



Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos

By Louis A. Pérez

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For more than two hundred often turbulent years, Americans have imagined and described Cuba and its relationship to the United States by conjuring up a variety of striking images--Cuba as a woman, a neighbor, a ripe fruit, a child learning to ride a bicycle. One of the foremost historians of Cuba, Louis A. Pérez Jr. offers a revealing history of these metaphorical and depictive motifs and discovers the powerful motives behind such characterizations of the island.

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Editorial Review

Review

[A] brilliant and intellectually challenging analysis of the metaphors that have shaped and informed the American view of Cuba over the last 200 years. . . . An essential book for those seriously interested in a deep understanding of Cuba-U.S. relations.--*Progreso-weekly.com*

[This] book needs to be read not only by scholars of U.S.-Cuban relations, but by anyone interested in the self-constructions of the United States.--*New West Indian Guide*

Instructive on imperial-colonial relationships as well as connections between the past and the present. Instructors at all levels will appreciate the breadth of editorial cartoons that Perez provides. . . . One cannot read this work without being aware of the eerie parallels between the American-Cuban experience and that of America's recent role in the war in Iraq; this alone will make Perez's work of interest to many historians today.--*Canadian Journal of History*

Perez draws on politicians' speeches, newspaper editorials and comic strips published over the century and a half before the revolution to show that Cubans were consistently represented not as agents of their own destiny but as innocent victims.--*London Review of Books*

This is exactly the kind of book policymakers and the chattering classes ought to be reading--something beyond the ignorant regurgitations of past thinking.--*Our Man in Boston*

Challenging, insightful, and comprehensive. . . . Perez 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.--Thomas Schoonover, H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews

A worthy addition to the award-winning *oeuvre* of Perez. . . . Will attract a broad readership of those interested in foreign policy, American studies, and Latin American Studies.--*Clio*

In a thought-provoking conclusion, Perez describes how arrogant and infantilizing metaphors from the 19th century continue to shape American policy toward Cuba.--*The Chronicle of Higher Education*

In *Cuba and the American Imagination*, Louis A. Perez Jr. adds to his impressive *oeuvre* on US-Cuba relations in the twentieth century. . . . Compelling. . . . As the potential for change and dialogue between the United States and Cuba appears viable for the first time in decades, Perez's study remains prescient. . . . Perez's argument that metaphors matter and demonstrate hierarchies of power is convincing.--*EIAL: Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe*

Adds to Perez's already impressive body of writing on U.S.-Cuban relations. Those new to his work will be in awe of his deep knowledge of the topic and subtle command of the material. We longtime admirers meanwhile will be reminded why he stands as a doyen of the field.--*Journal of American History*

An engaging and well-researched investigation into metaphors used by US politicians, journalists, and writers to depict Cuba. . . . Essential reading for Cuban experts, and it should be of interest to US and Latin American cultural historians.--*Journal of American Studies*

Quoting both U.S. political leaders and the popular press [and] reproducing many period cartoons, Perez demonstrates that the Cuba that took shape in the American imagination beginning in the early nineteenth century was constructed around metaphors of proximity, neighborhood, and racialism.--*Latin American Research Review*

A quietly ferocious critique of US foreign policy as seen through the lens of Cuban-US relations.--*Virginia Quarterly Review*

Brilliant. . . . Perez's study--the latest in a series of perceptive books on US-Cuba relations by this prolific historian--illustrate[s] how an avid US self-interest was transformed into selfless moral enactment.--*The Nation*

[An] excellent and highly recommended study. . . . One of the most important contributions to the debate about US-Cuban relations. . . . Should be required reading for policymakers, Latin Americanists, and Cuban exiles everywhere.--*Latin American Review of Books*

Both the author and the University of North Carolina Press are to be commended for their publication. This is, in short, a text that will be of great interest to students of American expansionism specifically and to students of empire generally. For scholars of Cuban history, it is a must read.--*American Historical Review*

Argues that Cuba was a laboratory of American imperialism. . . . Skillfully analyses how the metaphor of neighbour and neighbourhood was employed to justify U.S. intervention in Cuba in the late 1890s. . . . Includes a remarkable number of pictorial descriptions of Cuba from a wide range of American newspapers and magazines.--*Times Literary Supplement*

Brilliant. . . . Illustrate[s] how an avid US self-interest was transformed into selfless moral enactment.--*The Nation*

A pivotal book, one making an important tie between social psychology and historical scholarship. . . . Well written and organized. . . . Not only a Latin Americanist but any historical scholar would benefit greatly in reading this book.--*Fides et Historia*

Perez assembles a rich archive of U.S. representations of Cuba, both textual and visual.--*NACLA Report on the Americas*

Perez breaks important new ground by exploring the singular influence of metaphor --linguistic constructions that located US-Cuban relations within the norms of everyday life in US domestic culture. . . . Perez's approach is interdisciplinary and erudite.--Dennis Merrill, H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews

An indispensable study of U.S. policy towards Cuba. . . . A necessary preface for all other analyses of the subject.--*Diplomatic History Review*

Impressive collection of visual material.--*American Literary History*

The writing is elegant and free of jargon. . . . Anyone interested in self-justifying narratives of empire and especially the place of metaphor in shaping those narratives, should read this seminal contribution to inter-American cultural history. --*The Americas*

Review

Perez is our best historian of U.S.-Cuban relations, and this book is in one sense a summation of his distinguished work over the past several decades. It is particularly significant because the U.S.-Cuban relationship is going to have to be fundamentally rethought and reshaped in the near future, and this work not only provides critical information, but also acts as a loud warning about how that debate must not be conducted.--Walter LaFeber, Emeritus, Cornell University

Perez reminds us that the current U.S. policies toward Cuba and the hype about how the U.S. should 'manage' Cuba after Fidel are informed by deeply entrenched metaphors from the previous two centuries. This history reveals the ongoing blindness to social and political realities that such metaphors encourage. *Cuba in the American Imagination* is a timely addition to Perez's magisterial oeuvre.--Amy Kaplan, University of Pennsylvania

From its intervention in Cuba's war of independence from Spain to the naming of a 'transition coordinator' for the post-Castro period, the United States has long reacted to Cuba as a neuralgic issue. Louis Perez helps us understand the recurrent American attitudes of entitlement, domination, disappointment, and shock that have framed U.S. policies, and shows how U.S. experience with Cuba has shaped the broader world reputation of the United States. One can hope that tomorrow's policymakers will learn from this illuminating account.--Abraham F. Lowenthal, University of Southern California

From the Inside Flap

For more than two hundred often turbulent years, Americans have imagined and described Cuba and its relationship to the United States by conjuring up a variety of striking images--Cuba as a woman, a neighbor, a ripe fruit, a child learning to ride a bicycle. One of the foremost historians of Cuba, Louis A. Perez Jr. offers a revealing history of these metaphorical and depictive motifs and discovers the powerful motives behind such characterizations of the island.

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