news in February 2015, that Netflix was launching a Cuban streaming service (Arcos, 2015). It was a symbolic moment hardly likely to change anything much in the short term, since there are currently so few broadband accounts on the island but now, said Britto, Cubans can in theory join 50 million subscribers worldwide. Except that they, and any Cuban filmmakers who want to offer their work to Netflix for distribution, and any other internet platforms who want to court the Cuban market or to source material there, will come up against the absence of agreements, regulations and laws to govern the trade, even a means of making international payments beyond a tiny elite with access to international credit cards. Britto may be right that relations with the United States will, one way or another, change the whole of Cuban society. There will likely be radical transformations in multiple domains and the cultural field, being already so exposed, is likely to suffer hugely from the impact. Watch this space – if you can access it.

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## 8. A mixed economy of labour in a changing Cuba<sup>1</sup>

*Steve Ludlam*<sup>2</sup>

Cuba's reform of its political economy is transforming the world of labour. Greater state enterprise autonomy, mass redeployment of labour, and economic diversification into expanded private, cooperative and foreign investment sectors all have major implications. The changes complicate some constitutional workers' rights, notwithstanding a new Labour Code that extends rights to self-employed and privately employed workers. This chapter outlines and discusses the changes, having considered features of the history of Cuba's labour movement, the impact of the Revolution and more recent policy.<sup>3</sup>

In his seminal essay, Alastair Hennessy identified the role played in Cuba by a 19th-century independence movement that lacked the support of a revolutionary liberal class, and relied on radical nationalist intellectuals (1963, p. 351). Later, the Revolution was the first in the 20th century, declaring itself socialist, to break out in a country with a population mostly comprised of wage workers (Zeitlin, 1970, p. 3). Contrary to conventional Marxism of the time, it was not, however, led by a communist party and a mass labour movement but again, as in the independence movement, by radical nationalist intellectuals (though not exclusively). Rival ideologies and political economies aspiring to lead Cuba's national development have always reflected relations with external powers: Spain, the United States, the Soviet Union and global capitalism. As Kapcia has compellingly argued, Cuban nationalism had encompassed a set of codes that enabled successive generations of nationalists to claim the mantle of *cubanía* (2000, Part 1; 2008, pp. 89–94). Tension between the politics of class and the politics of nation was hence, and still is, a feature of Cuba's labour

- 1 Thanks to the many officers and members of the Central Union of Cuban Workers (CTC), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS), the National Lawyers Union of Cuba (Unión Nacional de Juristas de Cuba), and colleagues in the University of Havana and the Cuba Research Forum who, over many years, have helped me understand the changing world of employment in Cuba. Translations are my own, except where official translations are available.
- 2 Editor's note. This chapter was completed and submitted shortly before the sudden and very sad death of Steve Ludlam; it is published here by kind permission of his family, for which we are most grateful.
- 3 See Halebsky and Kirk (1985) for more background information.

movement, whose militant reputation depends in part on it surviving periodic repression in times of nationalist ferment.

It was skilled workers, notably in tobacco, who formed the 1840s' mutual-aid societies that later became craft unions (Casanovas, 1998, pp. 66–70; Stubbs, 1985, pp. 85–6). Cuba's early reputation for labour militancy reflected the protests of free blacks, *mulatos* and white creoles whose strikes in 1868 were blamed on agitation by the abolitionist wing of the anti-colonial movement. The first independence war (1868–78) divided the tiny labour movement between Spanish loyalists and anti-colonial separatists, the latter further divided over home rule or independence, and over slavery and race, and weakened by exile (Casanovas, 1998, pp. 111–19). Returning exiles accelerated the impact of anarchism and socialism: anarchism grew most, but sat uncomfortably with radical nationalism. Martí's vision was one of class harmony in a liberal polity; hence, anarchist rejection of liberal political economy and insistence that workers had no fatherland were targets of Martí's polemics (Hennessy, 1963, pp. 355–7; Ibarra, 2008, pp. 209–10; Cantón Navarro, 2005, pp. 85–97).

As Spanish rule faltered, violence grew against the labour movement and, in the second independence war (1895–98), the colonial government outlawed workers' organisations (Instituto de Historia, 1985a, p. 126). Unionised exiles had funded, and many had joined, Martí's army, alongside unionised groups of island workers, while most peninsular<sup>4</sup> workers supported Spain (*ibid.*, pp. 95–102). Divided and devastated by the war, unions that struck in the early years of the 'Pseudo-Republic' after 1902 were routinely suppressed by force. Inter-war labour politics contended with US intervention, state repression and world depression. In 1925, the first national federation, the Confederación Nacional Obrera de Cuba (CNOC) was formed. Its organised groupings were, in order of influence: anarchists, 'non-political' reformists and the newly formed Partido Comunista de Cuba (PC). When the CNOC, soon under PC influence, called a 24-hour general strike in 1930, President Machado's government arrested leaders, shot dead several workers on May Day, and made the CNOC illegal. In 1933, the latter federation and the PC called another general strike; Machado declared martial law but was forced to legalise them both. They called off the strikes but they nevertheless spread, halting when Machado fled (Instituto de Historia, 1985a, pp. 237–84; Alexander, 2002, pp. 36–52). The US-installed President Céspedes lasted only months before Sergeant Fulgencio Batista's military rebellion put in power the progressive nationalist president Grau San Martín, who adopted a historic range of pro-labour measures in 1933. These included a maximum eight-hour day, union recognition, a sugar-industry minimum wage, the right to strike, and a law

4 Spaniards from 'the mother country' with legal status as nationals under the Spanish colonial system.

setting a minimum 50 per cent Cuban labour requirement in all workplaces. The latter, demanded by nationalist union leaders, responded to grievances over Spanish workers' preferential access to apprenticeships and the influx of Caribbean immigrants but the PC and CNOC fiercely opposed it as divisive and racist (Instituto de Historia, 1985a, p. 305). Grau San Martín's Auténtico party's support of the non-communist unions foreshadowed Cold War divisions.

Batista's coup in 1934 heralded severe repression, which became worse after the crushing of the revolutionary general strike of 1935 joined by unions across the political spectrum. Union offices were seized, rights suspended, some labour militarised, and thousands of activists sacked, imprisoned or driven into exile. In 1935, when Batista called elections and promoted reforms favouring sugar workers, CNOC and PC opposition gave way to negotiation, legalisation and toleration of the latter's control of the former. With the Communist International's turn to popular-front politics in 1935, the PC led a drive in 1939 to unify PC-led, Auténtico-led, and 'non-political' unions into the Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC) (Instituto de Historia, 1985b, pp. 18–21, 50–7). The campaign for the 1940 Constitution, supported by the CTC's main ideological groups, registered historic labour advances, reviving the 1933 rights. Twenty-six labour-rights articles were incorporated into it including: state responsibility for full employment; a minimum wage; equal pay for equal work; unemployment, accident, pensions and other welfare benefits; a maximum eight-hour day; one month paid annual leave; maternity leave; union recognition; the right to strike (and lock-out); collective bargaining; prohibition of race/colour discrimination; and protection of agency workers and workers in cooperatives. 'Cubanisation' of labour was restated alongside a prohibition of contract-labour importation and of immigration liable to 'debase the condition of labour'.<sup>5</sup> A period of relative political stability for labour followed, underpinned by recovery from the Depression and rising wartime demand. In 1944, the PC renamed itself the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), and fought the presidential election in alliance with Batista, as they had done in 1940. However, Grau San Martín's Auténticos won. Funded by 'clause K' of the state budget, the anti-communist Auténticos split the CTC in 1947 and established the CTC-K. Assassinations of leaders of the sugar workers, the dockers and the Havana cigar-makers, government-appointed 'labour delegates', and the activities of the state Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities all weakened a beleaguered PSP and corrupted the CTC (Stubbs, 1985, pp. 147–57).

5 See the 1940 Constitution, available at: [www.latinamericanstudies.org/constitution-1940.htm](http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/constitution-1940.htm) (accessed 7 Aug. 2017).

Batista's second coup in 1952 thus took place against a divided and subdued labour movement. A CTC-K-called general strike against the coup was called off within hours, as its general secretary, Eusebio Mujal, allied himself with Batista, who strengthened the mujalista CTC by compelling employer collection of union subscriptions, and making trade union officials' positions permanent (Instituto de Historia, 1985b, pp. 252–3; Alexander, 2002, p. 153). As the 26th July Movement (M26/7) and other rebel movements emerged, destined to triumph in 1959, labour politics had witnessed a century during which revolutionary anarchists, and then communists, had periodically led the labour movement, overcoming race and skill divisions to fashion an organisationally united trade unionism. However, having divided along Cold War lines, unions were now associated with a corrupt, US-backed cubanía, opposed by communists and radical nationalists alike. The Revolution opened a new era of labour rights: a 1959 *Ley Fundamental* [Fundamental Law] restated verbatim the labour articles of the 1940 Constitution, declared the 1933 rights 'irrevocable', and reaffirmed the cubanisation of labour.<sup>6</sup>

The unions, paradoxically, were initially weakened by ideological divisions and sidelined by revolutionary strategies. Under Batista, M26/7's *secciones obreras* [workers' branches] had sustained clandestine activity, as had other groups, including the PSP's *comités de defensa de las demandas* [defence of demands committees]. But several factors undermined the call for a revolutionary general strike in 1958 by M26/7's Frente Obrero Nacional (National Workers' Front, FON), despite significant support. The mujalista CTC actively opposed it. Havana's M26/7 strike committee rejected PSP participation, and the latter was not enthusiastic, passively calling for the future creation of a unified organisation (Thomas, 2001, pp. 657–9; Instituto de Historia, 1985b, p. 345). Secrecy around simultaneous M26/7 armed actions weakened strike-planning (Ramonet, 2007, pp. 195–6; Instituto de Historia, 1985b, pp. 347–8; Aladro Cadroso et al., 2007, pp. 123–7). After the strike failed, the guerrillas in the sierra took unambiguous control of revolutionary strategy.

The PSP stance on the strike, and its criticism of the guerrillas as 'bourgeois putschists', meant that Rebel Army leaders had a complex relationship with trade unionism, though Fidel Castro's call for a general strike in January 1959 to prevent a counter-revolution was a total success. A wave of bargaining in 1959 secured many demands and wage rises, part of a deeper process of mass radicalisation in workplaces (Blackburn, 1980, pp. 81–90). In 1959, Fidel Castro even attacked the PSP for encouraging 'counterrevolutionary' wage struggles (Scheer and Zeitlin, 1964, pp. 116–7). Political tensions within the revolutionary leadership were mirrored inside the CTC. The FON (by now

6 See *Ley Fundamental* (1959) República de Cuba, Havana, available at: <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/6/2525/38.pdf> (accessed 7 Aug. 2017).



FONU, FON Unido), combining M26/7, PSP, Revolutionary Directorate, and Ortodoxo and Auténtico party adherents, seized control of most unions, and the government recognised the new leadership. David Salvador, FONU head, became general secretary of a CTC known for a period as CTC-R (Revolucionaria). M26/7 soon dominated the unions, after union elections in which they rejected an alliance with the PSP, reflecting M26/7 divisions over communism and long memories of PSP deals with Batista. As M26/7 tensions with the PSP eased, the latter's union role was reasserted (Kapcia, 2014, pp. 77–80); Salvador, protesting at communist influence, joined the counterrevolutionary underground and was later jailed for 30 years (Alexander, 2002, pp. 206–7). The Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba became the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba in 1961, and was reorganised along sectoral lines, mirroring the revolutionary ministries.

The other key factor in the 1960s was the revolutionary leadership's ambition to move rapidly past socialism towards a Cuban communism of 'new men', which left trade unionism looking more of a relic of the old society than a pillar of the new. Lenin's advocacy of strong trade unionism in the transition to socialism seemed irrelevant (1970, pp. 460–80). Wage bargaining was sidelined, as Che Guevara constructed a national salary scale, and moral incentives were given priority over material incentives (Bernardo, 1971, pp. 25–47; Mesa-Lago, 1968, pp. 81–105; Yaffe, 2009, pp. 63–7, 204–16; Acosta Santana, 1982, pp. 306–7). The CTC was now ideologically aligned with the leaders of the Revolution. The campaign against bureaucracy hollowed out trade-union officialdom, while the Ministry of Labour, the Vanguard Workers' Movement, revolutionary managers and Works Councils all displaced local trade unionism. In legislation on worker grievances, new *comisiones de reclamaciones* [grievance commissions] were made up of directly elected workers, representatives of management and the Ministry of Labour, but not of unions.<sup>7</sup> Workers (and historians) portrayed unions as having 'withered away' (Zeitlin, 1970, pp. xxv–vi, 281; Pérez-Stable, 1999, pp. 114–16; Eckstein, 2003, p. 35; Fuller, 1992, pp. 146–50; Kapcia, 2008, pp. 139–40).

However, with the failures of rapid industrialisation, the Revolutionary Offensive and the 1970 sugar harvest, the leadership turned decisively towards a COMECON-aligned<sup>8</sup>, state-socialist political economy. Revitalising the unions became necessary, as that new economy allocated active roles to unions (Pérez-Stable, 1985, p. 292; Hernández and Dilla, 1992, 40–2). The CTC's 13th Congress in 1973 reasserted union autonomy, while acknowledging the leading role of the new Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC), formed in 1965.

7 *Ley no. 938 de procedimiento laboral y de seguridad social* (1961) Consejo de Ministros, Havana.

8 Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, led by the Soviet Union, 1949–91.

The retreat from moral incentives was marked by the pursuit of individual payment-by-results, accompanied by the vigorous proclamation of the 'socialist principle of distribution', according to which personal income should be based on contribution, rather than on need, as assumed in a communist future (Codina Jiménez, 1987, pp. 134–5). Workplace assemblies were strengthened to increase participation, and renewed direction given to the direct union role in workplaces and in the state (CTC, 1973, pp. 46–51, 147). Voluntary work and socialist emulation were emphasised, and a national association of volunteer innovators and rationalisers (ANIR) established (*ibid.*, pp. 125–36, 165–6, 145–6).

With the first PCC Congress in 1975 and the adoption of the national Constitution in 1976,<sup>9</sup> this phase of institutionalisation was concluded. The 1976 Constitution restated labour's core legal rights, for example: to work an eight-hour day; rest days and paid holidays; social security in terms of sickness, invalidity and maternity pay; support in old-age; health and safety at work and accident benefits; and free health and education services. In 1985, a Labour Code enacted a full set of worker and union rights.<sup>10</sup> The 1976 Constitution and 1985 Labour Code incorporated the progressive gains of 1933 and 1940, but added rights based on state-socialist political economy, such as the rights to propose legislation; participate in planning and managing enterprises; conclude legally-binding collective bargaining agreements in all workplaces; and organise voluntary labour and socialist emulation. Trade unionism was given the 'dual role' of worker representation and mobilising workers for building socialism. Fuller concluded that, under this socialist political economy, which also decentralised more decision-making to managers, the unions enjoyed more influence than ever before (1992, p. 160). Others interpreted the fact that unions had acquired power and responsibility and no longer contested the distribution of capitalist profits as representing the collapse of free trade unionism (Alexander, 2002, pp. 224–54; Córdova and García Moure, 2003, pp. 122–7).

The sudden collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989–91, and the intensification of the US embargo, crippled the economy and reduced the capacity of the state. Cuba, re-emphasising nationalism and Martí, entered its 'Special Period in Peacetime', opened its economy to joint ventures with foreign capitalists, expanded international tourism, and legalised more self-employment, receipt of remittances and domestic use of US dollars. Normal work in most of the state sector was hollowed out by loss of contracts, electrical power and supplies. Unemployment and underemployment grew, and informalisation

9 See *Constitución de la República de Cuba* (1976) República de Cuba, Havana, available at: <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/6/2525/51.pdf> (accessed 7 Aug. 2017).

10 *Ley no. 49: Código de trabajo* (1985) Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Havana.

mainly involved state employees doing 'fiddle work', often in work time and with stolen materials. The unions might have been expected to swing entirely behind government demands, but there is serious evidence that workers' interests were stoutly represented. Urgent economic policy reforms were discussed in mass 'workers parliaments' (Roman, 2003, pp. 250–61). Union opposition overturned a proposal to allow foreign ventures to employ Cuban workers directly, and derailed proposals to levy income tax on inadequate salaries (Evenson, 2001, pp. 11–12). Following CTC pressure, judgement on disciplinary cases returned to workplace-elected Basic Organs of Labour Justice, after being the preserve of management since 1980 (Pérez-Stable, 1985, pp. 302–3; Evenson, 2001, pp. 64–8). The CTC, like civil society more generally, became more independent in the 1990s (Kapcia, 2000, pp. 238–9).

Occupational structure was changing. The sugar industry declined, while tourism, health, biotechnology and other scientific services grew. By 2000, a new Labour Code was already being discussed, to reflect the changing political economy, although it took until 2013 for it to reach the National Assembly. In the meantime, by 2005, the economy had recovered its pre-crisis Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and would grow strongly until 2008, as partnership with Venezuela strengthened (Morris, 2014, pp. 5–6, 30–3). A drive began to restore normality and raise productivity in the world of labour. A new General Regulation on Employment Relations was enacted in 2005:<sup>11</sup> to protect workers as the economy changed, management would pay a redundant or laid-off worker 100 per cent of salary for 30 days, then 60 per cent until an alternative was agreed. This could be another job, 'study as a form of work' retaining salary and employment rights, or early retirement. Atypical contracts, such as part-time, multiple-employer, homeworking and fixed-term, were recognised. Laws in 2006 covered work study, staff development and annual performance review. The universal application of *idoneidad demostrada* [demonstrated suitability], based on productivity, qualifications and disciplinary record, and not seniority or favouritism, was introduced for appointments and promotions, with local joint committees to monitor its application. Tough legislation in 2008 on health and safety at work was also enacted, a priority for the unions (Ludlam, 2009, pp. 543–6). This period of legislation placed the unions at the procedural heart of employment policy.

Modest general salary rises were announced in 2005, and the national salary scale reformed, followed by special increases for those working in education. The main focus, though, was again on payment-by-results schemes. Effective mainly in a minority of enterprises forming part of a 'business improvement system' launched in the 1990s, by 2004 they covered only about a third of

11 *Resolución no. 8/2005. Reglamento general sobre relaciones laborales* (2005) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana.

workers. Legislation in 2006 on payment-by-results had limited impact, so legislation in 2008 required that all workplaces introduce such systems. Previous caps on bonus earnings were removed, and provision made for non-shopfloor workers to benefit.<sup>12</sup> The primacy of the ‘socialist principle of distribution’ was reasserted as the key to higher salaries and the future of socialism (Ludlam, 2012a, pp. 54–61). So, even as the ‘Battle of Ideas’ was mobilising voluntary labour, a sharp turn to material incentives was underway.

