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Introduction by Christopher Endy

Reviewers: Dennis Merrill, Ricardo D. Salvatore, Thomas Schoonover, Wayne S. Smith

**Louis A. Pérez Jr. *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos.***

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8078-3216-5 (\$34.95, cloth).

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### **Contents**

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Introduction by Christopher Endy, California State University, Los Angeles .....	2
Review by Dennis Merrill, University of Missouri-Kansas City .....	6
Review by Ricardo D. Salvatore, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella.....	10
Review by Thomas Schoonover, Emeritus, University of Louisiana at Lafayette.....	18
Review by Wayne S. Smith, Center for International Policy.....	25
Response by Louis A. Perez, Jr., University of North Carolina.....	28

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Introduction by Christopher Endy, California State University, Los Angeles

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When it comes to explaining the United States' troubled history with Cuba, few scholars have written with as much authority and influence as Louis A. Pérez, Jr. More than three decades after the publication of his first book, Pérez's latest volume on the subject falls firmly in the cultural school of U.S. foreign relations history. Briefly put, Pérez shows how Americans imagined themselves as superior to Cubans and then used that imagery to justify their imperial interventions. In its most basic terms, this argument is a familiar one. Pérez even draws a number of cartoons from John J. Johnson's enduring 1980 visual anthology, *Latin America in Caricature*.<sup>1</sup> Pérez's originality comes in the way he delivers this argument. As the reviewers in this roundtable note, Pérez marshals a vast and impressive collection of evidence to show how commentators in the United States viewed their relationship with Cubans. Just as importantly, he frames that evidence around an adventurous discussion of metaphor, in which he incorporates relevant scholarship by linguists, philosophers, and anthropologists. In this light, Pérez helps advance the project pioneered by Frank Costigliola and others into multidisciplinary research on emotions and metaphors.<sup>2</sup> All four reviewers in this roundtable agree that Pérez's journey is very much worth the effort.

Pérez's emphasis on the power of metaphor convinces the roundtable reviewers in large part because of the sheer extent of documentation he has gathered. The reviewers variously describe Pérez's massing of metaphors as "rich," "omnipresent," and "overwhelming" (that last adjective presumably directed at skeptics of the cultural approach). Pérez's evidence implicates a wide range of influential U.S. politicians, journalists, and cartoonists. He also exposes the role of historians in the U.S. imperial project. As more than one of the roundtable reviewers note, Pérez brings in for criticism the writings of scholars such as Woodrow Wilson, Julius Pratt, Foster Rhea Dulles, Richard W. Leopold, and Robert Ferrell.

Despite all their praise for Pérez's insights and prodigious research, the roundtable reviewers also suggest that certain topics and questions remain unresolved. One issue concerns the question of how to think about Cuba's place in the broader history of imperialism. Pérez begins the book with two bold claims. First, he writes that "Cuba occupies a special place in the history of American imperialism" because it served as "a laboratory" in which Americans developed their imperial methods. Second, he argues that Americans' fixation on Cuba makes the island "a case apart." In his words, "the destiny of the nation seemed inextricably bound to the fate of the island. It was impossible to imagine the former without attention to the latter" (1). In his review, Thomas Schoonover asks if Pérez overstates the uniqueness of Cuba as a laboratory of empire. Schoonover suggests that U.S. images of Cuba emerged within a broader set of images of Native Americans, other Latin Americans, and Asians. Ricardo D. Salvatore likewise calls for a wider comparative

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Frank Costigliola, "Reading for Meaning: Theory, Language, and Metaphor," in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 279-303.

lens and stresses the need to frame U.S. imperial metaphors as part of a broader discourse shared by empires such as those of Spain and Britain.

Then there is the question of Pérez's connections between the eras of William McKinley and George W. Bush. The most striking metaphor of continuity is the recurring image of foreigners as children learning to ride a bicycle under U.S. tutelage. This metaphor guided U.S. imperialism in Cuba at the turn of the twentieth century, and it resurfaced a century later to explain the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Dennis Merrill, Wayne S. Smith, and Schoonover endorse Pérez's foray into the very recent past, echoing his hope that greater awareness of distorting metaphors will help produce more enlightened U.S. foreign policy. Salvatore shares this critical perspective but calls into question Pérez's emphasis on continuity in the history of U.S. imperial metaphors. He suggests instead that too many permutations in U.S. international relations, such as the Good Neighbor Policy, took place during the twentieth century. The real story, he writes, involves change as much continuity.

Salvatore and Pérez also disagree on the extent to which one can and should write about "the American imagination" in the singular. Salvatore notes that Pérez leaves out voices from African Americans and other minorities in the United States. In replying to this critique, Pérez places Cubans, rather than Americans, back at the center of his analysis. Oppressed minorities in the United States might matter to scholars of the United States, he notes, "but for those peoples [i.e. Cubans] who fall victim to imperialism, well-intentioned dissent within the imperial polity is a mute point." One upshot of this debate is that a future historian might profitably adapt Pérez's subtitle and pursue new research on "metaphor and the anti-imperial ethos."<sup>3</sup>

The final main critique of the roundtable, advanced by Salvatore, calls attention to the question of how diplomatic historians using the cultural approach should address the role of material forces. Salvatore agrees that metaphor and representation matter, but he wishes that Pérez's book focused more on how language and culture represented material interests. What were the metaphors surrounding U.S. technology and economic power? How did those metaphors evolve during the twentieth century as the material nature of U.S. economic and political power in Cuba changed? The cultural approach, Salvatore suggests, is particularly needed to help improve studies of material interests in U.S.-Latin American relations. In this spirit, one can point by way of example to other books that bring cultural history to the study of technology and economics, such as Michael Adas's *Dominance by Design* and Emily S. Rosenberg's *Financial Missionaries to the World*.<sup>4</sup>

In the end, the roundtable confirms both the value of Pérez's scholarship and the possibilities for further research. Pérez's extensive, interdisciplinary research into metaphor improves the intellectual toolbox available for diplomatic history's cultural

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<sup>3</sup> One good starting point in this project would be Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Adas, *Dominance By Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2006); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

approach. Salvatore's comments on how Pérez left some metaphorical stones unturned only confirms the value of continuing further down the path Pérez takes in this book.

### Participants:

**Louis A. Perez, Jr.**, is the J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor of History at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He completed his graduate work at the University of New Mexico in 1970. He is author of a number of books on Cuba and Cuban-U.S. relations including *Army Politics in Cuba, 1898-1958* (1976); *Intervention, Revolution, and Politics in Cuba, 1913-1921* (1978); *Cuba Between Empires, 1878-1902* (1983); *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (1988); *Cuba Under the Platt, 1902-1934* (1986); and *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* (1999). His present project, "The Structure of Cuban History," examines the principal driving issues of the Cuban past.

**Dennis Merrill** received his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut in 1986 and is Professor of History at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is the author of *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development, 1947-1963* (1990); co-editor with Thomas G. Paterson, *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 2 vols., forthcoming 2009; and forthcoming *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth Century Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

**Ricardo Salvatore** is Professor of History at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is author of: *Wandering Paysanos. State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era* (Duke University Press, 2003); *Imágenes de un imperio. Estados Unidos y las formas de representación de América Latina* (Sudamericana, 2006); and *Subalternidad, Derechos y Justicia Penal* (Gedisa, 2009). He has coedited a number of books, among them *Culturas Imperiales: Experiencia y representación en América, Asia y Africa*, (Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2005); and *Los Lugares del Saber* (Beatriz Viterbo, 2006). He is interested in the intersection among business, knowledge enterprises, and informal empire. He is currently working on a book manuscript titled *United States Strategies for Knowing South America 1890-1945*. Essays on this topic have been published by *Neplantla*, *American Quarterly*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, *Interventions*, and *Comparative American Studies*.

**Thomas Schoonover** received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1970 and is Sagrera Professor emeritus, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, Louisiana. His principal book publications include *Hitler's Man in Havana—Heinz August Lüning: Nazi Spies and U-boats in the Caribbean* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); *Uncle Sam's War and the Origins of Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); *The French in Central America: Cultural and Commerce, 1820-1930* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000); *Germany in Central America: Competitive Imperialism, 1821-1929* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998); *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880-1930*, jointly with Lester D. Langley (U. Georgia), (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); *The United States in Central America, 1860-1911: Episodes in Social Imperialism and Imperial Rivalry in the World System* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); and *Dollars over Dominion: The*

*Triumph of Liberalism in Mexican-United States Relations, 1861-1867* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). His current project is a study of “Leisure and the Modern Global Capitalism from 1850 to about 1950” including the United States, Latin America, and western and central Europe].

**Wayne S. Smith** is a Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington, D.C. and an Adjunct Professor of Latin American Studies at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He is the former Chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana (1979-82) and the author of *The Closest of Enemies: A Personal and Diplomatic History of the Castro Years* (W.W. Norton, 1987).

