

Under the Cuban Flag: Notions of Indigeneity at the End of the 19th Century

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“Until the Indian marches again, America will limp” (Martí 1977: 195).

Why, in a popular 1897 novel set in Cuba, about United States involvement in the movement for Cuban independence, is there to be found an indigenous community that has survived untouched since the early sixteenth century, when all historical accounts have Caribbean indigenous communities as virtually extinct from soon after the European invasion?

In Frederick Ober’s 1897 novel, Under the Cuban Flag, or the Cacique's Treasure, three United States citizens are landed on the north-east Cuban coast in the bay of Nipe by a boat delivering arms to Cuban rebels. The Captain of the boat describes them to the rebel leader as a “harmless” professor, “who only wants permission to study the natural history of the island”; a military instructor, who has a letter from the Cuban Junta in the States recommending him to General Maceo, but whom the Captain thinks “is sent down here on secret service by the president of the United States, to report on the exact situation”; and a “light-headed Yankee... prospecting for cash” (15-16). Respectively, Professor Brown, Major Carrolton, and Doctor Johnson.¹

This is an adventure story, so there is much spying, suspicion of spying, melodrama, and life-saving. It is also a romance, so the Cuban rebel leader, Santos Gomez, has a sister-in-law, Hortensia, with whom the Major and Professor both immediately fall in love. By this time, the action has moved to the rebel camp on top of El

Yunque. Here the Professor finds a cave that has been used as a burial place for indigenous caciques. They also meet a young boy from Boston, Archie Goodwin, son of a banana merchant, who, in return for saving the life of another infamous rebel, Carlos Lopez, had been sent a gold figurine, made by Indians. Lopez eventually shows the Professor the full extent of the treasure from which this piece was drawn:

Don Carlos thrust his hand in underneath a rock, and drew out an earthen vessel shaped like an ancient amphora....[H]e inverted the amphora, and out rolled a stream of golden trinkets, falling with mellow music upon the shelf of semi-translucent limestone. There were objects like grinning satyrs, beetles, tortoises, little gods with arms extended, heads of men and women, some with crowns, and others with coils of golden hair.... spear and arrow heads, some as broad as the palm of one's hand, and all of gold! Reaching in again, he drew out another earthen amphora, and out of this tumbled figures of golden parrots, fern-leaves, monkeys—all nature seemed to be duplicated in this collection cunningly wrought out by the ancient aboriginal artists. When he had done, there lay before the astonished spectators two shining heaps of almost priceless treasures. (104)

When they emerge from the cave, they see in the distance “the white walls of the port of Baracoa” (79), from which all this “treasure” is destined to leave the island.

The rebels are tricked into believing that the Major is a Spanish spy. He is condemned to death, but rescued by Hortensia, who thereby declares her love for him. The embattled group flees into the mountains of the Sierra del Cristal, guided by the maid, Juanita, who is a mestiza descendant of the aboriginal inhabitants, and who still speaks the Indian language. Eventually, they enter a deep ravine and are ambushed and captured by Indians, carrying bows and arrows, wearing only breech-

cloths and feathers, and with their hair in scalp-locks—in other words conforming fully to North American depictions of American Indians at this time. There are signs in the mountains of ancient cannons and arquebuses.

The chief saw that the Major's attention was attracted by these antiquities . . . and in good but archaic Spanish briefly told him their history. It seems that a Spanish general, some time in the fifteenth century, learning that the Indians had fled to this retreat in the mountains, invaded the forest with a force of men and artillery. He never went back, nor were any of his men ever seen again by their countrymen. Led astray by false guides at first, then hemmed in and ambuscaded, the last of the Spaniards perished at the very verge of the Indian valley. "But," explained the chief, with a shrewd twinkle in his black eyes, "we did not kill the horses that drew the cannon, and we lured them on and on, until very near the spot you saw them; then we fell upon the remnant of soldiers and put the last one to death. That was the last time our country was invaded; no white man has ever been here since. Long ago we used the last pinch of powder—long since fired the last arquebuse. Now we depend upon our arrows, spears and lances; but we kill not much game, for our gardens and the fields and forests give us enough for our wants."

"But I thought—all the world believes—that the last of the Indians were killed by the Spaniards many, many years ago," said the Major.

"Yes? That is good; that is why we have been preserved, instead of being hunted like beasts as our ancestors were. It was in Cacique Hauetey's [sic] time that, believing the end was near, our fathers assembled together and took counsel of wisdom. They fled to these mountains, and the Spaniards believed they had all committed suicide, as, indeed, many of the Indians had. Ever

since we have lived here, shut in from the world, knowing nothing of what the world has done for more than three hundred years. You are the first invaders; it was predicted long, long ago that you and the beautiful woman by your side should come; that you should arrive on the eve of an important festival; so we went down to meet you, and lo, here you are! You will never return, neither you nor your lovely companion, but you will not be prisoners; no, as free as the air around us, you shall be, until—.” (205-6)

Drawing on a knowledge of Indian psychology gained from his long campaigns against the Apache and Plains Indians, the Major fears they are going to be sacrificed and that he will need all his cunning to insinuate a different course of action into the chief's mind. The Indians expect a message from the divine Hortensia, which the Major concocts “to the effect that, if the Indians wished to preserve themselves from extermination, they should remain concealed in their stronghold yet another decade, or until another message should acquaint them with the Cacique's wishes. Meanwhile, they should still pursue the paths of peace, carefully refrain from committing bloodshed, and endeavour to improve their material and moral condition” (225).