## The challenge of ‘updating’

This early 21st-century combination of worker protection and incremental attempts to rationalise production took place in comparatively optimistic times. With the future political economy unclear until the PCC’s much-delayed 6th Congress in 2011, a new Labour Code had to wait. Optimism dissipated in 2008, when hurricanes and the world crisis triggered severe balance of payments and budget deficits (Vidal Alexandro, 2010, pp. 172–5). The crisis prompted a more rapid *actualización* [updating] (avoiding negative socialist connotations of ‘reform’ and ‘reformism’) to achieve a new balance between the state and markets. Decentralisation, diversification and internationalisation all carried consequences for working life. A more mixed economy of labour emerged from a series of reforms, notably:

- the 2010 *reordenamiento* [restructuring] of the workforce
- the 2011 PCC *Lineamientos* [Guidelines] on economic and social policy
- 2012 legislation permitting non-agricultural cooperatives
- 2014 legislation on payment-by-results and on foreign investment
- the 2013 Labour Code, implemented from 2014

These will be outlined before considering a set of underlying challenges to labour rights.

## *Reordenamiento*

In September 2010, it was the CTC, not the government, which announced that half a million state employees, some ten per cent of the workforce, were to be redeployed during the first three months of 2011 (CTC, 2010). It came as a shock, with no mass consultation, although it should not have been a surprise: Raúl Castro had spoken of workers ‘sitting at home’ on indefinite unemployment benefit, and of a million underemployed workers in state jobs (Castro Ruz, 2009; 2010a). The first edition of *EconoMía*, a new CTC updating bulletin, later acknowledged that ‘Among the unfamiliar and profound transformations brought about by the updating of the economic model, one

12 *Resolución no. 9/2008. Reglamento general sobre las formas y sistemas de pago* (2008) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana.

of the most evident and sensitive for the impact it has in the world of labour, and thus for the whole Cuban population, is the question of employment.' A 'positive crisis' was underway for the state-centred model that had provided, 'an enormous and sometimes excessive security to the immense majority of workers, on no few occasions to the detriment of productivity and economic efficiency' (Rodríguez Cruz, 2014).

The 2010 announcement and consequent legislation covered the selection of redundant workers, alternative work and reform of unemployment benefits (CTC, 2010).<sup>13</sup> Surplus workers were expected to redeploy themselves into: self-employment in an expanded range of licensed activities including contracted workers employed by others; small workplaces rented from the state; cooperatives; or a few state sectors with labour shortages. The government said that a million state workers would eventually be redeployed. Reordenamiento also involved the work undertaken by those remaining in post, who might be transferred to new, sometimes distant, locations (Muik, 2011). It created widespread anxiety as the balance of responsibility for jobseeking shifted from state to worker. The CTC had agreed to a dilution of the 2005 rights of redeployees to 'study as a form of work' or early retirement. Earnings-related unemployment benefit, previously unlimited in principle, would now be limited to between one and six months depending on length of service.<sup>14</sup> Thereafter, discretionary benefits would be subject to household income and availability to work assessments.

On paper, belt-and-braces protection from unfairness was in place. Numbers to be redeployed had to be agreed by workers' assemblies; selection of redeployees was based on idoneidad demostrada and recommended by a mainly elected workplace 'Committee of Experts'; workers could appeal to the workplace grievance panel and the courts. Salvador Valdés, the CTC general secretary, spelled out the unions' dual role, saying, 'As representatives of the workers, we have to avoid violations, paternalism, favouritism and any other negative tendency, and at the same time convince them of the necessity of applying these measures for the country's economy, with the assurance that, in the final instance, no one is going to be abandoned' (*Trabajadores*, 3 January 2011, p. 16). The dual role was soon tested. The agreed selection process was often improperly conducted, and countervailing union power was soon

13 *Resolución no. 35/2010. Reglamento sobre el tratamiento laboral y salarial aplicable a los trabajadores disponibles e interrumpidos* (2010) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana; *Resolución no. 32/2010. Reglamento del ejercicio del trabajo por cuenta propia* (2010) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana; *Decreto-Ley no. 278/2010. Del régimen especial de seguridad social para los trabajadores por cuenta propia* (2010) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana.

14 *Resolución no. 35/2010. Reglamento sobre el tratamiento laboral y salarial aplicable a los trabajadores disponibles e interrumpidos* (2010) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana.

deployed. The three-month implementation process was halted, replaced by a completion target in the 2011–16 five-year plan. Raúl Castro spoke of now proceeding ‘*sin prisa, pero sin pausa*’ [without haste, but without pausing] which became the slogan of the hour (Castro Ruz, 2011).

Displaced workers began to bring grievances to the national CTC, which had to open new legal advice centres to handle complaints against employers and unions. The restructuring damaged the unions, as the CTC acknowledged. Referring also to another policy change that it had endorsed but which hit workers’ incomes, it reported that,

The elimination of gratuities and improper subsidies, and the labour restructuring were measures that we supported and in which we ensured the processes and conditions so that these processes did not generate conflicts or incidents of a political character ... Nevertheless, the application of these decisions, without doubt, has come at a political cost to our organisation (CTC, 2014, pp. 4–5).

Unions also quickly turned to recruiting the self-employed, to keep them, in the general secretary’s words, ‘on the Revolution’s side’ (cited in Valdéz Paz, 2012). The CTC’s report to its 20th Congress described this as its most important political task, recording that over 40 per cent had joined. More than a thousand self-employed workers’ union branches participated in the Labour Code consultation. United States’ policies to fund independent unions and to promote Cuba’s private sector certainly made (and still make) this a particular challenge.

### ***Lineamientos***

The reordenamiento was only the start. The 6th Party Congress in 2011 was preceded by mass consultation on its *Lineamientos*. The scale and impact of the consultation was striking. Over 160,000 workplace and other meetings left only 32 per cent of the original guidelines unchanged, with dozens of new clauses added (PCC, 2011, p. 3). Analysis of the most-supported changes revealed both everyday and more ideological concerns, for example adding salary increases for work bringing ‘particular social benefits’ to the original proposal to privilege hard currency-producing workers (Ludlam, 2012b, pp. 249–52). The new strategy almost exclusively addressed economic policy, hence ‘The heart of these *Guidelines* ... is [to] ... produce what we can export, save imports, and invest in work that can recover its costs most rapidly, and, further, raise the level of efficiency of the economy’ (Castro Ruz, 2010b). The document’s Preamble specified, as conditions for this efficiency, the development of

a process of restructuring employment and salaries, with consideration given to non-state forms of economic management where advisable, with a

view to eliminating inflated payrolls in all the economic sectors, and make work the main source of people's incomes;

increasing labour productivity; strengthening work discipline; raising the motivational effect of salaries and incentives; eliminating egalitarianism in income distribution and redistribution; and as part of this process, the removal of improper free benefits and excessive individual subsidies will be necessary (PCC, 2011, pp. 8–9).

Just six of 313 clauses referred directly to employment and salaries, restating the Preamble's items. More generally, the strategy proposed greater integration into world markets, decentralising enterprise management, subjecting state enterprises to profitability criteria and bankruptcy, and expanding the private, foreign investment and cooperative sectors. Dozens of state enterprises were soon trialling greater autonomy, not least in labour matters, with the expectation of a new company law to come. For the unions, the drive to greater enterprise autonomy signalled an intensified role for collective bargaining agreements, which will cover more items such as payroll size, working hours and company-level bonus schemes. The CTC was soon running a national training programme. The potential, as CTC specialists recognise, is for more conflict at local level, rebalancing the dual role of defending workers and supporting economic development.

## Non-agricultural cooperatives

The *Lineamientos* announced the creation of a non-agricultural cooperative sector as the preferred form of non-state, socialist economic activity, extending cooperativism beyond agriculture (PCC, 2011, p. 12; Fernández Peiso, 2012, pp. 392–3). A leading pro-reform economist described this as 'decisive for the transformation process' (Triana Cordoví, 2013, p. 126). Legislation and regulations were published in 2012.<sup>15</sup> The initial scale in labour terms – estimates suggested around 15,000 individuals by the end of 2013 – was limited, compared to around 500,000 in agricultural cooperatives, and some 450,000 in self-employment. Gradual expansion was expected, though, as small-scale state enterprises were offered the opportunity to convert, and perhaps provide examples of non-alienated socialist labour (Ludlam, 2014, pp. 145–7).

15 *Decreto-Ley no. 305/2012 De las cooperativas no agropecuarias* (2012) Consejo de Estado, Havana; *Decreto-Ley no. 306/2012 Del régimen especial de seguridad social de los socios de las cooperativas no agropecuarias* (2012) Consejo de Estado, Havana; *Decreto no. 309/2012 Reglamento de las cooperativas no agropecuarias de primer grado* (2012) Consejo de Ministros, Havana.

Labour rights in cooperatives have been a focus. Beyond constitutional rights to health and education services, profit-sharing members of cooperatives have to pay into the social security system to get access to welfare benefits. More complex has been the hiring of contracted workers, a potentially exploitative labour relation. The legislation required that, after three months' work, hired workers must be offered cooperative membership or be released, and hired labour must be limited to performing ten per cent of a cooperative's working time.<sup>16</sup> Minimum wages and access to labour justice and other rights were prescribed in a linked regulation.<sup>17</sup> These were to be working cooperatives, not profit-sharing businesses living off the alienated labour power of others.

## Foreign investment

The 2014 law on foreign investment, implementing the *Lineamientos*, intended a major expansion of this sector, stimulated by generous tax and profit-repatriation rules.<sup>18</sup> The sector is subject to labour and social security law, and Cuban workers remain state employees. The national salary scale is not applied to salaries in this sector, subject to a minimum fixed at half the national average salary (much higher than the national minimum wage), and enterprise-level payment-by-results systems are anticipated.<sup>19</sup>

## Payment-by-results

During 2014, the 2009 legislation on payment-by-results was reformed. One law removed the 30 per cent payment-by-results cap on non-shopfloor staff, some of whom had been going 'back on the tools' (returning to the factory floor) to earn higher bonuses.<sup>20</sup> In parallel legislation, state companies were required to establish profit-sharing bonus schemes, with up to 50 per cent of net profits available for the purpose.<sup>21</sup> In 2016, payment-by-results schemes were further reformed, following disappointment at the rate and manner

16 *Decreto-Ley no. 306/2012 Del régimen especial de seguridad social de los socios de las cooperativas no agropecuarias* (2012) Consejo de Estado, Havana.

17 *Decreto no. 309/2012 Reglamento de las cooperativas no agropecuarias de primer grado* (2012) Consejo de Ministros, Havana.

18 *Ley no. 118: Ley de la inversión extranjera* (2014) Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Havana.

19 *Resolución no. 16/2014* (2014) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana.

20 *Resolución no. 17/2014* (2014) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana.

21 *Resolución no. 203/2014* (2014) Ministerio de Finanzas y Precios, Havana; *Resolución no. 100/2015* (2015) Ministerio de Finanzas y Precios, Havana; *Resolución no. 155/2016* (2016) Ministerio de Finanzas y Precios, Havana.



of implementation.<sup>22</sup> Three principal changes established near-complete company-level autonomy, capped performance-related pay to the enterprise director and administrators to a multiplier of the average salary (2.5 and 2 respectively), and reformed the policy on non-fulfilment of targets. The latter measure was so that the pay reduction was to the workers' position on the national salary scale and not to the national minimum wage. These reforms met some key objections, coming from workers and unions, focusing on delays due to ministerial bureaucracy, excessive payments to bosses, and severe salary cuts where production had faltered through no fault of workers.

## The new Labour Code

The 1985 Labour Code was written for a different era and political economy, and by 2013 had been amended by over 90 subsequent laws. Consultations over a new Code since the late 1990s had produced some 30 draft versions before the process was halted to await the outcome of the PCC congress in 2011. The new draft was published in 2013, the product of union-government negotiations and consultation with labour lawyers, academics and others. In a new departure, the Code itself was less detailed, while a complementary and more easily amended Regulation would later publish the operational procedures.<sup>23</sup> Nearly 70,000 workplace meetings discussed the draft, and a joint commission of the CTC, Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the National Assembly analysed responses. Over 100 changes were made, of which, in my analysis, 80 per cent were substantial, amending around a quarter of the draft clauses. In the CTC's evaluation of the consultation with workers, the greatest number of proposed amendments concerned employment contract issues. The draft proposal to permit working on all but seven of the 30 days of annual leave was amended, to permit this only in exceptional circumstances and only after consultation with unions. Written contracts for private sector workers were made obligatory and indefinite contracts for workers in cyclical work, like tourism, were added. A proposal to insert a new stage into the workplace grievance and disciplinary procedure, giving senior management exclusive powers to make final judgements, was removed.

In the enacted version, restated fundamental worker rights included equal pay, a minimum salary, welfare benefits, participation in enterprise management, a written contract, a maximum of three years for fixed-term contracts, and for the first time non-discrimination with reference to sexual orientation (following, most unusually, a very late National Assembly amendment). The

22 *Resolución no. 6/2016* (2016) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Havana; MTSS (2016) *Resolución no. 15/2016* (Havana: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social).

23 *Ley no. 116: Código de trabajo* (2013) Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Havana; *Decreto no. 326/2014 Reglamento del código de trabajo* (2014) Consejo de Ministros, Havana.

normal working week was set at between 40 and 44 hours, based on an eight-hour day and five-day week. In the state sector, one month's paid annual leave (plus ten paid public holidays), and guaranteed weekly rest days, remained as rights. Overtime working, subject to union agreement, would now be paid at a premium rate (time and a quarter). Unpaid care leave was introduced. Cuba's exemplary maternity leave rights (one year of paid leave, one unpaid) were further enhanced with protection from overtime or shift working, and now included an hour's paid time daily for feeding a baby up to age one. Health and safety at work articles required employers to eliminate risks, provide training, and supply adequate protective equipment and clothing. Workers and unions had the right to stop work they considered dangerous. Grievance and disciplinary issues would go before workplace Organs of Labour Justice, the majority of whose members have to be elected to two-year terms; appeals would go to the courts and non-state workers could go directly to the courts. Rights in redundancy and redeployment situations were enacted along the lines of the 2010 reforms.

The draft chapter on union rights was the most amended section. Unions had the right to participate in company planning and control, and new rights to receive management information and training. Unions were guaranteed office space and materials, and facility time (a draft item to restrict this was removed). The Code generally contains dozens of other requirements of agreement or consultation with unions: agreement is now necessary, for example, for lay-offs, working hour patterns, overtime or rest day working, the annual safety report, and the content of the obligatory, wide-ranging and legally binding workplace collective bargaining agreement that also requires a majority vote in favour from the workers' assembly.

A major novelty, reflecting the economic reforms, was the legal definition of 'worker' (to include the privately employed contracted worker) and of 'employer', who might now be state or non-state. The basic rights of private employees, in terms of minimum salary, maximum hours, paid annual leave, and health and safety, were specified for the first time since this contracted worker category had appeared in 2010. The new Code also marked the shift to material incentives, and away from the labour politics of the COMECON era. It no longer included the unions' right to organise voluntary work, moreover their right to run 'socialist emulation' (removed in the draft Code) was restored, but only where legitimate and fair. In a sensitive political change, the Code restated the right to form trade unions. However, whereas in the 1985 Code this right could be exercised 'without prior authorisation', it now required 'conformity with foundational unitary principles'. This reflects a concern, much expressed in the union consultations, to avoid divisive breakaways, especially in the private sector, and in the light of US destabilisation activities: as the

new Code was coming into force, President Obama said, in his 'normalisation' speech of 17 December 2014, that 'we continue to believe that Cuban workers should be free to form unions' (Obama, 2014).

The new Code thus restates most existing worker and union rights, and adds new ones reflecting both the new world of work and wider political economy change. As the CTC's Central Report to its 2014 Congress put it, 'The economic, political and social context that Cuba is living through imposes new challenges to the organisation, these are times of important changes, demands, commitments and convictions' (p. 4). Several of these challenges concern fundamental constitutional rights in socialist Cuba.

## The right to work

The Cuban Constitution establishes that, 'Work in socialist society is a right and a duty'.<sup>24</sup> The reforms challenge the job security associated with the political economy constitutionally embedded in the 1970s: the *reordenamiento* envisages a third of the Cuban workforce being employed outside of that old state sector. Payroll rationalisation is an ongoing process. This is not informalisation as experienced elsewhere: free health and education services are rights of all Cuban citizens; welfare benefits are the right of all who pay social security insurance, and for those who do not there is discretionary social assistance. The *reordenamiento* actually produced de-informalisation, as tens of thousands of previously illegal self-employed workers took out legal licenses, acquiring rights in the process. Furthermore, the 2013 Labour Code incorporated rights for the self-employed and contracted workers. However, while the state is facilitating new forms of non-state work, it is no longer guaranteeing state employment for all to underpin the right to work and, as noted above, unemployment benefit rights have been limited since 2010 to terms now embedded in the Labour Code.

## Equal pay

The concept of the *salario real* (the salary's actual purchasing power in inflationary conditions) has entered common parlance. It is not hard to see why. By 2008, salaries had fallen to 24 per cent of their 1989 purchasing power (Vidal Alejandro, 2010, pp. 161–2) while, since 2008, the reduction of ration-book items and of electricity price subsidies, and inflation in supply-and-demand-priced food markets have made matters worse. Unless the updating raises real incomes, a quarter of a century of deprivation will continue to threaten political legitimacy. Salaries were the issue most frequently raised in the 2014

24 See p. 23, *Constitución de la República de Cuba* (1992) República de Cuba, Havana (Editora Política), available at: <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/5/2138/10.pdf> (accessed 7 Aug. 2017).

CTC Congress, and also in union consultations over the Labour Code, even though the salary scale has never been in the Code, but is fixed by the Council of State, after consultation with the CTC. The salary challenge is, however, not just about quantity: the Constitution establishes the complementary rights to 'equal pay for equal work' and 'the socialist principle of distribution "from each according to their capacity, to each according to their work."<sup>25</sup> Income *igualitarismo* [egalitarianism] is officially denounced; in a National Assembly speech, Raúl Castro insisted that, 'Socialism means social justice and equality, but equality of rights, of opportunities, not of incomes' (Castro Ruz, 2008).

During 2014, the salary scales for health sector workers were doubled, and in some cases tripled. Health, though, is an exceptional category, and state sector salaries will rise, principally not through the basic scale rates but through decentralised payment-by-results systems (CTC, 2014, pp. 17–18). Payment-by-results – material incentivisation beyond the basic salary scales – is the main instrument for securing the 'socialist principle' of 'to each according to their work'. These schemes have been decentralised and are negotiated in workplace Collective Bargaining Agreements. Work incomes therefore depend not only on the individual's contribution, but also on local union effectiveness and on enterprise profitability. Logically, this implies unequal salaries for equal work in different enterprises, irrespective of the individual's work effort. The CTC already acknowledges this: 'Inequality between some sectors and on occasions within the same sector can be observed' (2014, p. 18).