Nearly three years after the terrorist strikes of September 11, 2001, the National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks upon the United States reported that the gravity of the threat should have been grasped earlier, but declined to pin blame on specific officials or federal agencies. The most important failure, the commissioners concluded, had been a government-wide “failure of imagination.”<sup>1</sup> For scholars still skeptical or even hostile toward the cultural turn in foreign relations history, the commission’s findings should stand as a sober reminder that ideas, knowledge, and imagination are central to policy making. In his most recent book, Louis A Pérez Jr., J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, explores the complexities of imperial meaning, and exposes the colossal failure of American imagination that has characterized nearly two centuries of U.S.-Cuban relations.

The narrative is familiar. The specter of slain monsters notwithstanding, John Quincy Adams spoke optimistically of Cuba’s annexation to the federal republic. The Ostend Manifesto kept dreams of possession alive through the 1850s. But it was the “splendid little war” in 1898 and the subsequent Platt Amendment that secured a Cuban protectorate. Pérez softens his well-known argument that President William McKinley’s decision to intervene arrived just in time to snatch military victory from Cuban rebels. “Whether Cubans would have, in fact, gone on to defeat Spain, in 1898 or thereafter, or even at all, cannot be demonstrated, of course,” he notes. What Cubans, Spaniards, and Americans had concluded, he nonetheless maintains, was that the days of colonial rule were numbered.(44-45) From the turn of the century down to New Year’s day 1959, the U.S. presence on the island grew exponentially. Military interventions in 1906, 1912, and 1917, the ouster of reformist president Grau San Martín in the early 1930s, the U.S.-dominated sugar trade, the massive infusion of North American private capital, the Guantánamo naval base, and the invasion of pleasure-seeking U.S. tourists all contributed to the denial of Cuba’s agency and deepened its dependence on the United States. The “loss” of Cuba to Fidel Castro’s brand of communism stirred Washington’s deepest wrath and inspired covert operations, assassination attempts, and a half-century of punishing diplomatic and economic embargo.

The plot summary is not new, but the interpretive framework is fresh and provocative. In addition to military and economic muscle, the U.S. system of domination rested on the production of knowledge. Pérez breaks important new ground by exploring the singular influence of metaphor – linguistic constructions that located U.S.-Cuban relations within the norms of everyday life in U.S. domestic culture. Situated just ninety miles from U.S. shores, the island’s proximity inscribed it in the nineteenth century American imagination as a neighbor in need, fruit ripe for the picking, a damsel in distress, a hemispheric Armenia, an orphaned child, and more. Metaphors made the “other” familiar to ordinary Americans and emblazoned Washington’s political purposes with moral intent. They made

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<sup>1</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 339-360; *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 July 2004.

U.S. authority over Cuba seem not only desirable, but natural. “The power of the metaphor,” Pérez argues, “lay in its capacity to represent power as a matter of normative common sense, to impose an obvious logic on the otherwise complex enactment of national interests.”(137-138)

Metaphorical thinking about Cuba obscured the distinction between self-less purport and self-interest. The war of 1898 thus passed into memory and history as an act of U.S. charity. Cuban independence came not as the culmination of a decades-long Cuban struggle, but as a gift bestowed upon an infantilized people deemed incapable of achieving it for themselves. The Platt Amendment and the military interventions it legitimized helped discipline the adopted ward. In return, Washington demanded “gratitude,” itself “a mode of political coercion . . . designed to obtain Cuban acquiescence to North American interests” – that translated into trade privileges and investment opportunities for U.S. businesses.(197) The history profession, also a prisoner of metaphor, was summoned to the service of power. Christened the Spanish-American War, Cuba was entirely written out of the script. Authors from Theodore Roosevelt to Robert Ferrell embraced the notion that through its war with Spain and its supervision of Cuba, the United States played the role of good Samaritan or at least that of a responsible great power.

Pérez’s approach is interdisciplinary and erudite. In addition to standard works on U.S.-Cuban relations and U.S. diplomatic history, the text references the sociologist Frantz Fanon, the philosopher Immanuel Kant, and historians Benedetto Croce and Eugene V. Genovese. Insights from cognitive psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, literary critics, and novelists illuminate how humans arrive at knowledge of themselves and others, and how they translate ideas into action. The eclectic analytical framework allows Pérez to expose society’s propensity for deception, especially self-deception – and especially self-deceptions that normalize acts of political domination. It also permits an unusually rich exploration of diplomacy’s emotional realm. “The Americans were rarely rational about Cuba,” Pérez writes.(255) John Quincy Adams, widely acclaimed by historians as the most sage of U.S. secretaries of state, characterized Cuba in exaggerated terms: as “indispensable to the continuance of the integrity of the Union itself.” The “loss” of Cuba in 1959 generated an inverted hysteria that placed the U.S. position in global politics in serious jeopardy.

When Cubans demonstrated the audacity to question U.S. policy and history and to imagine a Cuba for Cubans, Americans once more “succumbed to representations of their own making.”(248) Initially written off as an unruly adolescent, Fidel Castro came to be understood by 1960 and 1961 as an ingrate whose pathological hatred for the United States precluded normal diplomatic relations. Pérez acknowledges that the revolutionary government’s authoritarian bent along with its economic nationalism played into Washington’s disenchantment – but he ties the rupture in U.S.-Cuban relations most firmly to more than a century’s worth of misplaced foreign policy fantasies. As in the case of 9/11, the U.S.-Cuba catastrophe sprang from numerous errors in judgment, but ultimately boiled down to an utter absence of imagination. After a brief flirtation with Castro’s revolutionary aura, the popular press and commentators viewed events in Castro’s Cuba with “a mixture of incomprehension and incredulity.”(244) For Pérez, nothing testifies to the emotional basis for U.S.-Cuban relations more than the five decades of hostility that followed the

revolution. “That a policy of covert operations, of economic sanctions and trade embargo, of political pressure and diplomatic isolation – all designed to “hasten” the fall of the Cuban government – endured fifty years virtually unchanged as a failed policy was itself the most powerful evidence of the pathology of Cuba among Americans.”(273)

Pérez draws a distinction between popular sentiment and political purpose. For policymakers, Cuba always represented coveted territory, perched strategically along Caribbean shipping lanes and a potential treasure trove of wealth. Down through the years, however, popular sentiment and political purpose “engaged one another in dialectical interaction, each serving to validate the other, thereupon passing into the collective memory.”(177) Thus, the dividing line between interests and perceptions became extraordinarily thin. Some may contend that the line is in fact too vague to be of explanatory value. In search of positivist cause-and-effect outcomes, scholars of diplomacy have traditionally limited discussion to hard interests and hard power – and rely on trade statistics, measurements of military capabilities, and telling quotes pulled from state archives – to make their case. Yet metaphorical knowledge about Cuba was omnipresent in popular culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Presidential proclamations, exhortations in the halls of Congress, visual caricatures in the newly emergent mass media (amply displayed inside this book), travelogues, theater, and works of fiction referenced Cuba as female and childlike, Uncle Sam as manly and valiant. To ignore or dismiss the power of imagination in U.S.-Cuban relations is nothing less than to sanitize the historical record.

Metaphorical analysis can undoubtedly shed new light on U.S. relations with nations other than Cuba. The “special” Anglo-American relationship and the passionate U.S. attraction to Israel (already expertly placed in cultural context by Michelle Mart) immediately come to mind.<sup>2</sup> Even more apropos are U.S. foreign relations that have been defined by verbal expressions that colonize knowledge while proclaiming innocence from or the nonexistence of empire. The strange career of U.S. relations with “old Mexico” and America’s encounter with “inscrutable Asia” beckon. But the findings are unlikely to exactly duplicate those plumbed from what Pérez observes is a unique U.S.-Cuban experience – one that in essence collapsed the distance that typically separates the transmission and reception of culture. Recent studies of U.S. interactions with Europe by Victoria de Grazia, Christopher Endy, and others have shown that engagement more often than not produces a selective appropriation and hybridization of cultural practices, rather than a one-way process of cultural imposition.<sup>3</sup> Gilbert M. Joseph and others have demonstrated that even in the western hemispheric, where U.S. political, military, and economic power is immensely disproportionate and frequently deployed to bolster

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<sup>2</sup> Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How Americans Came to View Israel as an Ally*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holiday: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

tyranny, ordinary, everyday “close encounters of empire” often permit Latin Americans to contest assigned identities and subtly rearrange the social meaning of empire.<sup>4</sup>