Some Cuban specialists see such income variation as requiring a less precise harmonisation of salaries where equal qualifications produce markedly varied incomes depending on economic location. Income tax is one instrument in this respect. In September 2016, with CTC support, the government announced a dramatic extension of payment of the 'special social security contribution' (the equivalent of national insurance payments in the UK), and the introduction of income tax for some workers. The justification was the rise in salaries in the previous five years (43 per cent on average, 54 per cent in the business sector), and the increased costs of pensions, which are now paid at up to 90 per cent of final salary. In addition to the sectors already paying the social security contribution, some 300,000 workers in *perfeccionamiento empresarial* [business improvement] companies receiving the scheme's plus payment, payment-by-results, or profit-sharing bonuses, pay a 5 per cent social security rate if their salaries have exceeded 500 Cuban pesos a month (twice the national minimum salary). And they pay income tax at 3 per cent on salaries between 2,500 and 5,000 pesos per month, and 5 per cent beyond 5,000. *Granma* reported this reform as 'another step in favour of redistribution of income' (2 September 2016, p. 2). Anticipating complaints of lack of consultation, the CTC noted that the

25 See *ibid.*, pp. 10, 22.

workers' parliaments which debated the Special Period reforms had blocked the introduction of income tax in 1994, but had agreed to its use, in principle, when salary conditions permitted (*Trabajadores*, 5 September 2016, pp. 6–7).

In his book on political economy, Che Guevara questioned how the 'socialist principle of distribution' could apply when different salary rates applied for the same work according to state priorities (published posthumously, 2006, pp. 152–4). In the new labour economy, decentralisation and diversification have now removed much of the earlier direct state control of salary priorities. In the non-state sector, the national salary scale does not apply, but the Labour Code gives contracted workers the right to the national minimum salary. In the foreign investment sector, a higher minimum salary is required and, in 2016, special, higher salary scales were introduced for construction and related workers in priority foreign investment projects. These are focused on tourism and the Special Development Zone around the new Mariel Bay harbour (*Trabajadores*, 31 October 2016, p. 4).

Such measures in a non-state sector containing a third of the workforce raise questions about the application of the 'socialist principle of distribution', to which the tax system for the self-employed and – where they are contracted workers – their predominantly private employers, adds further complexity. The PCC's 2016 Congress opened public debate on the 'Conceptualización del modelo económico y social cubano de desarrollo socialista' [conceptualisation of the economic and social model of socialist development], that set out the principles behind the reformed model (PCC, 2016). Key sections delineated new forms of non-state and private property, and announced a limit (unspecified) on the private concentration of wealth, in addition to the one on property accumulation announced by the *Lineamientos* (ibid., pp. 7, 10). Raúl Castro has said that the tax system, 'constitutes a fundamental instrument of the country's economic policy by being the principal formula of redistribution of national income' (Castro Ruz, 2012). In terms of sustaining the legitimacy of the 'socialist principle of distribution', whose reassertion is central to the prospects for the socialist model, the tax system will be crucial. Alongside *salario real*, *evasión fiscal* [tax evasion] has become a much used term in Cuba. Tax officials reported that in 2015 unpaid tax amounted to 43.2 million pesos (*Trabajadores*, 17 October 2016, p. 6). So 'equal pay for equal work' and the 'socialist principle of distribution' now present much more complex challenges for unions, labour lawyers and government officials, if these constitutional principles are not to be diluted in a 'market socialist principle of distribution'.

## **Exploitation of man by man**

The third general challenge posed by the mixed economy of labour is to the Constitution's principle that, 'In the Republic of Cuba the governing economic

system is based on the suppression of the exploitation of man by man'.<sup>26</sup> As noted above, the legalisation of private employment in 2010 was a major shift in labour policy. As one leading economist put it, it was 'one of the most significant conceptual changes in the last 50 years' (Fernández Estrada, 2014, p. 25). The contracted worker category soon became the second most rapidly expanding group in the self-employed workforce (after private caterers). Such hired labour can be employed in the private sector, the cooperative sector, and indeed by state enterprises; the CTC identified one private enterprise with 200 private employees. The risk of exploitation is obvious.

From 2010, the government's treatment of contracted workers as civil contractors selling a service, rather than as workers selling 'abstract labour' (in Marxist terms), generated intense debate. In 2012, the president of the Supreme Court's labour bench settled the issue, in favour of worker status and labour law protection, such that, 'So long as we are in the presence of an owner (person responsible for a business of specific production or service activity), and of other persons contracted to perform activities, there exists a relationship of subordination', and therefore an employment relation as defined in international law (cited in Lotti, 2012). On this basis, the concepts of worker and employer, as noted, were redefined in the new Code. In his Central Report to the 2016 Congress, Raúl Castro bluntly acknowledged the emergence, outside any appropriate legal framework, of small and medium private employers. The Communist Party, he insisted, should be 'calling things by their name and not hiding behind illogical euphemisms to mask reality' (*Granma*, 17 April 2016, p. 7).

The acceptance of a sector based on private exploitation of labour poses, self-evidently, an unprecedented challenge to revolutionary Cuba's union leadership. In the Labour Code, the non-state sector has the right to a collective-bargaining agreement, posing a new challenge, as the CTC has recognised:

In the new conditions we have to examine how to develop collective negotiation, which constitutes an instrument of the workers and unions in places where subordinated work exists, enabling the improvement of labour relations between employees and employers that do not violate established rights and duties, matters that need to be prioritized in union work' (2014, p. 27).

In 2015, according to Cuban lawyers, this process had yet to begin in the private sector. Whether, for contracted workers, the 'exploitation of man by man' becomes extensive – as in China's vast capitalist labour sector – or whether it is closely regulated by the state and the unions, constitutes a serious challenge

<sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 10.

for Cuba's mixed economy of labour, and will be a key signal of the future of the 'socialist state of workers'.

## Conclusion

For more than a century before the Revolution, Cuba's labour movement carved out gains and rights in contexts of: state repression; ethnic discrimination; independence wars; dictatorships; conflict between colonial and neocolonial authorities and a succession of nationalist cubanías; and of movements for social transformation – notably anarchism followed by communism. A protectionist colonial political economy then gave way to one dependent on the United States and its world economy, before a progressive nationalism briefly offered a more developmentalist alternative. Historic rights won in 1933 and 1940 were soon lost to the Cold War and dictatorship. The Revolution restored these rights and, after a period of uncertainty about the union's role in the new society, a new set of dual role rights and responsibilities, consistent with a Soviet-supported, state-socialist political economy, were embedded in the Constitution and a Labour Code. Cuban unions are exceptionally powerful, constitutionally and financially independent, and command a platform of rights that workers and unions elsewhere would mostly be delighted to enjoy. They have the overwhelming majority of workers in voluntary membership, including a large proportion of self-employed workers, and remain massively influential in the state, workplaces and society in general.

The longevity of the progressive heritage in labour rights is reflected also in the CTC's frequent reference to its 1939 foundation, making it Cuba's second oldest pre-revolutionary mass organisation. Its newspaper regularly carries histories of heroes and martyrs of pre-revolutionary years, reinforcing the claims of the unions' authority within the post-revolutionary state. Their autonomy is, however, constrained by acknowledgement of the Constitution and hence of the PCC's leading role, and by an acceptance of sharing responsibility for building a successful socialist economy. In that dual role of upward representation and downward mobilisation, there is plenty of evidence of union power, to the point that the conventional wisdom is that the government can do nothing in the field of employment law without the unions' agreement, as the exhaustive processes of consultation seem to bear out. On the other hand, the PCC sets the horizon of change: as the recent CTC general secretary nominations have made obvious, the PCC can still exercise the obscure privilege of *nomenklatura* [nominating and removing leading postholders].

The updating strategy now presents unions with new challenges, as the more market-oriented political economy model, more profitability-based and more exposed to global market forces, makes the world of labour more diverse and less certain, and the task of representation and collective bargaining more

complex. Commentary on Cuba's economic reforms generally highlights the growing private sector, implying a transition to capitalism. This ignores the island's dominant state sector, the revived planning system, and the role of small-scale private enterprise in socialist transition models. However, from a socialist perspective, the impact on workers is as important as forms of property. After all, the defining feature of capitalism is not private property, but how 'free' labour is exploited. Unions have recruited energetically in the self-employed sector, to keep these workers 'on the side of the Revolution', and although a lot of representation has taken place to advise these workers and raise their needs, collective bargaining – where there are concentrations of privately deployed workers – has barely begun. The defence of constitutional rights to work, equal pay for equal tasks, and protection against capitalist exploitation, now requires of unions a different engagement with state and non-state enterprises. Fuller's observation (above) about the link between decentralisation and union influence in the 1980s applies with even more force today, when the potential for so-called 'non-antagonistic contradictions' within the socialist system are also greater. The principal non-economic arguments for the reforms are that they are necessary to sustain Cuba's sovereignty and hence preserve the Revolution's other crucial conquests, the exceptional 'social wage' of health, education and other services. These sustain both political legitimacy and the social solidarity whose erosion has been identified as a key threat to socialist states undertaking economic reforms (Lane, 1996, p. 183).

Despite Raúl Castro's coruscating criticisms of political culture in Cuba in general and in the PCC in particular, reform of the political system is not on the agenda (Ludlam, 2012, pp. 252–6). The role of the unions in sustaining legitimacy in the existing system is therefore vital, not least as, with Fidel Castro's death and Raúl Castro and the rest of the 'historic generation' due to retire from state office in 2018, the tremendous political authority of the Revolution's victorious leaders becomes less easy to invoke. Can the unions keep private sector workers in the CTC and 'on the side of the Revolution', or will the US regime-change strategists succeed, as they still intend, whatever diplomatic and trade normalisation has occurred, in developing 'independent' unions where previous attempts to fund and organise such unions have failed? Even if the self-employed and small-scale entrepreneurs simply demand their own mass organisation, it would open a wider and potentially destabilising process of debate about interest-group representation whose structures have been largely unchanged since the 1960s. Can the unions, using their political influence and their powerful collective bargaining rights, ensure that the economic reforms deliver adequate remuneration? Raúl Castro directly acknowledged, in a major departure for public discourse, and in his first major speech as interim president, that salaries did not provide a 'decent' standard of living (Castro Ruz, 2007).



Almost a decade later, referring to rising food prices, Raúl Castro's Central Report to the 2016 Party Congress noted that, 'In these circumstances, wages and pensions are still unable to satisfy the basic needs of Cuban families' (*Granma*, 17 April 2016, p. 5). After the Congress, the National Assembly was cautioned that missed export targets and the crisis in Venezuela would mean a slowdown in salary increases, and fuel shortages in some sectors (*Granma*, 9 July 2016, p. 6). The US embargo, not least its impact on foreign investment in general in Cuba, is a crippling constraint that the election of Donald Trump is unlikely to ease; and the island acknowledges its own shortcomings. However, the commitment to social justice is extremely strong. Indeed, were it not for the unrivalled 'social wage' of: ration-book food distribution; price subsidies for food and other key expenses such as electricity, transport and culture; and free healthcare and education, then many Cubans, unable to 'satisfy ... basic needs' from their salaries, could technically be categorised as living in severe poverty. As Raúl Castro warned his Party Congress, as the new economic model is built,

a different scenario for Party organization will take shape, characterised by the increasing heterogeneity of sectors and groups in our society, originating from differences in their income. All this poses the challenge of preserving and strengthening national unity in different circumstances to those that we became accustomed to in earlier stages (*Granma*, 17 April 2016, p. 7).

This combination of low incomes with new inequalities and uncertainties in the world of labour is thus central to the challenge to the Revolution's unity. If, as has been recently argued, Cuba's political leadership has worked as a variant of 'a very specifically post-colonial nation-building socialist corporatism', can a new social contract, or corporatist settlement between labour and the state, be constructed to sustain the island's constitutional 'socialist state of workers', not least as the charismatic authority of the 'historic generation' fades (Kapcia, 2014, p. 222)?<sup>27</sup> Cuba's trade unions today enjoy political influence consistent with their size and the centrality of labour in any, but especially in a socialist, society. Unions as institutions and workers in general have at their disposal an unparalleled set of legal rights with origins in Cuba's nationalist and socialist victories, and tremendous organisational resources reinforced by international trade union solidarity. And, despite all the material and moral disruption of the post-Soviet Special Period, they organise a politically sophisticated and fiercely nationalist working population. How they seek to exercise their rights, and how they balance the dual role in the new mixed economy of labour, will be decisive factors in determining whether the goal of a 'prosperous and sustainable socialism' can be achieved.

27 Also see *ibid.*, p. 4.

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## 9. What's in a name? Emigrant Cubans since 1959 and the curious evolution of discourse

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Although, given the outside world's continuing fascination with Cuba and the constant challenge to expectations which the island presents post-1959, it is always a 'good moment' to address (and reassess) aspects of the Cuban reality. But 2015 really *was* such a moment due to the totally unexpected announcement, on 17 December 2014, that almost 54 years after full diplomatic relations had been broken in 1961, generating five decades of mutual hostility and non-communication, the governments of Cuba and the United States were aiming to re-establish these relations as soon as possible. All manner of preconceptions suddenly became open to reappraisal.

Immediately after that announcement, the world's media rushed to find out why this decision had been taken and to hazard guesses (many of them predictably wild and ill-informed, usually based on wishful thinking rather than hard fact or objective assessment) as to what the political consequences might be for the island. Most outside commentators assumed that the immediate result would be Cuba's seemingly inevitable opening to capitalism and globalisation (which had, of course, been universally expected way back in 1989–91, with the island being perceived as the last 'domino' of the socialist world and Soviet bloc to fall). But they conveniently forgot that, despite the dramatic nature of the change in rhetoric and daily relations, Cuba's equally long economic isolation – enforced by the five-decade-long US embargo – would *not* end for some time to come. All of that, of course, has been thrown into further doubt, if not confusion, by the political shock of Donald Trump's election in November 2016, especially as both his transition and advisory teams include several activists from the pro-embargo lobby.

Even before that latter development, however, it had rapidly become clear as 2015–16 unfolded that – perhaps aware that those elements in the US Congress supporting the embargo and opposing any recognition of a system detested by them might yet prevent any real change taking shape in the US-Cuban relationship – different groups and commercial enterprises in the US were rapidly beginning to take advantage of the moment. Quasi-educational visits began to be organised (a pretext to evade the US's continuing prohibition

of normal tourism to the island), while the immediate improvement in the atmosphere of the relationship, coupled with the Cuban government's 2012–13 liberalisation of the rules on travel abroad for its people, encouraged a significant movement of Cubans in both directions, albeit few permanently but even so the numbers were telling. The outflow to the United States rose from around 11,000 in 2012 to over 22,000 in 2013 (*Guardian*, 2014) and then almost doubled again to more than 43,000 in 2015 (Krogstad, 2017). This movement was attributable to the fact that, although would-be non-Cuban-American travellers to Cuba were still largely prohibited (under the embargo) from tourist-related visits to the island, family visits and remittances from emigrant Cubans living in the United States are allowed and even encouraged. The levels of travel and remittances were thus restored and even surpassed those pertaining in 2004 before the Bush administration placed severe restrictions on them.

Therefore, since most of those taking advantage of this freedom to travel and to visit Cuba were of Cuban origin (usually first- or second-generation emigrants to the US), this raised the continuing question of official and unofficial Cuban attitudes to such 'returners'. Have such attitudes actually changed since 1959 and, if so, how much? In fact, the wider question of how much attitudes might have changed towards those returners, on the island and among the communities in which they were now based, also now seemed relevant. At one level, the granting of legal permission for island-based Cubans to travel told one story; equally, the evidence that attitudes had to some extent shifted in the Cuban-American community – demonstrated by the increase in visitors to Cuba and attested to by a series of media surveys carried out in Florida – told a parallel story (LAWG, 2012; FIU, 2014).

However, slightly misleading views tend to be recorded in surveys of Cuban and Cuban-American opinion outside the island. Respondents often say what they think questioners expect them to say or, as with the 2008 and 2012 pre-elections surveys in Florida, when it came to the actual ballot the responses did not necessarily reflect apparent shifts in political opinion and changed voting patterns. Moreover, assessing opinion inside Cuba poses its own challenges in terms of accuracy and predetermination. It is therefore necessary to find other ways of getting to grips with fluctuations in attitudes.

To achieve that and to increase awareness of the reality behind the two stories, this chapter therefore resorts to a method familiar to any student of post-1959 Cuba: namely, to examine the two Cuban communities' political discourse, on and off the island, for any signs of real change. This is because insights into the broader picture can be gained by examining shifts in the hegemonic discourse long used in Cuba (both officially, through the media or in speeches, and unofficially, among ordinary Cubans). The method, used with



reference to Cuban emigrants, and thus also defining and categorising them (especially US-based ones), can simultaneously detect any shifts in the parallel (if contrary) discourse in the Cuban-American community. Interestingly, in 2013, the prestigious Casa de las Américas prize was awarded to a book, which in great part implicitly addressed this issue by tracing and questioning both the legal framework around the emigration issue and its discourse (Arboleyda Cervera, 2015). What perhaps makes this approach revealing is the reality that there was such a shift in discourse in 1977–9; it arose directly from the decision made by Jimmy Carter's US administration and the Cuban government to agree a mutual recognition and establish partial, if not full, diplomatic relations via 'interest sections' in third-party embassies in each other's capitals. This move was a prelude to later escalation to full ambassadorial and embassy-based relations. Following that decision, the new, if brief, climate of détente (brief because, from 1981, the Reagan administration's determination to reheat the Cold War meant Cuba was isolated anew) saw the US willing to allow its citizens limited travel to Cuba, especially Cuban-Americans who could visit their families on the island for the first time. There was also a parallel willingness in Havana to allow these 'Americanised' Cubans to return (if they were first-generation emigrants) or, if they were second-generation US-born Cuban-Americans, to visit the island for the first time. Indeed, 150,000 Cuban-Americans took up that opportunity in 1977–82 (Duany, 2011, p. 141).

That agreement generated an immediate, if mostly unofficial, change in the discourse: the use of the standard term *gusano* [literally 'worm' or 'larva'] now had to change. It had been used disparagingly in public discourse in Cuba for more than 16 years to describe those who had chosen to leave it for political reasons, because they opposed or were fearful of the island's movement towards socialism followed by communism from 1961. Most obviously, and with typical humour, ordinary Cubans changed it from gusanos to the more eloquent *mariposas* [butterflies]. This suggested a metamorphosis in either the character of the former emigrants (once seen as politically ugly refugees abandoning their homeland but now beautiful beings, welcomed again) or the Cuban authorities' attitude to, and acceptance of, these now Cuban-American visitors to the island (*ibid.*, p. 141). Indeed, in 1978, the Cuban government changed its own discourse by organising a conference called 'Diálogo con figuras representativas de la comunidad cubana en el exterior' (Arboleyda Cervera, 2015, p. 44), thereby shifting from gusanería to comunidad, at least in part.

While the change in discourse reveals much about the average Cuban's constant use of humour to express the contradictions of a system that was, and still is, characterised by a mass of contradictions, paradoxes and complexity, it also opens up another issue. This is the role which discourse always plays

in defining ideological patterns and in the public's identification with, or alienation from, a hegemonic ideology. It usually both reflects and reinforces the layers of thinking and assumptions below the surface.

Indeed, if that is true of any system and any hegemonic ideology, it is especially and demonstrably true of any polity where the notion of a national identity plays a crucial role in shaping an emerging political culture. This especially applies to a new, recently colonial, country, where either a pre-existing 'national' identity has been denied or where a new one has to be created out of the distortions necessarily created by colonialism. That was true, for example, in the case of post-1902 Cuba, where the credibility of the new Cuban Republic was immediately called into question by the process, fact and effects of imposing the notorious Platt Amendment<sup>1</sup> into the wording of the new state's first – and defining – Constitution in 1901. This act created the legal instrument for the United States' subsequent 32-year neocolonial control of the island's affairs.

However, it was also patently true of the process which began in Cuba in 1959, whether it is defined as a process of revolution and a movement towards socialism, or, alternatively, a new nationbuilding process (Kapcia, 2014, p. 198 *passim*). In both cases, a discourse which would reflect and help create a consensus on what it meant to be 'Cuban' or 'revolutionary', and on who could therefore be considered Cuban or revolutionary, was seen as essential; in other words, the arguments focused on who made up the 'us' of a new national construct and therefore also on who constituted the 'them'. The latter referred either to those who chose not to be included in the 'us' (for example Spaniards who, after the 1898 defeat by the United States, chose to leave and return to Spain), or to those perceived to have prevented the 'us' from being 'us'. In the Cuban case, given the lack of any preceding formal nationhood (such as had been the case for post-partition 19th-century Poland, where it had been eliminated and then denied), this definition of us and them was especially important (for defining as clearly as possible who to include and exclude) but was also especially problematic. Consequently, this issue necessarily found its way into the debates around the putative constitutions for the independent Cuba which the 19th-century anti-colonial rebels hoped to create (Kapcia, 2012).

1 The Platt Amendment was a bone of contention among Cuban nationalists from 1901 until it was abrogated in 1934. Originally an amendment proposed (by Senator Orville Platt) to a US Congress bill on 2 March 1901, the US government then imposed its wording into the text of the future Cuban republic's draft constitution, as a condition of withdrawing US troops from the island and granting it independence. Once reluctant Cuban agreement had been achieved by a small majority, the wording then became part of a treaty between Cuba and the US on 22 May 1903. This, by including the US's right to intervene unilaterally in Cuba and to lease land from Cuban territory for naval bases, ensured the US's continued direct control of Cuban affairs.

The question was problematic, firstly, because of the preceding ambivalence of many *criollos* [Cuban-born whites]. The depth of their *cubanidad* [sense of Cuban identity] had been called seriously into question because they were reluctant to rebel against Spain in the 1820s, and again in the 1860s, had an 'annexationist' preference in the 1840s and 1850s for US rather than independent statehood, and thereafter had an enduring admiration for 'Americanisation' (Pérez, 1999, pp. 37–43). If that repeated reluctance and that historically embarrassing desire to be subsumed into the United States was a difficult part of Cuba's history to fit into a preferred heroic narrative, it also left alive anyway the possibility of an inadequate unity for genuine independence.

Secondly, the volume of Spanish immigration caused difficulties in the last two decades of the colonial era when more immigrants arrived than in any period beforehand (Pérez, 1988, p. 135). Potentially this made the new Cuba more culturally Spanish (and perhaps more politically or ideologically so) than it had been before independence. Indeed, this was enhanced by pressure from the US military occupation authorities of 1899–1902 to allow a degree of formal tolerance to any Spanish people choosing to remain in Cuba. These authorities had already given clear preference after January 1899 to Spanish residents in the crucial areas of civic employment and commercial activity (Pérez, 1983, pp. 285–86). Finally, although much less problematic (since so many ex-slaves had fought on the rebel side in one or more of the three rebellions for independence from 1868 to 1898), attention had to be paid to those who, having been brought forcibly to Cuba to work, could not morally be excluded from full participation there simply for having been born outside the island.

In fact, one late draft constitution for the would-be new Cuba – that drawn up in 1897 at La Yaya – defined 'Cuban-ness' (that is, those eligible for citizenship) as the entitlement of those born on the island, those born abroad of Cuban parents (to allow the offspring of economic emigrants and former political exiles to be included) and, finally, any non-Cuban who had fought in the revolution against Spain (Pichardo, 1977, p. 501). Thus, this document potentially, if not explicitly, excluded most Spanish-born Cuban residents and any former African-born slaves who had not fought against the Spanish in the rebellions. However, by 1901, the arguments had shifted – partly in response to US pressure but also to take into account the Spanish-born relatives of many second-generation, pro-independence Cubans. The Constitution of that year allowed citizenship to those Spanish who, residing on the island on 11 April 1899, chose to become citizens of Cuba (even if they had fought for Spain against Cuban independence and even though they de facto represented part of the perceived problem of Spanish colonialism, one which had prevented that

independence from being realised). It also allowed Cuban citizenship to all ex-slaves born abroad (Pichardo, 1986, p. 76).

It was thus a more inclusive definition of cubanidad than had been intended just four years earlier. However, this Constitution included an additional clause of some longer-term significance. It both prohibited dual citizenship (a fairly common legal instrument in many countries at that time) and removed citizenship from any Cuban who, after independence, had either served in a foreign armed force or chosen to emigrate, rather than work abroad temporarily (*ibid.*). This was significant in the longer term, of course, because the post-1959 exclusion and excoriation of those who chose to leave Cuba for political reasons (rather than simply to work abroad, which was always excepted in successive constitutions) was by no means new in Cuban history. Therefore, from the outset of Cuba's independence, those who remained on the island equated their compatriots' decision to leave it permanently to abandonment of the country (although most who did so after 1959, believing they would return, did not consider themselves to be permanent emigrants). This was reflected in public discourse, while reference texts or the media would routinely describe any Cuban who had left Cuba for political reasons in such terms. For example, of the controversial poet Heberto Padilla, one text observed 'Después de abandonar el país' [After leaving the country] (Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística, 1984, p. 700) and, of the author Lydia Cabrera, 'se marchó del país' [she left the country] (Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística, 1980, p. 166). However, because it had been legally and constitutionally validated, at one level this usage was simply following the legitimate tradition established by the otherwise hated and politically illegitimate 1901 Constitution.

By 1959, of course, the 1901 Constitution had been popularly replaced by the progressive and essentially nationalist 1940 document, which, although removing the clause in question, maintained the prohibition on dual nationality (except for those immigrants who chose to keep their original citizenship as well as becoming legally Cuban, that is, prohibiting any Cuban-born citizen from acquiring a second citizenship). It also removed citizenship from those Cubans serving in foreign armed forces and guilty of certain as yet unspecified crimes (to be defined subsequently) (Pichardo, 1980, p. 330). This was in keeping with the Constitution's nationalist pedigree, for that same document also defined every Cuban's duty as adherence to, and educating children in, *conciencia nacional* [national consciousness] (*ibid.*). Therefore, the post-1959 attitude to the gusanos could also be formally justified by the 1940 Constitution (which, until 1976, was still legally in force, continuously and officially updated with a string of amendments, the *Leyes Fundamentales*). This meant that, by opposing a programme presented as a fulfilment and enhancement of that *conciencia nacional*, such emigrants were *de jure* deemed

to be traitors and un-Cuban. Moreover, if those Cubans chose to take up their rights under US legislation (the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act) and become US citizens, under the terms of the extant Constitution they could not hold dual nationality, thus forfeiting their Cuban citizenship and their legitimate and constitutional claim to *cubanidad*. Indeed, once the United States had established full sanctions, initially and specifically under the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act, any Cuban who supported those sanctions (and most seeking refuge in the US did so enthusiastically) could legitimately be defined by Cuba as supporting an anti-Cuban policy, and thus doubly treacherous. Curiously, however, and certainly enhancing the lack of clarity around the question, despite official disapproval of such 'traitors', the island never did officially and legally consider those leaving it in that way, and acquiring US citizenship, as having forfeited their Cuban citizenship (Duany, 2011, p. 140). Instead, they were largely perceived as having lost something symbolic: their claim to being Cuban, and moreover their claim to the more ambiguous and amorphous concept of *nacionalidad*.

Those same sanctions, coupled with the failed US-backed Bay of Pigs/Playa Girón invasion of 1961 and subsequent Operation Mongoose,<sup>2</sup> and the plethora of laws and policies designed to destabilise the Cuban system and economy, also created a crucial element in defining (and arguments about) those Cubans who chose to leave. This was the 'siege' mentality which intensified throughout the 1960s and which, although easing in the mid-1970s thaw, was reimposed following Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency. It escalated again after 1992 (the Cuba Democracy Act, or Torricelli Act) and then 1996 (The Helms-Burton Act, or the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity [Libertad] Act). In talking about those '*dentro de la Revolución, todo*' and those '*contra la Revolución, nada*' (much quoted, but more often misquoted, phrases from his speech, 'Palabras a los intelectuales', of 30 June 1961), Fidel Castro was suggesting inclusion, rather than exclusion. His statement set up a special dichotomy, not between those deemed to be *a favor* and *contra* the Revolution, or between those *dentro* and those deemed *fuera* the Revolution, but rather, asymmetrically, between those working and being creative within the Revolution and those against it (Kapcia, 2005, pp. 133–4). Despite this, the siege conditions prevailing on the island once the Organization of American States (excepting Canada and Mexico) had been persuaded to break off relations with Cuba in January 1962, and support the embargo, meant that

2 The Bay of Pigs (known in Cuba as Playa Girón), on 17–19 April 1961, was a US-backed invasion perpetrated by more than a thousand Cuban exiles. Designed to ignite an uprising against the revolutionary government, it was overwhelmingly defeated by Cuban forces and civilian militias and was seen as a watershed in US-Cuban relations, and in how the Revolution was politically defined. It was followed by a US-backed six-year sabotage campaign in Cuba, called Operation Mongoose, which had the same aim.

for many the distinction between ‘us’ (on the island and hence presumably choosing to stay and build the nation) and ‘them’ (choosing to leave and thus presumably to oppose nationhood) became clear: for them, ‘fuera’ did indeed mean ‘against’.

In this respect, the emerging posture of defiance which the siege engendered meant something else: for, at some point after January 1959, the essential dichotomy of any colonialism (and thus, even more, any neocolonialism) began to be challenged. That dichotomy (namely that the colonised are ‘the problem’ and the coloniser ‘the solution’) was crucial in persuading the colonised to accept and justify their own colonisation (Kapcia, 2014, pp. 206–11). By about 1963, Cuba’s isolation, the Revolution’s survival after 1961 and the traumatic aftermath of the Missile Crisis,<sup>3</sup> together with a growing sense of collective, if defiant, confidence, all began to see any external colonialism as the problem – to some extent this now implicitly included any Soviet high-handedness – not just that already identified before 1959, and along with this to see the solution as internal and to be found in the island’s fundamental human resources, that is, its people. Accordingly, those Cubans who chose to stay were now increasingly defined as the solution, and those who chose to leave as siding with the problem.

Indeed, it was perhaps for that reason that the Cuban state and authorities eventually began a process of allowing, and even encouraging, dissidents to leave, thereby de facto expelling (that is, exiling) them. That process created a solution to the problem of organised internal dissent of which particular use would be made from the early 1980s, starting with the Mariel exodus.<sup>4</sup> This tactic became common in the late 1990s and early 2000s, partly because, if such dissidents were outside the island, they were perceived to pose little internal threat or to make few demands on the Cuban security forces, but also because, if they migrated to the United States, it was possible to tar them with the brush used against the earlier political emigrants whose opposition to the early Revolution had earned them much opprobrium from Cubans on the island who had welcomed most of the social changes.

Given all this, the problem soon arose of the appropriate nomenclature for such people, beyond the nationalist terms familiar across Latin America, that is, *vendepatria* or *traidor* [traitor]; hence, ‘gusano’ soon became the standard

3 The Cuban Missile Crisis (13–26 October 1962) was the stand-off between the US and Soviet leaders over the stationing of Russian missiles on the island. After a naval blockade lasting several days, but also urgent behind-the-scenes negotiations, a compromise was reached and the missiles removed in exchange for the withdrawal of US missiles from Turkey and a US undertaking not to invade Cuba.

4 For some six months in 1980, following disturbances around the Peruvian embassy (invaded by hundreds of Cubans seeking asylum) and the Cuban government’s declaration that anyone wishing to leave Cuba could be collected by boat from Mariel (a port west of Havana), nearly 125,000 Cubans took advantage of the ‘boatlift’.

term, both popularly and in the public discourse of the leadership, media and other channels.

However, the question of nomenclature also affected those who left: namely, what did they now call themselves? 'Exile' immediately emerged as the preferred term, not least because it had a long and honoured heritage in Cuban history, with successive generations of political dissidents and active separatists either deported (usually to Spain) or exiled (usually to the United States or other Latin American territories). José Martí himself had been deported to Spain and had then chosen to remain in what he always saw as a continuing and forced exile. Beyond him, however, thousands of Cubans from the early 1800s onwards, although not expelled by the authorities, had chosen to leave Cuba for political reasons, feeling unable to remain safely on the island, and all considering that the situation there had forced them to live abroad unwillingly (Arboleyda Cervera, 2015, pp. 27–9). Exile – usually referred to as *destierro*, or as an 'uprooting' from their homeland (Pérez, 1999, pp. 37–8) – thus already meant political asylum abroad. Equally, as observed above, they felt themselves to be in this position, sharing the fate of other politically-driven refugees, because, by leaving, they were considered traitors and had forfeited their right to participate in their own country's political processes and destiny (simultaneously losing their civil, political, social and property rights). They could not therefore be characterised as typical emigrants (Duany, 2011, pp. 138–9). Indeed, the term 'golden exile' was coined for them, partly referring to their levels of wealth, education and influence (unusual in most US immigration), but also implicitly giving them a positive quality (Arboleyda Cervera, 2015, p. 39).

However, there were always two separate words in Spanish for the English concept of and the term 'exile': *exilio* and *destierro*. The former is more explicit and usually refers to politically-driven and usually unwilling emigration, while the latter is slightly more often neutral, but still implies a degree of reluctance, often meaning that exiles felt obliged to leave Cuba, through economic necessity or political discomfort. Indeed, before 1959 the term tended to be used for writers and artists who, searching for space and recognition and unable to find it in Cuba, were obliged by circumstance and lack of opportunity to work abroad, without losing their sense of nostalgia for the island or feeling of homelessness.

Consequently, the choice was obvious for post-1959 refugees because their motivations were clearly political and they felt genuinely threatened on the grounds of their differences with the emerging political system in Cuba: for them the choice was obvious – they saw themselves as exiles, pure and simple. This was firstly because they felt they had been forced out of their *patria* [homeland] by a political class who had betrayed it by adopting allegedly 'un-Cuban' ideas and a 'foreign' ideology (helped by Partido Socialista Popular,

a Cuban communist party that many of them had always considered to be subservient to a foreign power, namely the Soviet Union). Accordingly, they always saw their migration as temporary, until such time when Cuba was liberated from an un-Cuban and alien ideology and returned to the fold of democracy and freedom, and thus also to the Cuban people. In their eyes, they were not emigrants, but political exiles.

Secondly, they were exiles because using that term placed them within a wider and longer-honoured tradition of legitimacy. Not only had 1939–45 seen many ‘governments in exile’ set up in London, giving refuge to the politically acceptable leaders of those countries occupied by the Nazis, and at the same time making their struggle for national freedom part of the wider battle against Nazism but, after the Cold War began, the term ‘exile’ had also then been adopted by some of those same groups and leaders who, having fled from Nazism, now found their countries under Communist rule and occupied by Soviet forces. For those people, therefore, the struggle against one totalitarianism had simply become a continuing struggle against another parallel one, and their exile in Britain allowed them to continue to plan their return after liberation. Unfortunately for them, however, as the United Kingdom proceeded to recognise all the post-1948 Communist-run countries of eastern and central Europe, its government could no longer support the exiles’ efforts to bring about their country’s liberation. Their exile status thus became more self-defined than official, and the many governments in exile remaining in London tended to become ageing and somewhat quaint entities, sad relics of a past age and a lost dream of ultimate return. Indeed, if they had any official status it was now as refugees rather than exiles.

However, the term ‘refugee’ (objectively the most obvious and logical one to adopt – and one that was used by agencies of the US, with its Cuban Refugee Program) was by no means an acceptable term to post-1959 Cuban emigrants, now mostly based in the United States. Even before sections of the public media in Britain or, to a lesser extent, the US, began to convert the term into (the less desirable) ‘asylum seeker’, it, as far as those Cubans were concerned, conjured up images of poor, homeless and unwanted victims of history. Those living in the United States in a golden exile were always clear that they were far from poor or homeless (apart from in the sense of having been deprived of their homeland), and that they felt wanted (by the US) and were the victims of betrayal, not defeat. Indeed, unlike the case of post-1948 Britain’s relationship with Eastern European refugees, the US government was always willing to treat some elements of the refugee Cuban leadership in the United States as an acceptable government in exile, to be supported actively on the World War Two model. Indeed, one part of the Bay of Pigs invasion plan was always to establish a bridgehead on the beach there for such a government to be



located and then invite external intervention (Blight and Kornbluh, 1998, pp. 94–103). Certainly, the public image in the United States of those exiles was one of respect (for their heroic anti-Communism, but also for their education, class and record of commercial success), until that image of Cuban immigrants was spoiled by the furore around the Mariel episode (Duany, 2011, p. 140).

Curiously, of course, there was always a further alternative available, the French term 'émigré', coined long before in 18th-century Europe and used on several subsequent occasions. It was first used, after 1789, of those aristocrats who fled the revolution in France (usually to Britain or Russia); hence, it initially implied those of superior rank who had fled a popular and bloody upheaval. The next major use of the term was in reference to liberal Russian intellectuals and aristocratic refugees, fleeing a repressive Tsarist apparatus in Russia, whose pre-exile use of French as a lingua franca and mark of social status enabled them to think of themselves (and be considered by others abroad) as émigrés. Curiously, however, the same term was used after 1917 for the next wave of refugees, when Russian aristocrats and intelligentsia fled the Soviet revolution. In both cases, the term was applied without question, because both groups seemed to repeat the social status and motivation of the post-1789 French refugees. Thereafter, though, it became more commonly used for any political refugee community boasting some sort of social status and organisational structure. This included some eastern European anti-Communist exiles, especially those resident in London, who lived in more salubrious districts as part of a slightly wealthier community, and still associated with the pre-Communism and pre-Nazism upper class or intelligentsia of their respective countries.