My comparative study of U.S. tourism in twentieth century Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico echoes these conclusions with one notable exception: 1950s Cuba. Whereas activist states and local elites in 1930s Mexico and 1960s Puerto Rico partnered to regulate the travel industry and to direct the tourist gaze to cultural as well as consumer displays, Fulgencio Batista’s Cuba offered a traveler’s free-for-all. Pérez correctly observes that North American vacationers from the church-going land of Dulles came to imagine Cold War Havana as a cornucopia of daiquiris, casinos, and inter-racial sex. Combined with the U.S.-backed dictatorship and the sinister presence of the American mob, the visitor-host arrangement gave short shrift to all but the most superficial trappings of reciprocity.<sup>5</sup>

While Cuba may stand as a historical anomaly, observers of contemporary world affairs and those who make policy will discover in Pérez’s study a broad prescriptive message. In a brief conclusion, the author surveys the global scene and has no trouble exposing mischievous metaphors at work. The historic distance between the Platt Amendment and the Bush Doctrine is relatively short. George W. Bush’s speechwriters concocted the phrase “axis of evil” in January 2002 to lump Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Iran’s Shiite theocracy, and communist North Korea into one orderly, enemy camp. When France and Germany objected to the administration’s war on Iraq the following year, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld dismissed them as obsolete remnants of the “old Europe.” We “just adopted a baby called Baghdad,” cautioned journalist Thomas Friedman following the subsequent invasion.(269) Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz capped the metaphoric riff when he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee just prior to Iraq’s legislative elections in 2005 that guiding the new state toward democracy was a little like “teaching a youngster to ride a bicycle, you don’t keep your hand on the seat the whole time. At some point you have to take it off.”(270)

As the Obama administration takes office, eager to prove its mettle, the lessons embedded in the history of U.S.-Cuban relations warrant scrutiny. Team Obama can begin helping America kick its metaphor habit by opening a long overdue dialogue with Raul Castro’s Cuba and pursuing normal relations. To do so, will not only require the United States to liberate itself from fifty years of self-defeating economic and diplomatic embargo, but also necessitate the abandonment of nearly two centuries of false knowledge. Advocates of the status-quo will put up a spirited fight and the effort will cost some political capital. But standing pat would represent more than failed policy, it would in fact constitute one more failure of imagination.

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<sup>4</sup> Gilbert M. Joseph et. al., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth Century Latin America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming, 2009).

*OF METAPHORS, EMPIRE AND SELF-FASHIONING*

This book is about how a limited number of metaphors shaped the U.S. understanding of Cuba and the Cubans, and how during the war of 1898 and its immediate aftermath, the same metaphors assisted the construction of the rhetoric of U.S. imperial designs as a selfless undertaking for the sake of humanity and civilization. The war of 1898 produced an explosion of representations about Cuba. Governing these representations were a few metaphors (relating to childhood, gender, parenthood, racial mixture and proximity) that helped to justify first the U.S. occupation of Cuba and later the American tutelage over the island. Combined, these metaphors provided the semantic devices of a rhetoric of righteousness at the service of imperial expansionism. From 1898 on the U.S. accepted its role as the international standard-bearer of freedom, democracy, and social equality. This transcendental change in U.S. self-consciousness, suggests Louis Pérez, occurred chiefly as a result of the war of 1898 and its cultural representations.

a) On Language and Empire

*Cuba in the American Imagination* makes a robust case for the importance of language in the self-fashioning of imperial nations. In particular, it points to the role of metaphors as vehicles of meaning and conveyors of moral purpose in relations of power emerging from colonial situations. In this regard, this book joins other scholars' efforts to understand foreign relations of the United States from a cultural perspective, in which language interactions constitute a privileged site of reflection and insight. As students of colonial discourse have shown, language and writing have played a crucial role in the construction of imperial relations. *La escritura* was central to the establishment, legitimatization, and endurance of the Spanish colonial system. In the same way, travel writing, novels, and illustrated magazines have been determinant in shaping the sense of mission carried by the British to India, Egypt and South Africa. And, in the same line, the writings of American scholars, missionaries, business prospectors, and diplomats helped to adumbrate the opportunities open to U.S. investors, educators, engineers, and traders in South America.

What makes the case of Cuba and the U.S. intervention special? Perhaps the fact that certain combination of images (Spanish oppression, Cuban infantile behavior, U.S. military virility, civilizing whiteness, the good father, the apprehensive neighbor) coalesced at a moment in time to produce a novel moral rhetoric of imperial purpose: the U.S. "had to" intervene in Cuba in order to stop Spanish oppression and cruelty and "had to" temporarily exert tutelage over the Cuban people in order to teach them the institutions and virtues necessary for self-government. The questions are: was this rhetoric really new? Were not the interventions in Puerto Rico and the Philippines equally important in shaping the moral rhetoric of empire? Was this rhetoric generated in 1898-1902 sustained over time, even when the U.S. shifted its mode of influence from tutelage to economic hegemony (from formal to informal empire)? Did the Good Neighbor Policy produce no effect on these

governing metaphors? More importantly, did the same stock of metaphors apply to episodes of U.S. interventions during the Cold War and its aftermath?

Pérez argued that, in the Cuban case, the U.S. foreign-policy community continued to see the events of the Cuban revolution of 1959 with the same metaphorical lenses. Fidel Castro was presented as either a paranoid schizophrenic or a personality with adolescent traits. This mistaken interpretation prevented a rapid understanding of the true social dynamic and ideological dimension of the Cuban Revolution. Once Castro and the Revolution were categorized as “communist,” then the old metaphor of proximity re-appeared to magnify the anxiety of the U.S. foreign-policy community and the press. The ultimate enemy of U.S. democracy -- Soviet Communism -- was “at our door”. The “Americans” were startled about the anti-American virulence of revolutionary rhetoric and at pains to explain why a friendly nation -- that should be grateful for having been given its liberty -- had turned against “them.” The rhetoric of Empire expected gratitude as the compensation due for its selfless investment of lives and revenue in 1898. Instead, it got the treatment of an enemy.

Scholars should welcome this book as an important contribution regarding the cultural study of imperialism, with emphasis on the role played by language in the making of national self-awareness and consciousness in the imperial nation. However, to complete the picture, I would like to have seen more discussion about subaltern discourses within the United States, about metaphors relating to technological and economic integration, and additional evidence and analysis of the metaphors deployed by U.S. enunciators and writers during the period 1920-1959. The question of the impact on language of the transition between formal and informal empire is an important dimension not examined in this book. While some geographical metaphors seem to inform the U.S. imagination about Cuba, no mention is made of other mechanical or technological metaphors. This makes it appear as if the rhetoric produced by U.S. writers and speakers about Cuba was separated from business interests and the business world. The words “American interests” most often refers to strategic visions of Cuba in the U.S. defensive system — that is associated with the geo-political situation of Cuba — than to the economic interests of U.S. investors in the island. The U.S. version of the civilizing mission included an argument that was not part of the French or British version: the idea that U.S. capital and technology could generate in less-developed countries a standard of living similar to that attained previously in the United States.

To indicate the object impacted by cultural representations of Cuba the author uses “popular imagination,” “national consciousness,” “American imagination,” “national awareness,” “public opinion” and other similar terms. Much of the enunciations presented as supporting evidence can be encapsulated under the concept of the “official mind” of U.S. imperialism (borrowing an expression from Gallagher and Robinson). That is, most of the texts and images examined come from people with special enunciatory power or with privileged influence over U.S. foreign policy. Only in limited instances does the discussion involve books addressed to the general public. Yes, there are popular poems, plays, and songs that supported the War of 1898, but there is not an extended discussion of subaltern voices in the U.S. As far as I can see, there are no examples of Afro-American, Asian-American, Native-American or Mexican-American texts about the U.S. intervention in Cuba.

The texts examined are fragments of U.S. “public opinion”, a concept that by no means represents the totality of perspectives in the United States at the time. Consequently, I am not sure we can speak of the “American imagination”, even if the term “America” is used to refer to the U.S. continental territory.

b) The Question of Continuity

The book emphasizes the long-run persistence of a limited number of metaphors in the U.S. understanding of Cuba. Much of Pérez’ discussion refers to two periods: A formative period c.1820-1880 in which Cuba was presented as a land crucial to the security and welfare of the United States, destined to be absorbed by the great republic. And a resolution period, from 1895-1902, in which Cuba appear first as a damsel in danger (the victim of Spanish oppression), a figure that justified her rescue by the manly and chivalrous U.S. During and after the war, Cubans were portrayed as orphan children in need of paternal guidance, in particular, in need of discipline and education. After the American occupation the disappointment about the failure of Cubans to sustain stable governments generated a new wave of pronunciations—this time claiming the need for Cuban gratitude for the 1898 U.S. intervention. There follows a discussion of images of Cuba in the 1920s, when the island was invariably portrayed as a brothel, as a casino, or a tropical paradise for tourists. With the advent of the Revolution in 1959, the surprise about Castro’s communist turn-around stimulated writers to see Cuba as the “bridgehead of Russia” in the Americas, as a “cancer” threatening to spread to the rest of Latin America, and a perilous center of anti-American propaganda within the U.S. ’s sight.