This term was, therefore, certainly not available to the Cuban refugees in the United States. However, it would have been of little use to them, quite simply because, with the Spanish-speaking world's tendency to Hispanise all French terms, the Spanish form of émigré was *emigrado*, thus making it identical to a Spanish-language form of 'emigrant' (the other being *emigrante*). Both terms were, of course, decisively rejected by all the politically motivated Cuban migrants in the United States, since (formally at least) they never considered themselves to be emigrants and definitely intended to return, although the likelihood of that happening faded more with every decade and with every new generation of descendants. Consequently, by a process of elimination of any alternatives, 'exile' remained the only possible term of reference (and preference), at least for those who had left in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, as already observed, migration from Cuba had itself begun to change by the 1980s and, with it, the discourse on the island. The tipping point was the Mariel exodus, but what was faintly discernible to the Cuban authorities in 1980 following the Cuban media's shift in discourse as that episode played out, then became completely obvious by 1994 (Port, 2012, pp. 70–80). The

early unrest around the Peruvian embassy allowed the media to use pejorative terms (such as *escoria* [human waste] and ‘lumpen’) about the ‘delinquents’ who were considered to have behaved badly and anti-socially and, once the exodus began, some elements in the media and political circles were happy to continue using that language to include those who had been released from prison and allowed to leave, or those whose sexuality was a reason to persuade them to leave and also a cause for public scorn. However, it soon became clear that some of those rushing to join the exodus were neither politically disaffected, criminal, socially delinquent or homosexual, but simply seizing the opportunity to find a materially better life in the United States – many on the island had after all become aware of the superior material conditions there when visiting mariposas brought with them all manner of consumer goods and a considerable amount of hard currency (Olson and Olson, 1995, pp. 79–80).

Of course, mass emigration saw its greatest and most dramatic escalation in 1994, with the August–October exodus of some 35,000 *balseros* [rafters],<sup>5</sup> echoing, if not repeating, the Mariel episode in scale and haste – but, revealingly, not reflected in the public discourse used to condemn those leaving. Indeed, the language employed by the Cuban media took up that hinted at during the disturbances of late 1980, and from the outset characterised the *balseros* as Cuba’s equivalent of the poor and desperate Haitians, Mexicans or Salvadorans fleeing across the dangerous straits of Florida, or across the porous and equally dangerous US–Mexican border to seek the promised land of the ‘American dream’. This was in the very same United States which had imposed the three-decade-long embargo perceived as having condemned Cubans to a penury and desperation further sharpened by the US response to Cuba’s crisis. Indeed, rather than holding out a hand to aid the island, it tightened the embargo with the Torricelli Act of 1992, thereby seeking to strangle the revolution at last.

The clearest proof of the new discourse came in the autumn of 1994, and again in 1995, when two high-profile conferences were organised in Cuba, under the banner of ‘Nación y Emigración’, specifically calling on Cuba’s diaspora (mostly aimed at those living outside the US, but by no means excluding US-based emigrants, even if few of them heeded the call) to help in the patriotic, and not necessarily socialist, task of ‘saving the nation’. It proved to be a shift because, for the first time, the old terminology accorded to the political refugees had simply and silently been replaced by the neutral word ‘emigración’, essentially recognising that at least part of the outside community of expatriate Cubans actually constituted a diaspora, driven beyond Cuba’s frontiers by hardship and global inequality rather than by political disagreement or fear. In fact, the conferences were specifically focused on recognising that such Cubans were now rightly seen in their homeland as part of a wider community (to be

5 The name given to people emigrating illegally on makeshift rafts.

recruited perhaps into the collective task of saving the patria) and no longer beyond the pale. To confirm this shift, the Cuban government's bureaucratic structures also changed in 1994, with the Cuban Foreign Ministry (MINREX) establishing a Department for the Affairs of the Cuban Community Residing Abroad and then, in 1995, founding a magazine (*Revista de la Emigración Cubana*) aimed at that community (Duany, 2011, p. 142).

Was the term 'diaspora', although by and large not used in the Cuban media or by Cuban leaders, therefore likely to be used by them in future, to replace the old terminology? The answer to this still seems to be largely negative; for, although migration studies discourse has long tended to take the term as standard (abandoning its original use to refer to the mass dispersal of Jews from Palestine, following repeated repressions by Rome and subsequent occupations), applying it to the Cuban case has still been problematic. This is because its academic use largely referred, and refers still, to migrants living beyond the original country's national boundaries – but in some sort of cultural or economic contact with family and homeland – thus constituting a community of 'nationals' and linking emigrants to those 'at home'. Hence, in the Cuban case, it did undoubtedly correspond to the motivations and links of many post-1980 migrants. However, it had never been true, before or now, of the pre-1980 migrants, who had largely shaped both US and Cuban attitudes to the island's emigration phenomenon. Moreover, even though the original refugees' children and grandchildren may subsequently have lacked their ancestors' original desire to return and restore a perceived version of the 'old Cuba', the solidity of pro-embargo attitudes and anti-dialogue sentiments among the Miami-based Cuban-American community (despite repeated newspaper reports of apparently changing attitudes) continued to suggest that at least some of those migrants might feel they are not part of the community remaining on the island. The possible exception to this is that the families they left behind might be perceived as captive within an alien system, and indeed the migrants might still hanker for the restoration of their property and believe their claim to it is a justifiable one. Consequently, while they might well consider themselves to be part of a diaspora in the original Jewish historical sense (of being deprived of their homeland by force), the Cuban authorities and thus also those shaping public discourse in Cuba would never accept that use of the term in this particular case, but would happily apply it to those leaving for economic reasons. It is therefore of limited use in this context as compared with other cases of mass migration.

In this discussion, however, there are two additional revealing angles to the nomenclature problem. The first is the tendency of those outside Cuba studying Cuban culture (and especially literature) on the island to ignore the growing inclination among migration specialists to distinguish between generations of

migrants from that land. This is because, curiously, the term 'exile' continues to be applied, almost uniquely, to writers who have left Cuba, well after the supposedly political emigration of the pre-1980 years. This thereby conflates the political refugees (of the generation of literary writers Cabrera Infante, Severo Sarduy, Juan Arcocha, Carlos Franqui and so on) and the later emigrants (such as novelist Zoe Valdés), whose emigration arose from a complex mixture of economic motives (seeking greater and more remunerative opportunities for publication of their work) and political motives (seeing the Cuban system as restricting their freedom of artistic expression). Indeed, this tendency has led to the wider pattern of many non-Cuban students of Cuban culture continuing to regard the island's cultural expressions either as reflecting resistance (against a repressive system) – but only if it can be perceived as dissenting openly or, at best, is invisible, such as being implicitly critical of the system – or as simply mediocre (again, particularly if dissent is open or is implicit). In the latter case, the only free and thus 'good' culture – especially in the case of literature – is to be found beyond Cuba's borders (Kumaraswami, 2012).

The second angle refers to the problem created for public discourse on the island by the distinction between the pre-1980 political migrants and the post-Mariel economic migrants. Essentially, that problem was soon solved by taking a cue from the rise of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) in the 1980s, as Reagan's drive to isolate Cuba again (part of his conscious reheating of the dormant global Cold War and his attempt to end the crisis in Central America by solving the problem 'at its source') resulted in a formal and close relationship between the political leaders of the Florida-based Cuban-American community and the Republican Party (Schoultz, 2009, pp. 434–9). With the tightening of the embargo, following Reagan's accession to the presidency, and with the creation of both Radio Martí and then TV Martí, it became much easier for Cuban public discourse to categorise that emigrant leadership as anti-Cuban (since they were again seen as collaborating with the state which had again consciously declared war on the island's national and nation-building project). Accordingly, by the 1990s, there was an increasing tendency in Cuban discourse to distinguish between *emigración* (used for 'ordinary' and presumed loyal Cubans, driven to migrate through economic necessity) and the *mafia-anticubana* of the émigré leadership. However, the usefulness of this term began to decline, albeit slowly, as that leadership steadily aged and was reduced (at the same time as the island's ex-guerrilla leadership had begun to fade from the political scene), and as the CANF (under Joe García) began to shift centrewards to embrace the possibility of some sort of dialogue. This provoked the hardliners to decamp to the Cuban Liberty Council, thus dividing a once solid front.

## Conclusion

Where then does this leave us? Firstly, of course, it confirms that the role of post-1959 political discourse, both within Cuba and about it from the outside, remains central to how the ideological positions adopted, on and off the island, are reflected and shaped. On the one hand, that discourse has continued over the decades to reflect such stances but, on the other, it has also helped to cement them and therefore even to shape and influence them. Consequently, the shifts identified in 1980 (during the Mariel episode) and 1994 (with the explicit references to emigración) were actually more significant than many imagined at the time and probably played a crucial role in reshaping attitudes thereafter.

Secondly, this chapter has aimed to confirm that, despite the image of entrenched positions on both sides of the discursive arguments, the picture is actually a dynamic one, more fluid and adaptable than one perhaps expects. This simply reflects a broader truth: that it is always an error to read the Cuban revolution as a monolithic, unchanging reality. Such an error – while just about understandable in journalistic treatments of Cuba (for example, the constant assumption that the Revolution was attributable to decisions taken and control exercised by Fidel Castro alone), and in tourism advertising (typically, seeking to attract visitors to Cuba by presenting its current system as if it is in a time-warp, accompanied by images of 1950s American cars) – is unforgivable in serious academic discussion.

Thirdly, this chapter also confirms that, from the outset of the Revolution, as had been the case for decades previously, the vexed and constantly debated question of national identity has been central to the island's political culture, not least on the two crucial issues identified here: the difference between the 'us' of those 'inside' and the 'them' of those opposing the new ordinance, and also therefore the whole related question of inclusion and exclusion.

Finally, it demonstrates something of considerable long-term significance: that Cuba's 'exceptionalism' may well have been either a reflection of past realities, now undergoing change or, alternatively, was always exaggerated and even inaccurate. For, while the combination of Cuba's geographical location, immigration patterns, development experience and position within the Cold War may have conspired to always make it seem an exception, the reality was that many of the political traditions, ideological positions and economic experiences which shaped the conditions for revolution in Cuba in the late 1950s were not necessarily unusual in the broader Latin American picture. It may therefore have been that particular combination of factors which radicalised Cubans' political response to their condition after 1959. Whatever the case, the fact that, while political asylum may have been the determining factor in Cuba's unusual emigration for the first two decades of transformation, its emigration patterns in the last three decades have increasingly fitted a much

broader continental pattern. This has made the post-1980 migrants, and possibly even the later generations descended from those who left prior to that for political reasons, into a more recognisable diaspora, capable of being examined by researchers as something closer to the norm, and using more 'normal' approaches to understanding migrants and their relationship to their country of origin (Duany, 2011, p. 152). Hence, the exile phenomenon almost certainly belongs to a special, and time-limited, period of Cuban history, perhaps reflecting older historical traditions as well as the particularities of the 1960–90 world.

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## **10. Decentering *cubanidad*. Commodification, cosmopolitanism and diasporic engagement shaping the Cuban migration to post-1989 western Europe<sup>1</sup>**

*Catherine Krull and Jean Stubbs*

**M**igration has long been a driving force in Cuban history, as the movement of people in and out of Cuba over the centuries has been linked to major political, economic and social upheavals, from conquest and colonisation through trade and commodity production to independence and revolution. Here, we take our cue from an essay by Alistair Hennessy which marked the 30th anniversary of Cuba's Revolution to explore how, embedded in this *longue durée* history, Cuba in the post-1989 period has become a country of emigration, with new diasporic movements to destinations other than its nemesis, the United States.

This chapter maps the context in which Western Europe, in becoming a major source of investors and tourists and recipient of coveted Cuban exports (cigars, rum and culture – especially music and dance), also became host to increasing numbers of Cuban migrants, whose generational 'coming of age' coincided with the dislocation of the island's pre-1989 world. We chart this in four countries under study, namely, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, especially their major cities, where Cubans gravitated. We highlight the cultural commodification of Cuba, homing in on London, arguably the most cosmopolitan of Western European capital cities, and boasting more visible markers of Cuba than any other including (paradoxically) Madrid,

1 This chapter is based on a larger project which examines post-1989 Cuban migration to Canada (particularly Toronto and Montreal) and Western Europe (France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, and especially their respective capital cities Paris, Berlin, Madrid and London). The broader project has involved historical and sociological research, ethnographic site visits and in-depth interviews with Cuban migrants to explore their motivations, experiences and perceptions; the impact of commodities, generations, gender, class, race and culture; and the extent to which there are observable patterns that are similar to or different from those of other migrants, especially those from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Our research was made possible by funding from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, for which we express our thanks, as also to institutions, colleagues and the many Cuban migrants themselves, who have supported our research in countless ways. For a companion article on Canada and for a comparative analysis of Cuban diasporic and transnational mobilities and migration in both Canada and Western Europe, see Krull and Stubbs (forthcoming 2018a, 2018b).

where Cubans were to be found in far greater numbers. Finally, the discussion is broadened by returning to Hennessy, 'generational consciousness' and 'age cohort' and borrowing from the work of Cuban ethnographer, Fernando Ortiz, to argue how the island's own history of cosmopolitanism resonates with the cosmopolitanism born of ethnic diversity in the global city. It concludes by suggesting new pluralities of *cubanidad* [taking pride in all things Cuban] might serve as counterpoints to the dominant United States-Cuba axis.

It is fitting, as we pay tribute to the scholarship of Alistair Hennessy, to begin by revisiting an introductory essay which he contributed to an edited collection, titled *Cuba After Thirty Years* (Gillespie, 1990). In characteristically erudite fashion, he situated what would prove to be a 30-year turning point for the Cuban Revolution in its wider historical context, with a view to identifying factors that might shape the future scenarios under scrutiny here. He began:

Cubans are great believers in anniversaries and never more so than since 1959. The purpose of this is clear. They provide occasions for sustaining the revolution's momentum and reviving waning enthusiasms – no easy matter given 30 years of inhibiting and unremitting blockade and consumer shortages. There is no particular magic in celebrating the thirtieth anniversary ... But there is a serious case to use the occasion for a reassessment of where the revolution has come from and where it is going. It has certainly not reached the end of the road but it has come to a crossroads. Short-term developments and long-term global events have converged to give urgency to such a reassessment (p. 3).

Hennessy described his essay as 'a modest attempt' to situate the Revolution more broadly. In effect, he regaled his readers with an incisive comparative longue-durée perspective of the kind that was long his forte. Such a perspective was crucial, to his view, in identifying factors that would be of significance at this new crossroads. He argued that, for comparable examples of small states exercising influence on a global scale, one had to go back in history to 17th-century Portugal and the United Provinces and 18th-century Britain, which had all built on their mastery of sea power and its technology. The rise of continental superpowers signalled the end of the ability of small states to become global actors – and then came the 1959 Cuban Revolution. A key determinant in Cuba's case was its historically strategic position in the Americas (which it shared only with Panama among Latin American states). It was this, coupled with its unique international hemispheric positioning in the Cold War, which accounted for Cuba's incommensurate leverage in the late 20th century.

He rehearsed the arguments that Cuba's was no classical revolution. Unlike in revolutionary France, there had been no Thermidor or Brumaire.<sup>2</sup> It had not devoured its children, though many had gone into exile, recreating a historically Hispanic Florida. The Cuban revolutionary government gained politically from the exodus because it undermined effective domestic opposition, but it also set in motion a post-1959 brain drain, whereby Cuba's loss was a gain to the United States, not least in business and academia. It likewise bequeathed a powerful Cuban-American lobby against accommodation with the Cuban regime.

Hennessy reminded his readers that 'Thirty years is a long time in the history of revolutions, taking us in the case of France way past Thermidor through the Empire [of Napoleon] and into the Restoration [after Napoleon's fall from power], in Russia through the purges of the 1930s and into the testing time of war, and in the case of Latin America's revolutions to the shift in Mexico in 1940' (p. 5). Cuba, he pointed out, stood in marked contrast, evidencing remarkable stability and leadership continuity. This was a source of both strength and weakness. Cuba's was a youthful revolution – most are, was his rejoinder. However, as its leadership aged, so attitudes could harden, dwelling on knowledge of the past rather than uncertainties of the future.

He highlighted how, in common with other Spanish-speaking peoples, Cubans tended to interpret their history (not least their revolutionary history) in generational terms – referring to the generations of 1868, 1895 and 1933, and to the Centenario in 1952, the year when 100 years since national hero and writer José Martí's birth coincided with Fulgencio Batista's second coup and served as catalyst to revolution. In Hennessy's view: 'Generational analysis is a slippery business: useful in literary and cultural history concerned with shared consciousness and sensibility, but less so in political history' (p. 6). He made an exception when there was a conjuncture between generational consciousness and age cohort, for which he provided an excellent comparative analysis in the Latin American context. He did not, however, follow it through for the 1989 Cuba scenario, when, as we shall argue here, it became most relevant again.<sup>3</sup>

Hennessy's seven-point framework, within which the future course of revolution might be determined, was succinct and insightful. Several of his points were embedded in changing international political scenarios beyond Cuba's control, not least superpower détente and the loss of Cuba's Soviet

2 A reference to the French Revolution's 1794 parliamentary Thermidor revolt, which led to the fall of Robespierre, and 1799 18th Brumaire coup, during which Napoleon Bonaparte took power.

3 In a footnote, Hennessy signalled the best discussion of generational analysis in the Cuban case was that of Valdés (1977; see also 1992). Valdés argued that, as in other Hispanic societies, this was effectively a phenomenon of age, of youth rising up in regeneration. This differs from the Mannheim concept of generation shaped by epochal events, to which we later refer, though in practice the two might coincide.

leverage. This he coupled with foreseeable changes within the Soviet bloc: the challenge from Islamic fundamentalism, the 'post-Afghanistan' drugs threat, the 'virus' of internal nationalist movements, inefficiencies of the economy, and environmental issues brought to the fore by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster (all of which contributed to the bloc's subsequent disintegration). He signalled the emergence of new international actors stealing Fidel Castro's thunder, citing by way of example Colonel Gaddafi, Yasser Arafat and Ayotollah Khomeini (all long gone) and a change in the US presidency bringing possible rapprochement with Cuba (in flux under President Barack Obama, but ill presaged with his successor Donald Trump). Hennessy predicted an approaching end to the high visibility of Cuban internationalism, in tandem with a growing awareness that wars of national liberation are wars of attrition, with no outright victors. Last but by no means least, he forefronted the Cuban economy's crucial internal weaknesses.

Hennessy did not foresee the depths of crisis into which 1990s Cuba was to be plunged, nor did he envisage some of the Cuban government's strategies that would be adopted to help bankroll the island through, which included health diplomacy and internationalism (Feinsilver, 2010; Kirk and Erisman, 2009) and broader external activism (Kapcia, 2011). He did make special reference to Canada, Mexico and Western Europe never having broken relations with Cuba, or having joined the US embargo on it, and he referred to a variety of factors accounting for this. One was 'picking up some of the crumbs' (p. 12) left by the withdrawal of US companies, others were asserting independence from the United States and not accepting US Monroism<sup>4</sup> and a 'backyard' approach to territories south of its border. In this context, he signalled a possible 1990s' return to the importance that Canadian, Mexican and Western European relations had had for Cuba in the early 1960s, before relations tightened with the Soviet bloc. He subsequently analysed this in greater depth for Western European-Cuban relations in a volume he co-edited, titled *The Fractured Blockade* (Hennessy and Lambie, 1993). The prediction was certainly borne out, especially with the hitherto unforeseen development of international tourism.

With all his clairvoyance, Hennessy did not refer to the possibility of a new and diverse emigration in response to the 1990s' crisis, whereby Cubans would also head in increasing numbers to places other than the United States, not least Canada, Mexico and Western Europe. We might borrow from a broad

4 A long-lasting principle of US policy towards Latin America, which, as coined by President James Monroe in his 'doctrine' to that effect in 1823, warned European colonial powers that any attempt to expand in the Americas would be seen as a hostile act against the United States; the term 'Monroism' thereafter (especially after Theodore Roosevelt added his interpretation of the principle in 1904) came to mean that any intervention in the Americas by external powers would be viewed the same way.

Hennessy approach to situate this in a turn-of-century international context, given that by 2011 one out of seven persons across the world were migrants, and globally this was manifested in south-north, south-south, east-west and west-east migration flows. In the regional context of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), after four-and-a-half centuries of a mass influx of Europeans, Africans and Asians, the flow changed direction. The new outflow was primarily north to the United States and Canada, but decades of post-World War Two European and Asian economic growth and liberalised immigration policies, plus the tightening of US borders in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001, saw increasing emigration to Europe and Asia in the 21st century. By the end of the first decade, Caribbeans and Latin Americans would account for 15 per cent of global international migration, around 32 million people in all; and some new destinations in Europe and Asia witnessed even higher rates of migration than to the United States (for Europe, see McIlwaine, 2011a; Pellegrino, 2004; Solimano, 2003; and Yépez del Castillo and Herrera, 2007).

Cuba was not exempt from this and, alongside a 2016 population of some 11.5 million on the island, an estimated further two million Cubans lived abroad, primarily in the United States, but also throughout the Americas and Europe, as well as Africa and Asia. In contrast to the abundance of studies on the US-bound Cuban migration, the new flows and diversity of destinations have only recently been receiving attention, and our aim here is first to document this widening field of study before narrowing the focus to post-1989 Western Europe and more specifically France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. We then highlight the post-1989 stereotyped cultural commodification of Cuba, homing in on London as a global city, where this has been at its most visible, and yet where, paradoxically, Cubans are fewer in number. We signal the diversity among them, some having turned the commodification to advantage, while others are at pains to distance themselves from any stereotyping, attaching importance to a sense of cosmopolitan citizenship.

We share contemporary concerns in migration studies regarding the complexities of 'diasporic space' as 'the entanglement of geneologies of dispersion with those of "staying put"' (Brah, 1996, p. 181)<sup>5</sup> and 'redefining citizenship in an era of globalization' (Overmyer-Velazquez and Sepulveda, 2015, p. 20). Thus, in our conclusion, we return to Hennessy, generational consciousness and age cohort, and frame the Cuban migration to Western Europe in the work of Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz, to suggest how new post-1989 pluralities of cubanidad might serve as counterpoints to the dominant United States-Cuba axis.

5 Brah's work continues to be cited among diaspora studies, the scope of which is beyond our remit here. Suffice it to cite Cohen (2008), Dufoix (2008), Braziel and Mannur (2003), Knott and McLoughlin (2010) and Sigona et al. (2015).

## Decentering the study of Cuban migration

The plethora of work on the post-1959 and post-1989 Cuban migration to the United States continues to dwarf the relatively little that has looked further afield to date. This is as true for Cuba as for the United States, although since the 1990s migration studies broadened in scope in the former in response to concern over internal migration, especially the east-west drift to Havana, and growing emigration.<sup>6</sup> Aja Díaz (2000; 2006; 2009) has been prominent in the field and highlights three key demographic issues facing contemporary Cuba, all interrelated: low fertility rate, ageing population and net emigration (see also Ajá Díaz and Albizu-Campos Espiñeira, 2012). Other Cuban researchers homed in on specific impacts of the migration, from the importance of remittances in weathering the crisis (Monreal, 2003) to the role of transnationalism in the burgeoning small business sector of *cuentapropismo* [self-sufficiency] (Nuñez Sarmiento, 2015).<sup>7</sup>

Of particular concern have been the growing societal inequalities which have accompanied this (Espina Prieto, 2004) and the trauma of migration for family and interpersonal relations (Martín Fernández, 2008; Martín Fernández and Pérez, 1997), compounded by the number of young professionals leaving (Casaña Mata, 2006–7; Martín Romero and Araujo González, 2008), many of them women of child-bearing age (Marrero Peniche, 2011; Núñez Sarmiento, 2015). Other studies have highlighted: the links between tourism and migration (Perelló Cabrera and Llanes Soralla, 2015); the differential, more open and flexible migration policies adopted as of the early 1990s in the cultural sector (Almazán del Olmo and Gutiérrez Guerra, 2009; Bustamante Salazar and Soralla Fernández, 2015); and the overall migration reform process (Martín Fernández and Barcenás Alfonso, 2015).

The migration was contextualised in broader Caribbean migratory trends (Alvarez Serrano, 2008; Rodríguez, 2007, 2011; Rodríguez Chávez, 2001), and

- 6 Much of the research has been conducted under the auspices of the University of Havana's Centro de Estudios de Migraciones Internacionales (CEMI), formerly the Centro de Estudios de Alternativas Políticas (CEAP), and the Centro de Estudios Demográficos (CEDEM). For informative overviews see Casaña Mata (2003), Martínez Reinoso (1995), Rodríguez Chavez (1999) and Soralla Fernández (2013a and b). For Cuban domestic migration, see Morejón Seijas (2007) and, comparatively in the Latin American context, Morejón Seijas and Marful Orbis (2013). *Temas*, Cuba's leading debate journal, also weighed in on the migration discourse in several of its issues, for example, Hernández et al. (2002) and Rodríguez Chavez (2002).
- 7 Remittances and *cuentapropismo* also garnered international attention – see Barbería (2004); Blue (2004); Eckstein (2004); González Corzo and Larson (2007); Hansing and Orozco (2014); Orozco (2009); Orozco et al. (2015); Pérez-López and Díaz-Briquets (2006); and Pérez-Rodríguez (2003). A point made more recently has been the flow of remittances from Spain (directly and indirectly through Latin America) and from Latin American countries per se, not least Venezuela, through its large number of Cuban *cooperantes* [international health workers, literally 'cooperators'].

country case studies documented leading new destinations: in the Americas, Canada (Gutiérrez Guerra, 2013a and b; Marrero Peniche and Gutiérrez Guerra, 2010), the Dominican Republic (Casaña Mata, 2000) and Mexico (Martín Quijano, 2005); and, in Western Europe, Spain (Martín Fernández, 2009; Oroza Busutil, 2014). The migration policies and the escalating migratory crisis of Western Europe also commanded attention (Oroza Busutil and Fraga Hernández, 2015), as did Austria (Oroza Busutil and López Valdivia, 2014) and, further afield, Angola (Pérez García, 2013).

It is important to stress here that, among officialdom, analysts and the Cuban population at large, emigration is no longer viewed as simply a survival strategy that individuals, families and networks of friends across society opted to take in response to the post-1989 crisis. With an estimated one in three families having at least one member abroad and whole cohorts of post-1989 classmates having sought betterment off-island, choosing to leave has lost its political and social stigma, to become accepted as a pragmatic approach to life. This has been a gradual and chequered process since the 1994 *balseiros* [rafters] crisis<sup>8</sup> and the resulting United States-Cuba migration accords triggered new overtures to Cubans overseas.

Landmark events were the Nation and Emigration Conferences in Havana (first held in 1994), along with smaller ones for Cubans resident overseas, who were encouraged to form their own national and regional associations, and who in turn lobbied for changes in policy and practice towards them.<sup>9</sup> The exit permits of up to 11 months annually, espoused in the early 1980s, were subsequently broadened to the Permit to Reside Abroad (PRE) for Cuban spouses of foreign nationals; the Permit to Travel Abroad (PVE) for personal reasons; and the Temporary Travel Permit (PVT) for work, especially in the cultural sector.<sup>10</sup> As of January 2013, Cubans resident on the island (with certain exceptions) were allowed to travel abroad and retain their legal status on the island, as long as they returned once every two years. Only if they failed to do so would they be considered migrants, and it is to this that Cuba's official

8 The mass exodus of Cubans to the US on makeshift rafts.

9 The extent to which Cubans abroad have contributed to changes back home in this regard is a story yet to be told. Interesting historical parallels can be made with the revolutionary clubs of Cubans abroad in the 19th-century independence wars, as they were conceived to support Cuba, invoking the name of José Martí, viz. Federación de Asociaciones de Cubanos Residentes en España José Martí (see <https://facrejosemarti.wordpress.com> – accessed 26 Jul. 2017), Asociación de Cubanos en Cataluña José Martí (see <https://accjosemarti.wordpress.com> – accessed 26 Jul. 2017). Some took the name of other Cuban revolutionary leaders, such as the Asociación Cubana-Gallega Haydée Santamaría, set up in 2014. An interesting racial departure was taken in the UK, where resident Cubans in 1996 set up the Sociedad Martí-Maceo; this was superseded in early 2016 by Cubanos en UK ([www.cubanos.org.uk](http://www.cubanos.org.uk) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017).

10 See Brismat (2008) for the details of these changes.

statistical turn-around from net emigration to net immigration, since 2013, has been attributed.

Emigration from Havana remains paramount and is also marked in certain pockets across the island, such as central Villa Clara, but many of these migrants have a prior history of personal or family step-migration, from rural to urban areas and from the provinces to Havana, in many cases tied to work or study. There has been some return migration, but the trend is increasingly for it to be circulatory and for home to be split between places. This involves physical to-ing and fro-ing, but also flexible strategies, the circulation of assets that are both tangible (material and financial) and intangible (knowledge, ideas and values, sometimes encapsulated in the terms social or cultural capital), dual citizenships and multiple identities.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps understandably, for logistical reasons if none other, the motivations, experiences and perceptions of the migrants themselves in their new host destinations have been less documented in Cuba than they have abroad. Two anthologies, edited in the United States, proved pioneering in this respect and bore thought-provoking titles: *Cuba: Idea of a Nation Displaced* (O'Reilly Herrera, 2007) and *The Portable Island: Cubans at Home and in the World* (Behar and Suárez, 2008). They ventured beyond Cuban-American confines to include contributions from Cubans elsewhere, such as Western Europe: Navarrete (France), in O'Reilly Herrera; and Aguilera Chang (Germany), Arcos and Estévez (Spain) and Pérez Sarduy (the UK), in Behar and Suárez (*ibid.*).<sup>12</sup>

The question this raised for us was: to what extent were Cubans in their new migratory flows and spaces experiencing displacement from the nation or rather carrying the island with them, at home and in the world? O'Reilly Herrera addressed two distinct trajectories in Cuban-American discourse relevant to this analysis. Although public discourse had become monopolised by a fixed exile narrative of 'displaced and dispossessed Cuban identity' (p. 3), some Cuban-American scholars challenged such alleged uniformity, given the reality of diversity and asymmetric power relations and the complexities of transnational Cuba (Fernández, 2005). Behar asked: 'How do Cubans travel with their island? What fragments of memory, language, and history do Cubans take with them?' (p. 7). Suarez, in turn, referred to "history on the

11 This is revisited at the end of the chapter, but it should be pointed out Cuba has these trends in common with other LAC migrations. Suffice it here to cite Bandau and Zapata Galindo (2011); Conway (2007); Hall (2002; 2003); Levitt (2004); Moser (2011); Nurse (2004); and Thomas-Hope (2005; 2009). An interesting question not yet in the public domain is the extent to which the Cuban government is monitoring state-diaspora relations throughout the region (for the Latin American-Southern European context, see Margheritis (2016).

12 A decade previously Behar had worked with Cubans on the island and Cuban Americans to produce the anthology *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (1995), while O'Reilly Herrera earlier edited *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora* (2001) and subsequently *Cuban Artists across the Diaspora: Setting the Tent Against the House* (2011).



move” from the intimate meditations of Cubans whose experiences have led to reconsiderations of “identity on the move”, anchored by a floating island, always there and ever changing’ (p. 13).

Part One of O’Reilly Herrera’s compilation, aptly subtitled ‘We are here, there, and everywhere’, included Venezuela (Ackerman) and Puerto Rico (Duany and Martínez-San Miguel). Duany, who also contributed to the Behar and Suárez (2008) and Fernández (2005) collections, had earlier researched the Cuban migration to Puerto Rico (Duany, 1992; Duany and Cobas, 1997). He debunked the ‘Cuban exceptionalism’ argument and subsequently took his own *longue durée* approach in his equally evocatively titled *Blurred Borders: Transnational Migration between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States* (2011), a comparative study of successive waves of migration to the United States from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.<sup>13</sup>

Borders were also blurring across the Atlantic. One contributor to O’Reilly Herrera was Mette Louise Berg, who wrote on Spain as a prelude to her later monograph *Diasporic Generations: Memory, Politics and Nation among Cubans in Spain* (2011). Whereas studies of the post-1959 Cuban migration to the United States had long identified different waves over time, Berg’s analysis was based on Mannheim’s concept of historically grounded generations being shaped by epoch-making events. Her approach was similar to that taken in the US context by Eckstein in *The Immigrant Divide: How Cuban Americans Changed the U.S. and Their Homeland* (2009); Eckstein and Krull, in their article ‘From building barriers to bridges: Cuban ties across the straits’ (2009); and Eckstein and Barbería, in ‘Grounding immigrant generations in history. Cuban Americans and their transnational ties’ (2002). In the case of Spain, Berg identified three diasporic generations: exiles (1960s–early 1970s), children of the Revolution (late 1970s–early 1990s) and migrants (from the mid 1990s). She argued that the three generations had little in common with each other. Each arrived in very different periods in Spain, during and after Franco, and each was shaped by highly diverse formative periods in Cuba. Berg and Eckstein (2015) would subsequently link their work comparatively on the United States and Spain, calling for a reimagining of the Cuban diaspora.<sup>14</sup>

13 Duany further emphasised the heterogeneous nature of the Cuban American migration in a later edited volume, *Un pueblo disperso: dimensiones sociales y culturales de la diáspora cubana* (2014). For the exceptionalism debate, see Hoffmann and Whitehead (2007).

14 The generational approach was likewise adopted by Gutiérrez Guerra (2013c) in her analysis of South Florida. It is also important to note the departure by Portes from his early work on the Miami enclave (1987) to the more recent characterisation of the bifurcated enclave (Portes and Purhmann, 2015; Portes and Shafer, 2006). The divide established is between pre- and post-1980 Mariel migrants and their lower financial accumulation stateside, not least because of remittances back to the island, such that Cubans as a whole have dropped from top to bottom in terms of percentiles of wealth among US Hispanics. An earlier counterpoint to the Miami success story is that of Grenier and Stepick (1992). For a counterpoint history of Cubans in Union City, New Jersey, see Prieto (2009).

Other research on Cubans in non-US destinations included Angola (Hatzky, 2015) and Mozambique (Hansing, 2008) in Africa, and Jamaica (McGarrity, 1996) and Mexico (Weimer, 2008) in the Americas. In Europe, there have been studies on Germany (Cala Fuentes, 2007; Eggert, 2006; Gruner-Domic, 1997; Ritschel, 2012); Zurich, Switzerland (Wimmer, 1998); and Spain (Gil Araújo, 2008; García-Montón, 1997; González Yanci and Aguilera Arilla, 2002; Loes, 2012). Recent country-specific case-studies have highlighted key aspects such as ‘transnational living’ and Cuban women’s migration to Spain (García Moreno, 2010; García Moreno and Pujadas Muñoz, 2011, 2012); marriage migration in Denmark (Fernandez, 2013; Fernandez and Jensen, 2014); transnational families in France (Mulet Pascual, 2016) and Germany (Brandhorst, 2009, 2013; Pérez Naranjo, 2013); music and migration in Barcelona (Sánchez Fuarros, 2008, 2012, 2013); and food, media and music in the UK (Alfonso, 2012a and b; 2013). Broader transnational approaches have also been in evidence: *santería*<sup>15</sup> (Rauhut, 2013; 2014); the Havana cigar (Stubbs, 2013; 2014); rum (Calvo Espina, 2002); art (Köttig, 2009); scientific knowledge networks (Palacios-Callender et al. 2015; Palacios-Callender and Roberts, 2013); and transnational networks of alumni from Cuba’s elite La Lenin school (Berg, 2015).

Keeping abreast of these studies, we approached our research with a set of overarching questions, some of which are addressed here. In what ways has the new commodification of Cuba shaped the new transnational generation (in the Mannheim sense)? Amidst competing material and symbolic Cuban imaginaries, have Cubans been forging new transculturations of global and local citizenship? To what extent do these mirror those of other immigrant groups, especially those of LAC origin?<sup>16</sup>

Our research drew us to the ways in which diasporic space matters. This played out at the Western European level in the broad junctures conducive to the migration deriving from bilateral relations with Cuba, as well as host country opportunities; cultural attractions; and public services familiar to Cubans such as transport, health and education. It also played out differently in each of the four countries, given their diverse histories of relations with Cuba (as well as the LAC region) and their approaches to migration, integration, assimilation and multiculturalism. The chapter considers this at the Western European level first.

15 The principal Afro-Cuban religion in Cuba.

16 Here, for example, Cohen’s categorisation of the Caribbean could be cited as the ‘diaspora of a diaspora’ (1992) and a ‘cultural migration’ (1998).

## Cuba and Western Europe

Situating the new Cuban migration to Western Europe, it is important to remember that the 1990s were cataclysmic for Cuba, in the context of being cataclysmic for Europe. The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall marked a new watershed in 20th-century European history, heralding the end of a politically divided Germany and harbouring hopes of an end to the post-World War Two/Cold War era. East and West Germany reunified in 1990, as the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) was subsumed in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). After the 1991 splintering of the Soviet bloc, the European Union (EU) embarked on a process of enlargement to include some former Soviet territories. Over ensuing years, EU countries charted a post-imperial as well as post-Cold War reshaping of overseas relations with major powers such as: Russia, China and the United States; former colonies, including those in the Caribbean; and areas of the world such as Latin America. A principal ally of the EU in the post-1989 period was the United States, but the EU-US relationship was not without its differences, of which Cuba was one. Relations between the United States and Cuba continued to be mired in Cold War politics, with the US trade embargo on the island dating back to 1962, only months after the Berlin Wall itself was erected, in 1961.