Though the author strives to show that some of the same figurative language continues to be applied to recent U.S. interventions and wars, the discontinuities in time and space (between the Platt Amendment and the war of Iraq) are so many and so profound as to render the hypothesis of persistence and extension rather weak without the contribution of further comparative evidence. I am sympathetic to the idea that Washington’s imperial mind has retained certain basic premises about Latin America since the time of Jefferson and Monroe. I also agree with the proposition that U.S. interventions in Latin America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century set the protocols and the rationale for future imperial adventures. But it is difficult, without a comparative study of the cultural construction of U.S. enemies, to conclude that the national self-perception presented by McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson still energizes current U.S. imperial interventions in Iraq and Pakistan.

Even if one wanted to argue (as Greg Grandin has done) that U.S. incursions in Central America and the Caribbean were a training ground for late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century imperial adventures, one would have to deal with the complex transition from Hemisphere Hegemon to World Power that occurred in the post-war period. Certainly, it would be difficult to argue that the nature of the U.S. Empire did not change much between 1902 and 1962. It certainly did, not only in matters of rhetoric and self-understandings but also in the technologies and knowledge available to office holders in Washington. It might well be that the American self-portrayal as a civilizing power continues to resonate as intensely as in McKinley’s time. Yet the United States’ civilizing mission itself changed significantly. Sometime after WWII development and anti-Communism replaced self-

government as the main motivations behind U.S. interventions in the world at large. With the ascent of globalization discourse in the 1990s emerged a view that legal, educational, economic reforms could produce the elusive integration and convergence sought, without direct intervention on the part of the U.S. Only recently, under President George W. Bush, has the “Empire of Democracy” come back as a rationale of U.S. foreign interventions.

Imperial metaphors change, not only because of the failure of prior metaphors to express the nature of the colonial/dependent Other, but because the very Imperial Center, as a result of its own technological progress, has many other goods to offer: technical expertise, antibiotics, cable news, oil-refining technology, satellite communication, Big-Bang theory and what not. In 1962 the missile crises presented the real possibility of a nuclear war, magnifying the importance of the proximity of Cuba to the United States. By contrast, in 1900-1902 U.S. speakers and writers could only fantasize about the possibility of “seeing” Cuba or Panama through the lenses of a telescope. The actual technological possibility of doing it was not yet there. It is my belief that technological modernity greatly affected the ways in which the U.S. empire imagined itself penetrating the flows of trade, investment, and the ways of life of Latin America.

And, at least for the period of Pan-Americanism (1890-1945), the U.S. presented itself also as a monitor of “progress” (economic, social, and political) in South America. With the advent of the Good Neighbor policy, the logic of tutelage became highly contested, forcing the U.S. to accept some of the historical demands of the Latin American republics. Only in the Caribbean Sea (the United States’ *mare nostrum*) could the U.S. claim the role of policeman and teacher of politically-infantile nations. Other troublesome nations (Argentina, for example) came to be regarded as such because they hosted Nazis or embraced forms of populism that were read as presenting totalitarian features. Over time, the “course” on democracy became much less appealing to Latin American student-nations than the “course” on development that the U.S. proposed to teach. In this regard, the Alliance for Progress can be considered a total overhaul -- or at least a quite complete “updating” -- of the U.S. self-fashioning as the Tutor of the Americas.

Modernity infused American informal rule with new images of Cuba. There is a bit of this discursive shift in Perez’s analysis of the 1920s, when Cuba became an island of tropical paradise to U.S. tourists; the Mecca of gamblers, drinkers, seekers of sexual adventures, business investors, and family vacationers. I would like to see a more extended discussion of these changes in the images of Cuba, in particular for the period 1920-1950. There were other forms of U.S. modernity (huge modern sugar *ingenios*, electric lighting, films, etc.) that affected the lives of Cubans perhaps as importantly as U.S. -designed elementary education and policing did. This period brought about a momentous transition in the history of Cuba and of Latin America. A time when the technological manifestations of modernity multiplied, a time when the discussion about the role of women reached the Spanish American nations, a time for the development of dreams of social order and of a policed society, and a time in which Cuba and other Latin American countries embraced bits of the U.S. medicine of social welfare and industrial regulation. The transition between a time of formal empire and a period of informal or neo-colonial dependency must have had an impact on the rhetoric of empire and hegemony. It is likely that metaphors related

to the misuse of natural resources or the inadequate productivity of local labor combined with (and perhaps superseded) the old metaphors of political infantilism and inability to learn self-government. Notions of Western superiority, argues Michael Adas, change in response to transformations in the technological and economic bases of the Center's accumulation.

c) The Inter-American Dimension

In my work on U.S. images of South America, I have found that before the outbreak of World War I, U.S. enunciators and writers came to acknowledge the existence of economic progress and political stability in the ABC nations. In fact, as ex-President Theodore Roosevelt told an audience in Buenos Aires in 1913, Argentina had already acquired political maturity and was in a position to help the U.S. in keeping a vigilant look on the still unstable and poor nations of South America. Confronted with technological progress and European civility, U.S. observers conceded that the ABC nations were already a few steps ahead in the civilization competition with regard to other nations of the Caribbean, Central and South America. Between 1890 and 1920 a Great Divide was carved in the vision of U.S. policy and opinion-makers, a divide between the "land of recurrent revolutions" (the Caribbean and Central America), and the "progressive" and "politically stable" South American republics (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay). The "discovery" of Argentina as a "white country" served to stimulate optimistic prognoses about a convergence with the United States well into the 1930s. While the foreign-policy community of the United States continued to use the metaphor of infant-nations to refer to Haiti, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Guatemala, this rhetoric figure was no longer appropriate to describe the ABC countries.

Professor Perez's insistence on the existence of a "special relationship" between the U.S. and Cuba since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century begs the question about the position of Cuba within the Caribbean and Central America. With good arguments the author sustains that the specter of Haiti (the first Black Republic) re-appeared as the image of the worst possible scenario for Cuba whenever political instability reactivated the need for U.S. intervention in Cuban politics. Other nations in the region, however, do not figure in the metaphors of empire. What about Puerto Rico, an island incorporated within U.S. sovereignty but not within the U.S. Union? Why was it not as problematic as Cuba? What about the Dominican Republic, a key territory for experimenting with the instruments of Dollar Diplomacy? Here is where the U.S. conception of an unending cycle of revolutions and debt was best exemplified. What about Nicaragua, a country which produced the first type of violent anti-Americanism known (*Sandinismo*), twenty-five years before the Cuban Revolution? My point is: placing Cuba within the strategic thinking of the United States about the Caribbean and Central America might have served to gauge more accurately the exceptionality of U.S. - Cuban relations. In other words: it is likely that representations about Cuba worked in the meta-discourse about the possibilities of progress-cum-civilization in the Caribbean and Central America, a region considered part of the "American Mediterranean" that contained the most "backward" nations on the hemisphere.

Lately, I have been writing in support of Critical Hemispheric Studies, a sort of a return to Inter-American Studies but from the critical edge of race, gender, and marginal nationalities. In this connection, it would have been very interesting to interrogate the sources about the place of “Cuba” in the Hemispheric (American) imagination. For writers from many Latin American countries have contributed to shape the image of Cuba, particularly of Revolutionary Cuba. From an original outpost of the Spanish empire, Cuba emerged to nationhood as a late-comer in relation to other Latin American republics. How these other nations saw Cuban’s aspirations to self-determination is a story that still needs to be told. Were they supportive of Cubans’ critique of U.S. intervention and of the Platt Amendment? Had Cuba acquired the respect of Latin American sister republics when the Pan-American conference convened at Habana in 1928?

The Habana conference (1928) marked an inflection in U.S. policies towards Latin America. Here, the U.S. listened to the insistent demand from Latin American representatives that the U.S. should stop its interventions in the region and that the Pan-American Union should operate on a multilateral basis. This conference might have been the origin of a reconsideration of hemispheric relations that led to the formulation of Good Neighbor policy c.1930. These outsiders (Latin American intellectual-statesmen) were probably also trafficking in metaphors about the U.S. and about Cuba. To them, the moral logic of the U.S. Empire did not resonate well. During most Pan-American conferences before the formation of the O.A.S. Latin American nations defended a position of absolute non-intervention, fearing that any concession in this regard could be taken by the Big Brother as a permission to temporarily intervene in their politics, societies, and economies. Interestingly, this position of absolute non-intervention did not consider seriously the case of intervention in defense of the weak, be they children, women, dissident intellectuals, victims kidnapped by guerrillas, or those “disappeared” by military regimes. Yet, at various points intellectuals and politicians of Latin America sided with the arguments presented by U.S. statesmen and politicians in defense of certain humanitarian principles or doctrines of international law, but fell short of authorizing U.S. intervention in countries of the hemisphere to sustain these principles or doctrines. The common position of Latin American representatives to Pan-American meetings and conferences was to demand a collective, multilateral treatment of these issues, and then pass some not-binding resolution.

d) On Historiography and useful Knowledge

An illuminating aspect of the work of Professor Pérez is his critical appraisal of the historiography produced in the context of Empire. At various points in the book he points out that historians replicated the master-narrative of empire, using the same justifications, arguments, and apparent “truths”. This historiography was “useful knowledge” to the extent that added confirmation to the moral understanding of U.S. power-holders and contributed thus to disguise self-interest under the form of higher purposes (humanity and civilization). History contributed to the project of empire, by erasing the agency of Cuban soldiers in the making of their own independence. The counter-argument, timidly whispered by Cuban officials during the occupation, was only fully exposed in the post-WWII period. Revisionist historians first and revolutionaries later presented 1898 as a ‘secured victory’ stolen by the U.S. occupation forces. They saw the U.S. invasion as the

frustration of Cuban self-determination. As Castro later claimed, the war of independence came to completion only with the 1959 Revolution.

This parallel and mutually re-enforcing march of Empire and History should be praised as a valuable approach to understand the cultural logic of U.S. imperialism. For many historians of U.S. foreign relations leave historians' responsibility aside when examining the formation of empire. Professor Pérez is right in putting the historians of the war of 1898 together with the publicists, the author of travel narratives, the war memorialists, the playwrights, and the filmmakers. They were all complicit in the making of imperial reasons. Pérez's contribution opens up interesting questions. What delayed the response of local historians to the narrative of empire? Was there such a thing as a collaborative intelligentsia? What were the obstacles to the development of Cuban History?

Readers will find it surprising that Professor Pérez's analysis of Cuban images jumps from the 1920s to concentrate on the Cuban revolution and its aftermath. In between, there is a major vacuum (no mention of the Machado regime, for example), only tempered by the short mention of Grau San Martín and some historians and cultural critics of the 1940s and 1950s. There is a passing comment to State Department psychological profiles of Cubans in the 1940s, and a bit more on advertisements about Cuba in the 1920s, but not a whole lot more. The texts that helped the dissemination of U.S. business interests in Cuba during these years presented the island as a "land of opportunity." But this apparently was not in conflict with prior metaphors of political immaturity. During the Revolution, Fidel Castro's rhetoric and actions are given primacy over other actors in the revolution. The figure of Che Guevara is mysteriously absent in this narrative. Though preceded by historians and cultural critics (such as Tamargo and Roig de Leuchsenring), it was Castro who set right the historical record regarding the war of 1898. Pérez argues that the Cuban Revolution was the event that restored Cuban agency to the meaning of 1898.

As an admirer of the author's previous works, I can only congratulate Pérez on this wonderful book. In particular, I want to emphasize the importance of this book for the cultural studies of U.S. -Latin American relations. Pérez has condensed in a powerful narrative written with passion and clear language, his thoughts about how Cuba impacted the U.S. imagination and about the enduring legacy of the war of 1898 in the moral logic of U.S. imperialism. The supporting evidence for his claims, particularly for the period 1820-1906, is overwhelming. Implicit in his argument is a critique of the complicity of knowledge (historiography) with Empire that I found especially illuminating. I would have liked the author to engage with the question of the Caribbean and South America as they shaped United States' visions of Cuba, but this by no means diminishes the soundness, importance and brilliancy of this book. On the matter of language and empire, I favored views that connect better the production of cultural representations with the material basis of U.S. imperial civilization. After all, the exportation of an "American"-way-of-life, the same as the "American" system of government cannot be detached from its economic and technological foundations. The Latin American alleged inability to operate machines has been fundamental to the formation of the self-appointed superiority of the United States in the hemisphere. Also high in my wish list is the question of how the transition between formal

and informal empire in Cuba resonated on the rhetoric of U.S. imperialism. But this is probably the matter for another book.

In early February, 2009, former vice president Dick Cheney again appealed to the tactics of fear with regard to U.S. foreign policy--a vague, emotional nationalist appeal, indicating the likelihood of more Al-Qaeda attacks if the U.S. government did not continue to pursue aggressive, anti-terrorist activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo, the United States, and elsewhere. Such appeals have been common currency in recent U.S. history; the appeals, however, tend to drive out reason, reality, and critical thought.

J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor of History, Louis A. Pérez, Jr., locates an early instance when U.S. foreign policies became detached from reality. His challenging, insightful, and comprehensive book, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*, explains the roots of U.S. disagreement with the government of Fidel Castro in Cuba. Pérez is arguably the most original and competent scholar of Cuban history in the United States. His book has the potential to be an epoch-changing work, if it is widely read and its ideas reach those in power. Unfortunately, this call to reformulate U.S.-Cuban relations is unlikely to happen because inaction costs less energy and is safer—politically and intellectually. But for those willing to risk a little, the trip through Pérez’s analysis of U.S.-Cuban relations since the early nineteenth century promises a rewarding adventure.

Devising a demanding research model, Pérez examined a wide range of public and popular records from the 1820s to the present. He gathered evidence beyond the traditional public documents and popular press. He located important material in popular magazines, song lyrics, poetry, theater pieces, sermons, and cartoons. Further, he exposed the changing metaphors and stereotypes of politicians, diplomats, journalists, religious leaders, and historians--those people who had formed and shaped U.S. views and policies toward Cuba in the past 180 years. These metaphors were repeated in various forms so frequently that they became common knowledge that offered quick and painless guides to policies. This knowledge displaced the need for historical narrative or analysis. Pérez’s metaphorical representation meant U.S. leaders of all kinds did not have to respond to economic, political, even security aspects in a reasoned, logical manner.

As the goals of U.S. leaders changed, the metaphorical images of Cubans adjusted. Prior to the war of 1898, the initial position of the Cubans, which was that of a noble people subjugated by despicable Spaniards, promoted a morally righteous cause for U.S. government intervention in the island’s affairs. For the subsequent sixty years, the metaphor for Cubans depreciated to that of waifs, orphans, children, and the downtrodden. These new metaphors justified the perpetuation of U.S. control of the island and its inhabitants. After three unproductive generations of U.S. assistance to educate and uplift the downtrodden and abused “children” [Cuba], the revolutionary movement of 1959 headed by Fidel Castro reclaimed the right of Cubans to govern their own island. And this transformation occurred without thanks or subservience to U.S. feelings. This thankless and incomprehensible alteration quickly exasperated the patience of U.S. authorities. U.S. leaders generated new metaphors of the Cubans as communists and dupes. Their altered

metaphor for Castro changed from a child-like person to an “insane” (pp. 241-42, 249-50) leader.

This study carries a large burden. “The U.S. experience with Cuba had a defining impact on the sense of purpose with which the Americans would project their power abroad,” Pérez argues, adding that “the Americans fixed their place and defined their purpose in the world, attributes that were subsequently transmuted into the very moral logic of the U.S. imperial project.” (p. 2) This suggests that U.S.-Cuban relations guided the course of U.S. imperialism.

We can redistribute some of the burden because earlier Americans used similar metaphors to define Indians everywhere and Hispanics along the south and southwestern borders. Still, the thesis of this study is, in Pérez’s words: “Americans embraced imperialism principally by way of an accumulated stock of metaphorical constructs, mostly as a set of figurative depictions arranged in the form of a narrative to represent national purpose. This was metaphor as the principal means through which a people persuaded themselves of the beneficence of their purpose and the propriety of their conduct, that is, the wherewithal to sustain the self-confidence and moral certainty so central to the maintenance of systems of domination.” (p. 4) This metaphorical representation concealed “the existence of empire from the imperial body politic.” (p. 4) The Americans learned to separate purpose from practice.

Pérez’s logical, thorough, and intelligent argument regarding U.S.-Cuban relations is persuasive, but, in some aspects, Pérez may assign too much pioneering influence to this metaphorical construct. Metaphor influenced U.S. relations with other countries besides Cuba. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the metaphors of Cubans that formed the basis for U.S. expansionist argument could be found in various sources in regard to Indians, Hispanics, and Asians encountered in Hawaii, China, Siam, and elsewhere. The constructed metaphors “suggest in form and function a creation myth, that is, the ‘birth’ of a new international entity, charged with salvation of the world. The rationale of American imperialism was inscribed in a master narrative that propounded unabashedly a stance of moral superiority: Americans given to selfless service to mankind, without ulterior motive, without selfish intent.” (p. 7) And the consequence of metaphor was twisted. Pérez notes that “precisely because the pursuit of national interest was imagined as enactment of moral purpose, the Americans could plausibly demand the world to acquiesce to the purity of their motives. They concluded that other people had no cause to doubt their intentions or oppose their policies.” (p. 7) Quite commonly, the U.S. demonizes the opposition whether internal or external. In a recurring contradiction, often the alleged struggle for freedom condemned all objectives or alternative viewpoints that impugned U.S. motives and purpose.