In line with Hennessy and Lambie's predictions, Western European countries did move to position themselves in 1990s' Cuba in a 'window of opportunity' without US competition. As post-Soviet bloc trade with, and aid to, the island plummeted, the United States tightened its blockade with the 1991 Torricelli and 1996 Helms-Burton Acts, pressuring Western Europe and introducing extraterritoriality clauses targeting third parties doing business with the island which are based in countries other than Cuba or the US. This resulted in the 1996 EU Common Position on Cuba, which inscribed EU dealings with the island within a US-driven human-rights political discourse. From the outset, Cuba took a hard line on this, while some analysts saw the EU stance as more of a holding operation (see Domínguez, 2000; Inotai, 2009; Pérez Gómez, 2004; Roy, 2009). What is certain is that, subject to the pendulums of national politics, individual EU countries were not always constrained by it, and even strengthened bilateral relations. Also, the more the United States brought extraterritoriality into play, the greater the battle with the US for extraterritoriality clause waivers, and the more the US embargo became a bone of contention and the EU Common Position was called into question. Summer 2014 witnessed the start of negotiations for a new EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. These escalated in tandem with the post-December 2014 thaw in United States-Cuban relations; and in 2017 the new EU-Cuba agreement was signed, notwithstanding Trump's rollback of the Obama administration's overtures.

The impact this may have on Western Europe's relations with Cuba is beyond the scope of this chapter, the focus of which is on the period dating back to the Soviet collapse and tightened US embargo, which catapulted Cuba into its catastrophic 1990s' economic crisis. Detrimental to societal gains, notably in health, education and nutrition, this triggered the 1994 balsero crisis and subsequent United States-Cuba migration accords. These in turn framed Cuban government strategies to forge broad political alliances and mobilise solidarity and support networks to reposition the island in the global economy: courting overseas non-US trade and investment; promoting non-US international tourism; and capitalising on achievements in health, education and culture, as well as iconic Cuban products (cigars, rum, music, dance and art), both at home and across the globe.<sup>17</sup>

Western European countries were also undergoing major transformations, from manufacturing to service economies and cultural industries, and with a more open-door policy facilitating mobility of capital and labour. While neoliberalism took hold in domestic and foreign policy, many people had fought long and hard for social justice and public services, notably the health, educational and other benefits of a welfare state, tempering the excesses of free-market capitalism. There was palpable dismay at seeing such gains undermined in the post-1989 neoliberal orthodoxies, and this heightened after the 2008 financial crisis and recession. Equally, Cuba's oppositional stance to the United States was admired and its valiant attempt to defend its social and cultural achievements in moments of great adversity.

This was the context in which, despite US opposition and the threat of US sanctions, Western Europeans became traders, investors and tourists in Cuba.<sup>18</sup> Growing numbers were also involved in solidarity and friendship networks, humanitarian initiatives and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) sending development aid. In the process, Western Europeans became consumers of 'things Cuban' and involved in relationships with Cubans, who in turn settled in Western European countries. Cubans thus became a small part of (if in many ways distinct from) other postcolonial and post-Cold War mass migratory flows into Western Europe from across the globe (see Bosma et al., 2012).

The mass migration to Western Europe was further bolstered by the United States closing its doors in 2001, after the events of 9/11; and warmongering European foreign policy played its part in Islamic fundamentalism coming

17 Among the many studies of Cuba's global repositioning effort, see the excellent analysis by Morris (2014).

18 International tourism to Cuba had risen exponentially to 3.5 million visitors by 2015. Canada was by far the greatest sender of tourists, over 1.3 million, mainly the 'snowbirds' of the winter months, and after Canada came the US, with just over 450,000, including almost 300,000 Cuban Americans. Next come four Western European countries: in descending numerical order, the UK, France, Italy and Spain. Germany slipped back in 2015, having been ahead of the others in 2014. See Perelló Cabrera (2016).

home to roost, with the 2004 Madrid train bombings, London's 7/7 terrorist attacks in 2005, and others since. Political shifts to left and right became mired in a groundswell of concern over refugees streaming into Western Europe from countries torn by war, destruction and poverty. Western Europe's celebrated welfare and diversity, which had evolved in a climate favouring free movement of capital and labour and embracing a wide range of ethnic cultures, was challenged by a growing phobia of migration and multiculturalism, spawning what has been termed 'workfare *v.* welfare' and the 'dilemma' of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2014).

Western European multicultural policies had been pioneered in the UK, influenced by leaders and intellectuals from postcolonial backgrounds, settling in the metropolis and bringing the empire back home. France, caught between republican traditions and immigrant demands, made some allowances for diversity, but support for multiculturalism was limited. Germany took some steps in the direction of multiculturalism, while Spain took conspicuously few. After 2001, the focus on the 'threat from Islam' was the backdrop to narrowing definitions of the nation. Spain and the UK were swept up in promoting a sense of national unity in the context of demands for regional autonomy, while Germany emphasised integration and France assimilation.<sup>19</sup>

The post-1989 Cuban migration has been seen as a political escape valve, helping explain regime stability and the persistence of Cuban socialism (Hoffmann, 2005; 2016), yet it defies characterisation as having been fuelled more narrowly by politics. Cubans have headed where history, government, business, tourism and solidarity fostered people-to-people ties which created personal and economic opportunity. To destinations where they could turn the new commodification of Cuba to pragmatic advantage and enjoy an urban cosmopolitanism born of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism (see Knott and McLoughlin, 2010; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002).

## Favoured destinations

Given the sheer numbers of Cuban family and friends already in the United States and the attractions of the Cuban Adjustment Act, dating back to 1966 and providing Cubans with financial benefits and privileged status over other

19 The details of this are beyond the confines of this analysis, but for good comparative overviews see Heckmann and Schnapper (2003), Lucassen (2005), Schierup et al. (2010); for France, Hargreaves (2007), Todd (1994); France and Germany, Kastoryano (2002), Germany, Aumüller (2009), Bade and Oltmer (2005), Heckmann (2003), Kaestner (2010); and the UK, Hansen (2000), Heath and Demireva (2014). It is all too often forgotten that Western European countries have been marked historically by flows of in- and out-migration. For an excellent European overview, see Knauf and Moreno (2011); for France, Montenay (2006), Noiriel (2002), Temime (1999), Weil (2004); Germany, Boettinger (2005), MacGregor (2014); Spain, Arango (2000), Colectivo IOE (1993, 2002); and the UK, Cohen and Story with Moon (2015), Fryer (1984), Winder (2004).

migrant groups in terms of acquiring residency and citizenship status, it was not surprising that the United States should remain the prime destination for Cubans leaving the island. Miami in particular kept its lure, with its Cuban-American population providing a strong host community. However, United States-Cuba hostilities only partially abated; the US embargo on Cuba remained in place; and migration to the United States implied more of a rupture than was often the case when migrating elsewhere. It was also often dangerous, if migrants attempted to use makeshift vessels to cross the Florida Straits or to travel overland through Central America to the Mexican-US border (the route that began in Ecuador, in place since 2008, had been an increasingly popular one until late 2015, when the country reversed its open-door policy for Cubans).<sup>20</sup>

Outside the United States, favoured post-1989 alternative destinations included the four Western Europe countries in focus here, where, in varying degrees and with ups and downs along the way, the path charted was one of 'constructive engagement' with Cuba. The Cuban migration, while small in comparison with the mass influx of migrants from many other parts of the world, was nonetheless a significant cohort in and of itself. As reflected in Cuban consular statistics in early 2007, 85 per cent of Cubans outside the island (an estimated 1,446,600) were concentrated in North America (United States and Canada). Europe followed next, with seven per cent (an estimated 119,916), of whom 70,000 were in Spain (Martín Fernández et al., 2007), and the figures have increased significantly since.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) regularly updates an online interactive map, with a country breakdown of migration, based on World Bank figures.<sup>21</sup> For 2011, the IOM figure for Cubans in Spain was 105,748; Germany, 11,726; France 1,993; and the UK 1,434. For 2013 and 2015, the comparable IOM figures registered increases in Spain, with 111,119 and 125,253, respectively; Germany with 13,581 and 14,528; and France with 4,624, and 4,780; and in the UK with an inexplicably low 52 for 2013 but 2,665 for 2015.<sup>22</sup> However, the point cannot be made forcefully enough that statistical sources are highly problematic, such that it is hard to compute, with any degree of accuracy, the number of Cuban migrants in any given time and place. In the Western European case, this is compounded by the ease of mobility for nationals of any one member country across EU borders, and

20 For an analysis of people trafficking in the Cuban case, see Soralla and Moreira Seijos (2014).

21 See [www.iom.int/world-migration](http://www.iom.int/world-migration) (accessed 26 Jul. 2017).

22 The IOM 2015 figures for Cubans in other Western European countries signal the need for further study: in descending numerical order, Italy (33,469), Switzerland (3,258), Sweden (2,712), Portugal (1,570), Netherlands (1,313), Norway (966), Austria (879), Belgium (708), Finland (562), Denmark (484), Greece (352).

for other nationals from mainland EU countries that are signatories of the Schengen Agreement,<sup>23</sup> the 2015 migration crisis notwithstanding.

Each of the four countries has presented differing pathways for Cuban immigration. Spain, Cuba's former colonial power, had seen significant pre-1959 postcolonial migration to the island and post-1959 migration back home. Many Cubans could thus claim citizenship through ancestry, and this peaked under Spain's 2007 Historical Memory Law. Another trend there, however, as in the other three European countries under consideration, was the migration of Cubans through marriage with foreign nationals who had visited or had links with Cuba. Similarly, in all four, a smaller number of Cubans had either travelled to work or study and then found ways of staying legally, or had overstayed illegally, the latter creating problems in terms of finding ways either to legalise their situation in the host country or return home, since Cuba imposed a penalty period. Others claimed political asylum, though it would seem with limited success.<sup>24</sup>

Over half of the Cubans in Spain are estimated to be in Madrid, with significant pockets in the Mediterranean port-cities of Barcelona and Alicante and northern coastal cities of Bilbao and San Sebastián in the Basque country, large numbers in the Canary Islands, and smaller numbers in the Balearics. In Germany, a significant presence has built up in Berlin, and also in cities such as Bremen, Cologne, Hamburg and Hanover in the former west, and Leipzig and Rostock in the former east. In France, according to official figures, Cubans are concentrated in Paris and its satellite towns. However, there is evidence of many more, with significant numbers in and around cities such as Lyons, Marseille and Nice as well as a scattering elsewhere. In the UK, some two-thirds are concentrated in London, with small pockets in cities such as Brighton, Bristol and Manchester, and others dispersed across the country.

Spain consolidated its position as Western Europe's post-1989 major investor in Cuba and promoter of its culture at a time when it, too, was transitioning internally: ceding greater autonomy to its regions and, from being a country with a large Spanish emigration, becoming one receiving a large number of immigrants, many of whom could claim Spanish ancestry. Spain could also become a springboard for further travel, becoming not only an end-site in itself but also a staging post to other EU countries and to the United States, as well as elsewhere in the Americas, under the visa waiver scheme for EU nationals. Spain would become even more of a trampoline after being hit hard by the 2008 recession and subsequent austerity measures, and again in the post-2014 moves towards closer United States-Cuba relations and given Cubans' concerns

23 Signed in 1985, and effective from 26 March 1995, it largely abolished internal border checks.

24 Little has been published on this, but for Spain and the US, see Fullerton (2004).

that the potential repeal of the Cuban Adjustment Act might close the doors to the United States as an alternative eventual destination. Yet this did not stop the number of Cubans in Spain from rising.

Germany presented a unique case, given the special relations of the pre-1989 eastern-bloc GDR with post-1959 Cuba, the post-1989 severance of those relations, and Cuba's rapid move for the return of those Cubans who had been working and studying in the GDR after the Berlin Wall came down. During the Soviet period, the former GDR, along with Cuba, was bolstered economically, educationally and culturally as a showcase for the Soviet bloc. Only vestiges remain of the pre-1989 academic programmes that sent Cuban students to universities of the former east, in Berlin, Dresden, Halle-Wittenberg, Leipzig and Rostock; and little, if anything, remains of the former east's docks and industries, that saw some 30,000 Cubans over the period 1975–90 under the umbrella of Cuba Técnica.<sup>25</sup> Cuba ensured the return of the vast majority, but not all. Thus, German official figures show an abrupt rise from 239 Cuban migrants in Germany in 1988 to 3,269 in 1991, which has been attributed to Cuban-German family and other links dating back to the pre-1989 period. Since then, figures have risen every year, with new Cuban migrants heading primarily to the former west, as have other domestic and foreign migrants, including Latin Americans, many of whom had claim to German ancestry.<sup>26</sup>

France and the UK both had enduring business, diplomatic and cultural relations with Cuba, and their more contemporary links have to be understood in the broader context of their colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial past, and the influx of peoples from their own former territories around the world and beyond.<sup>27</sup> Paris, which had its own 19th-century Cuban colony (Estrade,

25 For an excellent compilation of interviews with Cubans who studied and worked in the GDR under this exchange scheme and subsequently returned to Cuba, see Vogel (2009). Testimonies include stories of working alongside others brought under similar programmes from countries such as Angola, Mozambique, North Korea and North Vietnam, the lesser-known counterparts of those involved in the FRG's *gastarbeiter* [literally guest worker] programmes of the 1950s and 1960s with countries including Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. From 1961 to 1975, however, by far the largest number came from Turkey. Many stayed, such that by 2010 there were some four million people of Turkish descent in Germany, many concentrated in Berlin's Kreuzberg district, which, with its many Turkish restaurants, is now a trendy counterculture hub.

26 After Germany's long history of emigration to the Americas, for Latin American immigration see Cerda-Hegerl (2006), Gruner-Domic (2002) and Werz (2009), and for Latin Americans in Berlin, see Garay (1995).

27 Migration to France from the French Antilles has been well documented (Anselin, 1990; Audebert, 2008; Audebert and Calmont, 2007; Condon, 1996), as has migration to Britain from the British West Indies (Byron, 1994; Chamberlain, 1998, 2006; Goulbourne, 2002; Goulbourne and Chamberlain, 2001; James and Harris, 1990; Quirke et al., 2009). For comparative studies, see Brown (2006) on African Caribbean migration to France and the UK. On differential comparative modes of incorporation, identity and citizenship, see Cervantes Rodríguez et al. (2009) and Grosfoguel (2007).



1984), had long been a 'relay station' (Bandau and von Mallinckrodt, 2011) for artists and intellectuals from Africa and LAC. By the 21st century, there were signs of this abating and of Paris losing ground to Madrid, London and Berlin in intellectual attraction.<sup>28</sup> London in particular proved to be emblematic.

## Commodification and its discontents

In Cuba's strategy of global repositioning in prime Western European tourist-sender territories, the UK had by 2015 become one of the fastest-growing. The tourism would be varied in nature, and include political, health, environmental and other specialist study tours. However, commercial, all-inclusive, beach-resort, mass tourism soon far outweighed this, playing not only to Caribbean island attractions of sun, sand and sea, but also a time-warped nostalgia for Cuba's old US vintage cars and Tropicana-style shows, grafted on to revolutionary exotica. An accompanying throwback was to the island's pre-1959 reputation as a pleasure playground, which gave rise to a 1990s' sex-tourism comeback, with Cuban *jineteras* and *jineteros* [female and male 'jockeys'] riding the tourists and the crisis and seeking a route out.<sup>29</sup>

The heady dynamic of sex, love and money was accompanied by a stereotyping of Cubans and their culture, especially Afro-Cuban culture and dance, both at home and abroad. Across major Western European cities, despite (or perhaps precisely in juxtaposition to) the momentous political times, Cuba became arguably identified more by its culture than its politics, and this held true for London. The city, which had seen large numbers of migrants recruited from former colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to help rebuild its shattered post-World War Two economy and society, experienced new migratory waves from EU and non-EU territories alike as of the 1990s, fashioning its contours as a cosmopolitan global city.<sup>30</sup> London's Latin American population alone increased fourfold in 2001–11, on conservative estimates by over 150,000, with large numbers from Ecuador, Colombia and more latterly Brazil, and an influx coming from Spain (McIlwaine, 2011b; McIlwaine et al., 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016). They fuelled London's underground economy

28 London's *Time Out* magazine ran a special issue in 1989 to mark the bicentenary of the 1789 French Revolution with a lead article entitled 'Paris v. London', emitting early signals that London might be stealing the edge over its competitor.

29 For an excellent study on the Caribbean's pleasure islands, see Sheller (2004). For Cuba's pre-revolutionary pleasure tourism, see Schwartz (1997) and for Cuba's post-1989 period and the sex dynamic, see Babb (2011), Bronfman (2007), Cabezas (2009), Kummels (2005a), O'Connell Davidson (1996). For the race dynamic of this, see Roland (2011), and for the transnational politics of Cuban music and culture, see Ferguson (2003), Hernández-Reguant (2012), Kummels (2005b), Perna (2014), Thomas (2005).

30 See Eade (1997, 2010) and Sassen (2001) on the global city and processes of globalisation and migration, a discussion which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

and brought with them an array of Latin American practices (McIlwaine 2011c, 2012; Sheringham and Brightwell, 2012). The few Afro-descended Cubans who arrived in the 1980s had been catapulted into an African and Black British Caribbean presence, at a time when the now internationally famous Notting Hill Carnival was a much smaller local affair. The Cubans who arrived in the post-1989 years, among them a considerable number of Afro-Cubans,<sup>31</sup> entered a city where reggae shared centre stage with salsa (Roman-Velazquez, 2009) and other home-grown musics (Codrington, 2006). Moreover, London was fast establishing itself as a world music capital and Cuban music 'frontier' (Hernández-Reguant, 2012).