Demonizing has soothing qualities and reinforces a sense of moral superiority. Commonly, as Pérez argues, “those who would challenge the authenticity of American altruism, those who opposed the goals of American generosity, were necessarily evildoers and mischief-makers, misinformed or else malcontents given to doing bad things, and by definition deemed to be enemies of humanity.” (p. 7) A tsunami of self-generated moral rectitude

swamps critics; and fear tactics, name-calling, and sarcasm predominates in discussion. The French and Germans were condemned for following a different course in Iraq in 2002 and 2003, based upon honest and well-supported alternative information.

The logic of his exhaustive research leads Pérez to the conclusion that U.S. leaders saw empire as virtue. He summarizes the steps: “The proposition of beneficent intent and benign motive in defense of freedom and liberty in the world at large, very much derived from the experience of 1898, served to ascribe moral purpose to political conduct. It was a powerful self-confirming proposition, from which to defend empire as a matter of principle and expand power as a defense of virtue.” (pp. 7-8) This analysis may place too much emphasis upon Cuba in U.S. metaphorical representation. As a minor corrective caveat, well-established policies--Manifest Destiny and Monroe Doctrine--incorporated, in a general way, rested on similar metaphors.

As an explanation of the Spanish-Cuban-American war, Pérez outlines an argument: “Belief in moral discharge as national purpose developed into an enduring legacy of 1898 and passed into the master narrative of historical scholarship. . . [and U.S.] historians engaged unabashedly in a celebration of the selfless magnanimity with which the United States went to war in 1898 and subsequently attended to the well-being of the world at large.” (p. 9) He cites many prominent politicians, historians, officials, and journalists who repeated the metaphor-based master narrative in their histories (pp. 8-10, 93, 172-73, 194-195, 222-23 where he quotes more than a score of historians from Woodrow Wilson, Richard Leopold, Foster Rhea Dulles, to Frank Friedel). As a historian, this is both deeply saddening and, unfortunately, enlightening.

Since the U.S. expectation of supervising Cuba rested on its claim of liberating the Cubans from Spanish rule [here the reader might want to consult Louis Pérez’s *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (1998)], the U.S. historical narrative of liberating Cuba had to overlook, even deny, the fundamental role of Cuban troops as preparers and participants in the events around Santiago. Even a cursory study raises serious doubts about the U.S. interpretation. There was not a casualty or death among the U.S. troops landing near Santiago, Cuba. Why? The Cuban insurgents had cleared the area of Spanish troops. One could only imagine the altered history of the Allied invasion of Normandy in World War II, if the Allies had not suffered a single casualty. The fact that the Cubans made the conquest seem so easy, only fed the U.S. self-image of moral and real superiority and destiny.

Ignoring the Cubans’ vital role in the defeat of the Spanish was not unique. Popular U.S. historical narratives grant leading roles in defeating the Germans in World War II to Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, George Patton, Omar Bradley, the Normandy invasion, and the march to the Rhine River. There is little space in U.S. World War II memory for text or monuments honoring Marshal G. K. Zhukov and the other principal Soviet Army military leaders who commanded the troops that destroyed or captured the vast bulk of the German soldiers, tanks, artillery, and equipment lost during the war. But this is part of the magic of metaphor. Pérez reminds us of “the capacity of metaphor to reproduce premise as proof.” (p. 22) In 2002 and 2003, when the U.S. government was unhappy with the French, U.S.

officials failed to recall in gratitude that France had “granted” us freedom in the manner we did for Cuba in 1898. Seventy-five percent of the “colonial” land and sea forces at Yorktown in October 1781 were French. The British commander, Lord Cornwallis, tried to surrender to the French commander who, however, graciously and wisely directed him to George Washington. U.S. leaders expected gratitude from Cuba but gave none to France.

In several marvelous and reflective passages, Pérez outlines the U.S. use of metaphor and images: “Metaphor has been central to the premise of empire. It has served as a source of plausible purpose [which was] . . . self-explanatory and self-confirming, thereupon transacting the exercise of power as an obligation of duty and a deed of disinterest. . . . Metaphor concealed the ideological content of language, a process that purported to persuade without the need to explain and validate the propriety of power as a premise of normality . . . with domination depicted as deliverance, self-interest represented as selfless purpose, and subjugation rendered as salvation.” (p. 15) When combined with the rich body of examples and detail, he presents a credible explanation for the importance of self-interest, domination, and subjugation in U.S. foreign policy.

Part of the attraction of Pérez’s text is his knack for alliteration, paired words, or succinct phrases which generate unexpected insight into obscure matters. One phrase he used was particularly enlightening. It clarified the tension between Cuban and American viewpoints on the 1890s: “The Americans judged their actions by their motives; the Cubans judged North American motives by their actions.” (p. 182) Pérez’s phrasing illuminates a century of misunderstanding clearly but forcefully and poetically.

Metaphorical representation allowed the U.S. government “to advance a plausible claim to territory governed by Spain, . . . to create a parallel reality by which they persuaded themselves—and sought to persuade others—that Cuba rightfully belonged to them, not . . . as a matter of self-interest but as a function of providential purpose and moral propriety.” (p. 18) Even U.S. seizure of Guantánamo Bay in Art. VII of the Platt Amendment was “to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof.” (p. 21) As Pérez succinctly put it: “Self-congratulation begot self-admiration.” (p. 192)

Metaphorical representation explains at least some of the historiographical conflicts in diplomatic history. The academic debate circles around common themes—realism, idealism, radicalism, modernism, and post-modernism. The debate calls upon concepts that are “ideological markers”—the slogan of free market capitalism versus socialism-communism (as if the only dichotomy possible), or democracy versus militarism or authoritarianism. This debate, however, ignores the most common characteristic—according to Louis Pérez—reliance upon metaphor, and actually weak, inappropriate metaphors and mixed metaphors—that depicted unreality and ill-defined U.S. relations with Cuba (and Pérez suggests other areas as well). Wise people, leading politicians, and clever analysts hardly ever notice the unreal nature of much of the debate. However, Pérez’s thesis questions the foundation and the fundamentals of U.S. foreign policy and points to reality.

U.S. opinion leaders, politicians, and governmental officials used a body of metaphors to represent Cuba “at the door,” a neighbor, in the neighborhood, some variation of John Quincy Adams’s “a natural appendage,” or as ripe fruit--apples, pears, or plums--that are ready to fall to the United States through gravity. Neighbor meant a value system. As Pérez points out, it “was a construct informed with notions of charity, duty, and responsibility, and because these were notions upon which only the Americans could reasonably act, the metaphor served to disguise power exercised as a matter of self-interest.” (pp. 32-33)

Apparently Pérez had no difficulty finding numerous metaphors for a good neighbor or good samaritan who helped those nearby. He found that “the United States was singular in the degree to which it so thoroughly obscured the distinction between selfless purpose and self-interest.” (p. 174) Early during the first intervention (1899-1902), President William McKinley assured the President of the Cuban Republic in Arms, Salvador Cisneros: “All that I have done, was for your own good.” (p. 20) In Pérez’s analysis, McKinley spoke a telling phrase because it represented a fundamental problem: “Metaphorical representation fashioned a particular narrative mode [that] . . . accommodated self-deception and minimized self-doubt.”(p. 21)

There was near total detachment between metaphorical representation and reality. One set of cartoons and metaphors indicated the high death rate (using 80% commonly) in Spanish concentration camps in Cuba. The accuracy of the textual items and images were unverified, but still used to justify U.S. intervention on the basis that the concentration camps were inhumane and deadly. Nevertheless, only a few months later, in the Philippines, the U.S. military built concentration camps to control the population.

Various metaphors on the Spanish-Cuban civil war served U.S. policy and national interest. Prior to 1898, cartoons, images, and written forms described the U.S. need to protect Cubans, especially Cuban women, from Spanish forces; after the 1898 peace treaty, U.S. cartoons and written forms called for U.S. protection of Cuban women from Cuban men. The second set of metaphors of Cubans as children rendered the proposition of Cuban sovereignty as untenable. These metaphors justified the Platt Amendment and the permanent U.S.-Cuban treaty. They strengthened the decision to deny Cubans sovereignty or independence because denying children agency or autonomy was judged to be in the best interest of the children. The U.S. denial of independence to Cuba was a morally proper action.

The metaphorical representation of liberating Cuba from Spanish rule encouraged U.S. self-deception. “The Americans would thereafter stake their claim to world leadership on the basis of moral superiority,” and, as Pérez learned, “the use of power not for territorial aggrandizement or commercial advantage, but for the service of humanity, just like they had done in Cuba.” (p. 94) But in fact, Pérez points out, “U.S. military forces arrived to Cuba neither as allies of the Cuban army nor as agents of Cuban independence. They arrived to advance national interests of the United States.” (pp. 98-99) And as we know, Leonard Wood acknowledged privately to President Roosevelt in 1901 that the Platt Amendment removed any remnant independence from Cuba.

In summarizing the differing perspectives of Cubans and Americans as a consequence of metaphorical representation, Pérez constructs a set of delightful dichotomies: “What Americans celebrated as deeds of selflessness the Cubans denounced as acts of self-interest. The Americans expected gratitude; the Cubans harbored grievances. The Americans remembered 1898 as something done for Cubans; the Cubans remembered 1898 as something done to them. The Americans referred to the Teller Amendment as proof of beneficent intent; the Cubans pointed to the Platt Amendment as evidence of the self-serving purpose.” (p. 214) A few pages later, Pérez extends the succinct, fine language to continue his story: “The narrative of 1898 was a triumph of appearance over reality, more about self-representation than self-interrogation. The meaning of the war was inscribed into the national consciousness as a narrative that privileged popular sentiment over political conduct, intent over outcome, and ideals as motive—not interests. The Americans’ capacity for self-deception was exceeded only by their insistence that the Cubans, too, subscribed to the deception—and should be grateful.” (p. 227) There seems to be some relationship between Pérez’s metaphorical representation and a frequently noted American exceptionalism. At least both are avenues to escape logical explanation.

Consistently, there was a lack of historical perspective and too much unreality and arrogance in U.S. conduct toward the Castro government. As Pérez notes, the Americans were “without historical depth perception [and hence] unable to comprehend that the Cubans were addressing a history, not a policy. Indeed, in the early weeks and months it was all about history.” (p. 244)

Pérez links the current U.S. war in Iraq to the U.S.-Cuban story. Again, in Iraq, U.S. officials publicly led the discussion to metaphorical representation—in this case a war led by terrorists. He observes that “a war of choice in Iraq obtained validation by way of metaphor: the war against terror. Once the metaphor passed unchallenged, the president could proceed to govern as commander in chief, civil liberties were subordinated to national security, and national security justified torture, suspension of habeas corpus, and extralegal wiretaps. It all began with a metaphor.” (p. 270) It was, of course, not a war against terror, but against religiously inspired Islamic factions—the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other groups. Metaphorical representation shut out independent, self-reliant, critical, and free thought.

Americans have long labeled World War II as “the good war”—at least in so far as any war can be good. The twisted metaphor of a “war on terror” justified an unprovoked war on Iraq. Terror has always been a part of warfare. The U.S. government is not opposed to terror. U.S. forces have used barrage artillery fire, carpet bombing, carpet-fire bombing, screaming bombs, nuclear weapons, napalm weapons, and other weapons meant to instill fear and terror on civilian populations. The U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, and various other conflicts have killed hundreds of times more civilians than were killed at the Twin Trade Towers. Through its justification for war against Iraq, though, the U.S. government rewrote history. The new history suggests that Nazi Germany (in Poland )and Japan (at Pearl Harbor)conducted legitimate preventative wars. That seems morally and

historically unacceptable. But here, metaphors twisted history, a national commitment to civil liberties, and opposition to the use of torture.

And Louis Pérez raises another serious reservation about the U.S. metaphorical representation. It puts the United States on the wrong side for the promotion of self-determination, independence, and democracy. He warns of an unsavory course for the U.S. government: “The Americans acted purposefully throughout the final years of the twentieth century and the early ones of the twenty-first century, determined to recover power over Cuba as a matter of the natural order of things. . . . All in all, it was an astonishing presumption of entitlement, among both policy makers and officials distributing the money and the academics and administrators accepting the money—always no doubt in the best interest of the Cuban people. That the Americans in the twenty-first century could presume that planning the future of Cuba without the participation of any of the eleven million people who lived on the island was an attitude worthy of the arrogance of their predecessors in the nineteenth century.” (p. 274) Arrogance and disregard for another nation and its people highlights the unreal nature of the twisted metaphor.

While reading about U.S. foreign relations, I often confront a shocking gap in logic and reason. What does one think of a society that condemns concentration camps as inhumane and soon thereafter opens its own concentration camps? How can one explain a U.S. policy that lauds and praises its conduct in bringing liberty, freedom, and self-government to Cuba, and then quickly condemns a Cuban government that works to formulate those policies it finds best for Cuban society? Pérez has given us an impressive study of U.S.-Cuban relations that persuasively interprets U.S.-Cuban relations and, simultaneously, helps us generally to understand U.S. foreign policy.

**L**ouis A. Perez has long been recognized as the preeminent American historian working on Cuba. This book will certainly add to that reputation.

The book's principal thesis is that from the beginning, Americans have tended to deal with Cubans not as they are but as the Americans imagined them to be. And how could it have been otherwise when the overriding American interest in the island was in acquiring it, adding it to the Union? As John Quincy Adams put it in 1823, this was "an object of transcendent importance to the political and commercial interests of our Union. The annexation of Cuba to our federal republic will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself." (25)

This down through the years was the common view in the United States, especially among American political leaders. Hence, Perez notes that: "The North American relationship with Cuba was above all an instrumental one. Cuba – and Cubans- were a means to an end, to be engaged as a means to fulfill North American needs and accommodate North American interests. The Americans came to their knowledge of Cuba principally by way of representations entirely of their own creation, which is to suggest that the Cuba the Americans chose to engage was, in fact, a figment of their own imagination and a projection of their needs." ( 22-23)

The American goal was that Cuba become part of the Union. But few Cubans agreed with that. Among the landed, slave-owning wealthier classes there were some who favored annexation to the U.S., figuring they'd have a better chance that way to hold onto their riches. But they were a tiny minority. The vast majority wanted independence, and they fought a bloody war against the Spanish (1868-78) to attain it, not to become part of the Union. The U.S. helped the Cuban patriots not one iota during this struggle. Indeed, the U.S. position was that Cuba must not fall into other hands – and this meant not only the hands of some other power, but the hands of the Cubans themselves. (44) Cubans, then, had to be seen not as they were, but as the Americans imagined them to be, or wished them to be, i.e., as wishing to be part of the Union.

As the final war of independence began in 1895 and then rolled on, it became increasingly clear that the Cubans might indeed win. It was in fact to prevent this that the United States entered the war in 1898. The image increasingly put forward in the U.S. media, however, was that the Cuban people were crying out for the U.S. to save them from Spanish tyranny and violence. (57-58) Cuba was portrayed as a damsel in distress and the U.S. as the good neighbor intent on rescuing her. (71).

It was clear, however, that not all Cubans agreed, so those who opposed North American acquisition of their country were portrayed as "rabble rousers." (100) *The Washington Post* even described them as a "handful of professional agitators, whom in all probability, we shall have to hang or exile if we want to set up civilized institutions in Cuba." ( 100)

The Cubans had the Spanish virtually on the ropes even before U.S. entry into the war. Thus, the U.S. quickly completed Spain's defeat, signed a peace treaty with her which left the Cubans completely to one side, occupied Cuba and then began trying to convince the Cubans that what they really wanted was annexation to the United States. But that did not fly. The Cubans did not want to become part of the Union. Indeed, they felt that U.S. intervention had robbed them of what they'd fought for, i.e., their independence. The Americans therefore turned from pushing annexation to insisting that the Cubans accept the Platt Amendment, which turned Cuba into a U.S. protectorate. Those who opposed the Platt Amendment, the majority of Cubans, were portrayed as naughty children. (130).

The Platt Amendment was abrogated in 1934, but Cuba continued to be dominated by, and the Cubans to feel themselves to be dominated by, the United States. They did, that is, until the triumph of Fidel Castro's Revolution in 1959. As Raul Castro put it: "Now, with this Revolution, with this civil war that ended on January 1, we have done nothing less than to finish the War of Independence begun nearly one hundred years ago by our *mambises*." (220-221)

Another Cuban writer, Armando J. Florez Ibarra, went further: "We are witness to the vindication of the triumph that the United States, through its armed intervention in 1898, cheated us of....We have finally liberated ourselves from the complex of a protectorate." (221)

The United States, of course, was appalled. As Perez notes; "A sense of betrayal settled over the Americans, as they recalled anew how at the expense of their lives and expenditure of their treasure Cuba was liberated; for this they believed themselves deserving of treatment better than they were receiving from the Castro government." (223).