Ever since the sensational Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon began in the late 1990s, the London scene has, to coin Perna's words, been 'selling Cuba by [its] sound' (2014).<sup>32</sup> Following the reunion of Cuba's finest veteran musicians and Wim Wenders' film about them, this triumph of marketing was engineered by World Music's London-based Nick Gold, in partnership with Ry Cooder, the American guitarist who collaborated with the musicians. The phenomenon led to Cuban culture making its mark more broadly, with art exhibitions and film screenings, as well as jazz, classical music and dance.<sup>33</sup> It was salsa, however, that became the popular music and dance form, with Cubans and Colombians vying for top spot. There was a veritable explosion of salsa clubs and classes in London and elsewhere in the UK, featuring resident Cuban dancers and musicians. This, in turn, created a market for themed salsa

- 31 Afro-Cubans were present in proportionally larger numbers than in earlier Cuban migrations, such that where Cubans were once assumed to be whiter than their Caribbean counterparts, they came to be more commonly assumed to be black. In forthcoming work, we address more directly the race parameters and dynamic of the migration, and those of gender.
- 32 The Buena Vista phenomenon has been a fascinating development in itself thanks to the CDs and DVDs produced in the wake of Wim Wenders' film, *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) and the constant touring abroad of a band continuously reinventing itself, given the age of its members. However, Buena Vista's popularity abroad was not matched at home beyond the tourist circuit where it was seen as a stereotypical throwback creation for overseas consumption. For a debate featured in *Temas*, see Caballero (2001), de la Campa (2001) and Fornet (2000). Also, see Neustadt (2002).
- 33 Carlos Acosta ([www.carlosacosta.com](http://www.carlosacosta.com) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017) became a sensation as the first black lead dancer with the Royal Ballet and, in late 2015, crowned his career with the company by choreographing and dancing in a version of *Carmen*, before stepping down. See The Royal Ballet (2015) and Acosta (2008). He now splits his time between the UK and Havana, where he is building up his own company. Classical guitarist Ahmed Dickinson, who studied at the Royal College of Music ([www.ahmeddickinson.com](http://www.ahmeddickinson.com) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017), and violinist Omar Puente ([www.omarpuente.com](http://www.omarpuente.com) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017) perform regularly in London, the UK and abroad, and have also played with Acosta and in Cuba. Additionally, Puente plays with Raices Cubanas, a UK-resident Cuban band. The London Latin American Film Festival, which in 2015 celebrated its quarter century, was founded and continues to be directed by Cuban Eva Tarr-Kirkhope ([www.latinamericanfilmfestival.com/team/](http://www.latinamericanfilmfestival.com/team/) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017).

holidays to Cuba and, alongside major tour operators, smaller companies came into existence, working with Cubans resident in the UK and on the island.<sup>34</sup>

By the start of the 21st century's second decade, London was replete with billboards and advertising about Cuba, from holidays to events, bars, restaurants and clubs. Little Havana bar and restaurant in central Leicester Square and Islington's Cuba Libre, a replica of Old Havana's La Bodeguita, gave way to Soho's ritzy Floridita, which in its promotional material expressly emulated 'the 1930s style of its famous namesake, creating a perfect blend of glamour and decadence from a bygone era'. Little Havana is long gone, and Floridita has also since closed; however, others have taken their place: Cubana in Waterloo, Embargo Republica in Chelsea and The Cuban Camden. Cuba Libre closed in Islington and reopened as Escudo de Cuba in East London's trendy Dalston; the now-closed Forge in Camden featured resident Cuban musicians.<sup>35</sup> The Bolivian landlord of a local pub in up-and-coming Holloway, formerly the Lord Palmerston, was renamed Che Commandante.

Their decor varied, but was often a mix of 'exotic' and 'revolutionary', some stereotypically flaunting scantily-clad women and tuxedoed patrons, flanked by palm trees and sunny beaches, alongside Cuban flags and the ever-present Che Guevara. Claims of bringing the spirit of Cuba to London were dubious: 'a Castro-nomic wonder', 'a true Cuban experience', 'the soul and passion of Cuba', an 'authentic Cuban sandwich'. A Habana liquor store sold only British beer and Guinness stout, and a Cuban cocktail bar called on patrons to try an extensive list of tapas and homemade spicy curries.

The range of merchandise in an exclusive Chelsea and Kensington store included expensive designer t-shirts emblazoned with Che, the Cuban flag and other emblems of the island, along with Czech and Speake's 'Cuba' fragrance range, launched in 2002, inspired by the old town of Havana, its Latin rhythms, smooth cigars, fine rums and exotic beauties.<sup>36</sup> The Boisdale of Belgravia bar and restaurant, famous for its traditional Scottish dishes and whiskies, live jazz and blues, and fine Havana cigars, also opened Boisdale

34 In addition to the salsa clubs and classes at venues such as London's Bar Salsa ([www.london-salsa.com](http://www.london-salsa.com) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017), salsa bootcamp weekends and congresses feature resident Cubans ([www.salsaexplosion.co.uk/londoncubancongress/](http://www.salsaexplosion.co.uk/londoncubancongress/) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017) at events in London, as well as other cities and south-coast towns such as Brighton, Bournemouth and Eastbourne. Travel companies include salsa and dance holidays in their packages (see [www.eagleactivities.co.uk](http://www.eagleactivities.co.uk), [www.key2cuba.com](http://www.key2cuba.com), [www.takemetocuba.co.uk](http://www.takemetocuba.co.uk), [www.captivatingcuba.com](http://www.captivatingcuba.com) – all accessed 26 Jul. 2017). Some, like the Brighton-based company Responsible Travel ([www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017), operate solely in the UK. Others operate transnationally, like Cuba Dance Fury ([www.cubadanceholiday.co.uk](http://www.cubadanceholiday.co.uk) – accessed 26 Jul. 2017), which was initially set up in Germany and later extended to the UK.

35 See their websites: [www.cubana.co.uk](http://www.cubana.co.uk), [www.thecuban.co.uk](http://www.thecuban.co.uk), [www.embargorepublica.com](http://www.embargorepublica.com), [www.escudodecuba.com](http://www.escudodecuba.com), [www.forgevenue.org](http://www.forgevenue.org) (all accessed 26 Jul. 2017).

36 Quoted from the company website: <http://czechandspeakefragrance.com/product-category/fragrances/cuba/> (accessed 26 Jul. 2017).

Bishopsgate in the financial heart of the City, and Boisdale Canary Wharf, in the Isle of Dogs financial district, with ample outside canopied cigar-smoking areas. The not insubstantial number of tobacconists in the city, notably James J. Fox in Piccadilly, celebrated their most exclusive product, the Havana cigar. Under current anti-tobacco legislation, they can no longer display any cigars, only accessories. However, they have continued to attract a significant visiting international clientele (including US), on top of their British customers.<sup>37</sup>

Cubans did not own, staff or tend to frequent Central London's themed Cuban venues. The popular Casa Cuba bar-restaurant in South London's Crystal Palace proved ephemeral, closing in early 2015 for its Cuban owners to concentrate on their longer-established Cuba Direct travel agency, which started operations in 2002. In 2016, there were only a couple of smaller ventures owned and run by Cubans – Buena Vista Café in South London's Clapham (now closed) and Pradera in North London's Crouch End – and their clientele was not primarily Cuban<sup>38</sup> for no Cuban community as such had formed. Only a small number of Cubans, at the time of our study, visibly engaged in more formal Cuban networks and events in support of the island, though more occasionally went to a Cuban concert or club, or partied with a select group of Cuban friends. Many were married to nationals and residents and networked through them, while others forged support bases across Caribbean and Latino London.

What most stood out was the diversity of Cubans. There were those who had consolidated posts in academia and in language teaching, journalism, public sector health and other services while many others had experienced downward occupational mobility: an artist taking on work as a painter-decorator, a journalist working in a retail outlet. Not all involved in salsa had trained professionally, but rather put their informal dance skills to good use. What marked many, however, and young professionals in particular, was their discomfort with typical constructs of Cuba, not wanting to be packaged as a certain kind of Cuban, categorised by either politics or culture. As one summed up: 'I hate people saying Cubans leave because of politics. It's always about politics. I don't care about politics. That's why I came here, not the US.' In the words of another: 'I wanted options ... I'm not interested in having

37 For their websites, see [www.boisdale.co.uk](http://www.boisdale.co.uk) and [www.jjfox.co.uk](http://www.jjfox.co.uk) (both accessed 26 Jul. 2017). Tobacconists particularly fear losing their US clientele as United States-Cuba relations normalise further.

38 Cuba Direct was unique in also having an office in La Lonja del Comercio, Old Havana, see [www.cubadirect.co.uk](http://www.cubadirect.co.uk) (accessed 26 Jul. 2017). Pradera was previously a Spanish tapas bar, taken over in 2014 by an Italo-Cuban and Afro-Cuban partnership, who had co-founded Cubacheche in 2007 to promote Afro-Cuban culture in London and the UK. Cuban dishes and cocktails have been added to Pradera's menu and it is entirely Cuban one Sunday in every month. Live music played by a Cuban music trio resident in London is featured every Saturday night. See: [www.praderarestaurant.co.uk](http://www.praderarestaurant.co.uk) (accessed 26 Jul. 2017).

Cuban friends here ... I connect with my Cuban friends on the internet. I'm a transnational citizen.' And to quote a third, 'I never associate with the salsa crowd, jineteros ... I'm a professional ... I'm proud to be Cuban, but I'm not a person who likes what is called *cubaneo* [typically Cuban behaviour] ... I'm more cosmopolitan.'

### **On cosmopolitanism, *cubaneo* and *cubanidad***

The commodified Cuba and its imaginary in London was one which Cubans could turn to their advantage but also one many wished to distance themselves from, as they identified more with the city's cosmopolitanism born of tolerance for diversity and difference. This we found more pronounced among Cubans in London than in the other three capital cities, where commodified markers of Cuba, neither of Cubans' making nor designed for them, also tended to be replicated but on a smaller scale. This was especially paradoxical in the case of Madrid, given the far greater number of Cubans, many of whom would almost certainly have frequented at some point La Negra Tomasa, a central bar-restaurant venue – and perhaps a handful of others such as Cuando Sal de Cuba, La Colonial de Huertas, Centro Cubano de España and Restaurante la Cuba.<sup>39</sup> One older resident Cuban described how his compatriots tended over time to dissipate and dissolve into Spanish society. This was not, however, the experience of younger more recent migrants, including those with Spanish ancestry and citizenship and especially those of Afro-Cuban heritage. Although Spanish-speaking and in tune with that culture, they were not perceived, nor could they perceive themselves, as Spanish. They felt, and were made to feel, different, they said. They were Cuban.

In Paris, at the time of our study, there were only three Cuba-themed bar-restaurant venues of note: Cuba Compagnie Café in Le Marais, Cubana Café in Montparnasse, and Havanita in Bastille, all catering for a French and international clientele (Cubans in Paris stressed above all the importance of speaking French and assimilating French culture). Similarly in Berlin, Cubans emphasised the importance of learning German and integrating into German culture. Yet, post-1989 gentrified Berlin has a vibrant contemporary cultural scene, including the big Havana nightclub; and some smaller bar-restaurants have Cuban-German management and staff, such as La Bodeguita del Medio in Prenzlauer Berg and Varadero in Schöneberg, catering to a mixed clientele of Cubans and Germans.<sup>40</sup> Straddling the former east and west, Berlin bore

39 Of these, La Negra Tomasa is by far the best known ([www.lanegratomasa.com](http://www.lanegratomasa.com) – accessed 27 Jul. 2017).

40 For Paris, see [www.cubacompanie.com](http://www.cubacompanie.com), [www.cubanacafe.com](http://www.cubanacafe.com), [www.havanita-cafe.com](http://www.havanita-cafe.com); for Berlin, [www.havanna-berlin.de/#havanna](http://www.havanna-berlin.de/#havanna), [www.labodeguitaberlin.de](http://www.labodeguitaberlin.de), [www.varaderobar.de](http://www.varaderobar.de) (all accessed 27 Jul. 2017).

the markers of the Cold War showcase history shared by Cuba and the GDR, a history in which, as Hosek (2012) argues, the island had shaped the German imaginary. Her reading of *Buena Vista Social Club*, directed by the Berlin filmmaker Wim Wenders, was that of a German quest for a mythic external authenticity, an alternative to the embrace of the capitalist west and the abandoned socialism of the east.

This might be considered as having broader Western European resonance in the post-1989 era. In the 19th century, Cubans were polarised between those looking to the modernising, neocolonial power – the United States – and those leaning to the old Europe, especially Spain, the former colonial power (Kapcia, 1992). The tendency continued through the 20th century, with the Soviet Union as the new power shaping Cuba's destiny in the post-1959 years, but much curtailed in the period since Hennessy penned his 30th anniversary essay. More anniversaries have come and gone and, while the island has changed significantly, many of the challenges that Hennessy foresaw continue to be the backdrop for not only emigration but also debate on the Cuban nation, its culture and identity.

Alongside the 1990s' international Cuban music revival surrounding Buena Vista was another quieter rebirth, at home and abroad, around the concept of transculturation, as set out by celebrated Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz, in his classic *Cuban Counterpoint* (1995 [1940]). In 1995, the Fundación Fernando Ortiz was set up in the ethnographer's former home, heralding a spate of studies, reprints and events on his work. New critical editions were published in Spain and, in translation, in Germany, Italy and the United States. In 2000, the 60th anniversary of the first publication of *Contrapunteo* was marked by major events in New York and Miami. Ortiz, for whom the real history of Cuba was that of its intermeshed transculturations, was seen to have new relevance in an increasingly transnational world, one in which divides between capitalist and socialist, centre and periphery no longer had the same meaning. Among Cubans abroad, the Ortiz metaphor of the *ajiaco* – the broth of Amerindian origin that became the culinary emblem of the island – was celebrated as an incessant transnational simmering concoction (Perez-Firmat, 1989); transculturation was seen as a performative promiscuity of differences amidst the impossibility of a stable identity (Benítez-Rojo, 1992); and the infinite migratory tissue of Cuba would, it was argued, always circumscribe national homogeneity (Rojas, 1995).<sup>41</sup>

Among the cultural dimensions of this at home was a call to embrace multiple forms of cubanidad, such that the very first *Controversia* [debate] in

41 The Cuban debates on transculturation resonate with those on Caribbean creolisation, whose study has been interrogated in tandem with diaspora studies. See Chivallon (2011), Cohen (2015), Cohen and Sheringham (2016), Hall (2002, 2003), Cohen and Toninato (2009).

*Temas* was on nation and identity (Hernández et al., 1995). In the early 1990s, a short-lived literary journal was published in Havana titled *Diaspora(s)*, a term which subsequently gained ground among Cubans on the island and abroad as a more neutral term of inclusion, consistent with Ortiz's thinking. According to Hernandez-Reguant (2009), 'the "diaspora" trope debunked Miami as Cuba's oppositional capital, highlighting the rise of Europe as a preferred living destination for young educated Cubans, many of whom wished to extricate themselves from traditional exile politics' (p. 79). Madrid was promoted as an alternative centre for Cuban diasporic culture and in 1996 the journal *Encuentro* was launched, with the aim of transcending political polarisation. This was only ever partially achieved, and publication ceased in 2009.<sup>42</sup>

No other such initiative materialised elsewhere in Western Europe, where the 'generational consciousness' of the post-1989 'age cohort' tended to see itself at odds with politics, not least the kind evidenced by Madrid's Cuban dissidents or the small but vocal group of dissident Cuban writers in 1990s Paris. Cubans in cities such as Barcelona in Spain and Marseilles in France celebrated their distance from Madrid and Paris in this respect, and shared with their cohorts in London and Berlin the ability to blend into their city's ethnic diversity and enjoy a cosmopolitanism that put them at ease with their own cultural identity.

## Conclusion

Moving on to a lesser-known public address given by Ortiz in 1940, titled 'Los factores humanos de cubanidad' [The human factors of cubanidad],<sup>43</sup> Ortiz began by asking 'What is cubanidad?' and giving a seemingly simple response: the quality of that which is Cuban. Then he asked: 'What is Cuban?' His answer: Cuba is at once a land and a people, and cubanidad is a condition of belonging to Cuba. However, cubanidad for the individual, he argued, is not in the blood, nor on paper, nor in a place. It is most of all culture, in his words a condition of the soul, a complex of feelings, ideas and attitudes. There is also a fuller cubanidad, which is the consciousness of being Cuban and the will to want to be it. His distinction was between cubanidad, the generic condition, and cubanía that is consciously desired. He interrogated this not only in terms of the here and now, but also its historical rise and its foreseeable becoming: transplanted with incessant migrations; transformed locally and globally; and in creative, dynamic and constant flux.

42 Financial pressures played a large part in its closure. Though no longer published, all 54 issues have been digitalised and can be accessed online: [www.cubaencuentro.com/revista/revista-encuentro](http://www.cubaencuentro.com/revista/revista-encuentro) (accessed 27 Jul. 2017).

43 Reproduced in Ortiz (1964, 1973).

Ortiz ended on a note of exhortation that the study of the human factors of cubanidad was at the time more important than ever, and we might echo this today. Expressions of what it is to be Cuban have changed over time. Heterogeneous elements are recast, defying a national homogeneity of cubanidad and cubanía, or what in today's more stereotypical form might be seen as cubano. Cuban culture and identity have been well explored in relation to major geopolitical players: Spain and the US, and to a lesser extent Russia.<sup>44</sup> But what of the post-1989 transmigratory age cohort and their generational consciousness? Among them are not a few who have generations of migrants in their family, which creates a particular psyche. In the words of a Cuban whom we interviewed for the project, and who since 1989 has lived in France and the UK, has spent time in Spain and Cuba, and has family in both as well as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, the UK and the United States:

We are all descended from travellers, from all countries, whether from Africa as forced migrants, or from Europe as migrants seeking a better life ... I don't feel a foreigner in any European country ... I've come to believe the theory that there has to be a historical memory ... something within us that on arriving we can say 'Here I am.' I don't know if it's something I've made up to get by, but I feel I belong everywhere.

Cuba has traversed many landmark moments over time that have situated it at the crossroads of history and migration, and the present juncture has to be seen in that light. Post-1989 emigration has thrown up major challenges for the island that are far from easy to resolve. It has also, however, led to increasing numbers of Cubans experiencing parts of the world beyond Cuba and the United States. In the new destinations examined here, they might not have created Cuban communities based on physical location. They have, however, used their new city destinations as 'relay stations' to: 1) express their cubanidad and cubanía through virtual media, such as Facebook, personal blogs and websites, communicating with Cubans in places far and wide; and 2) engage with Cuba, keeping abreast of news, sending money, travelling whenever possible, sharing experiences and challenging attitudes, with some also actively lobbying for changes in Western European (and US) policies towards Cuba and Cuban policy towards them. After the thaw in US-Cuba hostilities was announced by Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro on 17 December 2014, and US-Cuba diplomatic relations were renewed on 1 July 2015, a good number of our interlocutors expressed concern about the potential pitfalls of a US-Cuba replay. Whether or not they return to live on the island, their cubanidad and cubanía will surely add new ingredients to the Cuban *ajiaco* and make theirs a diasporic cohort that is not victim but rather challenger (in the vein of Cohen, 1996) to any US-inspired formulaic recipe.

<sup>44</sup> Classics are Moreno Friginals (1995), for Spain, and Pérez (1999, 2008) for the US. For Russia, see Loss (2013) and Loss and Prieto (2012). For a more general approach, see Cervantes Rodríguez (2012).



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