As Perez puts it so well: "The incoherence of the American response to the policies and politics of the Cuban revolution in 1959 must also in part be understood as a matter of cognitive dissonance: the inability to order into coherent narrative form a comprehension of developments so profoundly counterintuitive and utterly inconceivable as a Cuban challenge to North American power. There was nothing in the available stock of North American knowledge of Cuba to enable the Americans to comprehend the forces released by the triumph of the revolution: a soaring self-confidence, rising expectations, a heightened anticipation of national fulfillment, but most of all a powerful sense of empowerment. Cubans in 1959 were a people who believed themselves to have recovered their history and reclaimed their historical agency." (244)

But to the Americans, this was not the way it was supposed to be! And in large part it has been this sense of the rightful order of things violated that has made Cuba such an emotional issue for the Americans, and, in a sense, encouraged them to hold onto the same old metaphors for some fifty years now. How else to explain the fact that the Bush administration's transition project set out to plan the future of Cuba as though that was somehow their right and as though they knew what the Cuban people wanted? As Perez brilliantly sums it up: "That the Americans in the twenty-first century could presume that

planning the future of Cuba without the participation of any of the 11 million people who lived on the island was an attitude worthy of the arrogance of their predecessors in the nineteenth century.” (274)

U.S. policy toward Cuba over the past half-century, then, has addressed figments of our imagination rather than hard reality and has been based on emotion rather than careful analysis. No wonder that it has been a total failure and has virtually no support in the rest of the world. Other governments regard it, at best, as an eccentricity. But the question for us now, in 2009, with a new President in office, is whether he can break free of this near-psychosis of the past and move toward a more sensible policy toward Cuba – or find that he also is its prisoner?

Response by Louis A. Perez, Jr., University of North Carolina

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I wish first to express my appreciation for the generosity of comments and the thoughtfulness of purpose with which Professors Dennis Merrill, Ricardo Salvatore, Thomas Schoonover, and Wayne Smith prepared their reviews. I very much also wish to thank Professor Thomas Maddux for arranging this engaging H-Diplo Roundtable. That the format provides an opportunity for the author to respond to the reviewers acts to alter the experience of reading the reviews. The process functions something akin to responding to written evaluations of an unpublished manuscript requested by a prospective publisher. And indeed, had I had the benefit of some of the insights offered by Merrill, Salvatore, Schoonover, and Smith in the form of referee reports, the completed manuscript would have taken slightly different turns at different points.

*Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* bears discernible traces of its time and place of writing. The book was completed between 2002 and 2007 in the United States. For scholars and students of imperialism -- indeed, for all who give more than casual attention to U.S. foreign policy and foreign relations -- these years were an extraordinary time. The alacrity with which the Americans invaded Iraq and the equanimity with which the Americans acquiesced to the laying waste of a nation were nothing less than astonishing. From the massive high-tech destruction of cities -- "shock and awe" -- to individual instances of "enhanced interrogation" -- shock and torture -- the American determination to impose its will on another people recognized few constraints.

The spectacle of imperialism in our time, with its attending use of force and application of violence, surrogate military actors and clientele political leaders, with official graft and incompetence surpassed only by official hubris and arrogance, was very much about control of representation, what we have come to know in current jocular vernacular as "spin," that is, the effort to shape political meaning through control of language.

The degree to which Americans actively supported or passively acquiesced to the domination of other people -- past and present -- has been transacted principally as a matter of moral purpose, and the construction of moral purpose is mostly about control of representation, by way of metaphor and euphemism, through analogy and allegory. And thus it was that the invasion and subsequent military occupation of Iraq -- so rich with metaphor and euphemism as the principal method through which to represent conquest and domination -- suggested new analytical possibilities with which to examine the North American relationship with Cuba, which was also about conquest and domination.

The larger question, of course, has to do with the ways that the U.S. exercise of power over other peoples is inscribed with the premise of self-evident beneficence, the ways that Americans represent their purpose to themselves, which is say the way by which they persuade themselves of the virtue of their purpose. Salvatore is certainly correct to point out that the Americans are not the first to deploy self-serving metaphors. As I indicate in the discussion of the depiction of conquered peoples as children, there is a long tradition of infantilizing the Other. Salvatore is also correct to call attention to the ambiguity of the very proposition of an "American imagination." If, in fact, however, we cannot speak of an "American imagination," can we then speak of an

American foreign policy, or American foreign relations, or American interests? And if we can indeed speak of the latter as proper categories, how are they imagined? And by whom are they imagined? Subaltern voices in the United States, including African-Americans, and Asian-Americans, and Native-Americans, and Mexican-Americans -- a list which to which could added other hyphenated Americans: disabled-Americans, gay- and lesbian-Americans, Jewish-Americans, among many others -- are not explicitly identified in the larger category of "American." Neither are they specifically excluded: they are instead assumed to be part of and participants in the polity whose leaders act in behalf of vaguely understood national interests. I recognize the conundrum. Quite apart from the issue of subaltern voices, however, that is, those voices that may or may not subscribe to the imperial project, the history of imperialism also records elite voices of anti-imperialism from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century. But to the extent that imperialism proceeds undeterred and unimpeded, do these voices matter? Certainly they matter to scholars and intellectuals who live and work inside the imperial state, and often for sound intellectual reasons and good political motives. But for those peoples who fall victim to imperialism, well-intentioned dissent within the imperial polity is a mute point.

The category of "American" in the book refers generally to the engaged public at large and especially the people who presume to speak for and act on behalf of national interests of the United States, the policy-makers and the power-holders, people with access to power and influence over power. These are constantly shifting actors and agents, to be sure, and certainly the composition of any given alignment of power shifts with changing circumstances. As Salvatore properly suggests, the choice of any text is indeed -- by the very act of selection -- only a fragment of public opinion. But if it can be determined that this fragment of public opinion contributed to the totality of the policy, we have then established an analytical framework to examine the source of perceptions, the means of representations, and the expectation of outcomes.

These issues speak directly to the insights offered by Merrill. Attention to the linguistic dimensions of American policy formulation provides an opportunity to probe the discursive framework from which value systems are derived. This is to conceive policy as an artifact, a product of social circumstance, culturally derived and ideologically driven which, when turned in on itself, can be made to yield insight into the assumptions by which policy-makers and power-holders imagine their purpose.

Language matters. To paraphrase Michael Halliday, language is as it is because of its function in the power structure. It may well be that the debate on American foreign relations should attend less to the formulation of policy than to its representation. The use of metaphor and euphemism has often to do with willful self-deception, a way to represent policy and depict purpose in the most self-serving terms. It is the way we lie to ourselves, and more: the way we let ourselves be lied to. Are we not slightly curious about the meaning of "enhanced interrogation" or "civilian contractors?" Is there subliminal comfort in language that spares us from the need to confront the reality of torture and mercenaries? And does that comfort produce the indifference that enables the United States to wreak havoc on the lives of others? Such constructs, as Schoonover correctly observes, are a way to "drive out reason, reality, and critical thought."

What made the Cuban revolution noteworthy was that it overturned the paradigmatic foundation upon which the Americans had exercised power for more than fifty years, the occasion when the

Other seized history on its own terms and dismantled the normative framework upon which U.S. hegemony rested. There is more than passing poignance to Wayne Smith calling attention to the passage on the American inability to arrange developments in Cuba in early 1959 into a coherent narrative order. It was impossible to imagine the inconceivable. As a young Foreign Service officer posted to the U.S. Embassy in Havana during those years, Smith bore witness to change in Cuba and reaction from the United States. We can appreciate the irony of Merrill's well-placed observation that the Cuba-U.S. conflict "boiled down to an utter absence of imagination."

I do indeed hope that the book will serve to point to new research directions, "to shed," as Merrill indicates, "new light on U.S. relations with nations other than Cuba." Salvatore is correct to caution that "imperial metaphors change." They do indeed: over time and from place to place. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have served as incubators of a new generation of metaphors and euphemisms. But it is also true that some metaphors do not change. The Americans continue to infantilize the Other. The persistence of the bicycle as representation of colonial relationships is no less remarkable. Apparently old metaphors can perform new deceptions.

I wholeheartedly agreed with Schoonover's observation that "metaphorical representation explains at least some of the historiographical conflicts in diplomatic history." To confront metaphor brings us face to face with the difficulty of understanding historical circumstances when represented as depictive constructs. I appreciate the attention that Salvatore gives to the matter of historians and historiography, and indeed very much welcome his posing the question of what delayed a critical response "to the narrative of empire," and more pointedly: "Was there such a thing as a collaborative intelligentsia?" It addresses the larger issue of the degree to which we are all implicated in the premise and purpose of the imperial project, past and present. There is certainly sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest that vast numbers of Americans embrace the propriety of using the material resources and the armed forces of the United States to spread democracy. It is something of a national credo, a belief in providential purpose and divine mission—or something like that. It is one of the things that makes Americans American. There may indeed be a change of mood among historians writing about U.S. foreign relations in the last fifty years, especially among those writing from the perspective of the receiving end of American policy. The claim to innocence is no longer tenable.

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