In a flurry of incidents towards the end of the novel, the Major and Hortensia are married in Key West; the Doctor returns on a filibuster and is captured by the forces of General Weyler, the Spanish commandant; and Carlos brings news of the death of General Maceo, one of the Cuban leaders, betrayed under a flag of truce. The Doctor spells out the novel's message: “If I had the means, I'd fit out a filibuster every month for the assistance of those gallant insurgents fighting over there, in the island we have just left behind. In other words, if our Government hasn't the backbone to assist those people struggling for freedom, right on our very coast, then let our own people take a hand in the game!” (314-5).

In broad terms Under the Cuban Flag is clearly an adventure story for boys in the nineteenth-century tradition of Jules Verne, G. A. Henty, and Mayne Reid, all of whom were popular in the United States and whose work features the same panoply of treasure, old maps, bones, and heroic young westerners; but Ober's detailed topographies, contemporary settings, and historical characters separate his novels from the classic adventures which usually take place in a vague or entirely fictional geography and are usually set back in time. Two features of Under the Cuban Flag are therefore particularly worthy of note: its fictional engagement with political themes of the moment—the insurgent war in Cuba, the persistent filibustering from the United States, the death of Maceo; and, second, its highlighting of the indigenous theme—the treasure of the caciques and the discovery of an aboriginal community which has survived untouched in the mountains since the end of the sixteenth century. I'll deal with the two aspects separately, focussing on the key year of 1897, when the novel was published, before finally moving out from the novel itself to some broader questions.

1897 saw the strengthening of the influential group of U.S. imperialists led by Theodore Roosevelt. At the beginning of the year, Roosevelt wrote to his sister Anna:

I am a quietly rampant “Cuba Libre” man. I doubt whether the Cubans would do very well in the line of self-government; but anything would be better than continuance of Spanish rule. I believe that Cleveland ought now to recognize Cuba’s independence and interfere; sending our fleet promptly to Havana.

There would not in my opinion be very serious fighting; and what loss we encountered would be thrice over repaid by the ultimate results of our action.

(Roosevelt 1951: 573-4 [January 2, 1897])

In May, naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan published the latest in his series of analyses of sea-power, providing the intellectual foundation for Roosevelt's strengthening of the U.S. navy: "In the cluster of island fortresses of the Caribbean is one of the greatest of the nerve centers of the whole body of European civilization; and it is to be regretted that so serious a portion of them now is in hands which not only never have given, but to all appearances never can give, the development which is required by the general interest" (261). In response, Roosevelt wrote a revealing and confidential letter, studded with the prophetic phrase, "if I had my way": Hawaii would be annexed, Spain would be turned out of the Caribbean, the Danish islands would be acquired (607-8 [May 3, 1897]). In November, now as Assistant Secretary to the Navy, and with growing self assurance, he wrote to another correspondent:

I would regard a war with Spain from two standpoints: first, the advisability on the grounds both of humanity and self-interest of interfering on behalf of the Cubans, and of taking one more step toward the complete freeing of America from European dominion; second, the benefit done our people by giving them something to think of which isn't material gain, and especially the benefit done our military forces by trying both the Navy and the Army in actual practice. (717 [November 19, 1897])

While there were obvious limits as to what Roosevelt could say in public, the early death of José Martí in 1895, followed by the military successes of Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo, and then by Maceo's own death in December 1896, had already galvanised popular U.S. interest in events in Cuba. By 1897 there was widespread public support for filibustering, which encountered sporadic official opposition in U.S. ports. One contemporary observer compiled a list of 36 vessels which made 71 expeditions to Cuba between March 1895 and April 1898 (Olivart). Archie Goodwin's

father in Under the Cuban Flag is said to have run a banana-exporting business from Baracoa to Boston, which suggests the career of Capt. John S. Hart, of Philadelphia, one of the largest importers of bananas into the United States, who had substantial investments in such a business, and who, finding it destroyed by the outbreak of the revolution, promptly turned his ships into filibusters; but was eventually tried and convicted in a U. S. court, and imprisoned in Philadelphia (Hill 214; and Wisan 231-2, 291).

The U.S. press—especially the Hearst newspapers—spent much of 1897 looking for a symbol of Cuba to further its campaign for U.S. intervention. It had one false start in February when Hearst’s leading reporter, Richard Harding Davis, filed a story about Clemencia Arango, a woman being expelled from Cuba for carrying dispatches to her brother’s rebel forces, who had been undressed and searched by the Spanish authorities on the boat taking her to Florida. Frederic Remington, safely back in New York, illustrated this story with an imaginative sketch under the headline: “Does Our Flag Shield Women?... Refined Young Women Stripped and Searched by Brutal Spaniards While Under Our Flag on the Olivette” (New York Journal, February 12, 1897). Massive indignation followed until the New York World, the Journal’s chief rival, interviewed Arango on the quay at Tampa and discovered that she had been searched, but by a woman, and with no men present in the room.

Hearst did better with the story of Evangelina Cisneros, the young Cuban woman imprisoned in the Recojidas gaol in Havana after resisting the attentions of a Spanish officer whom she had petitioned for the release of her father, a political prisoner on the Isle of Pines. Evangelina Cisneros became the very symbol of Cuba: “The unspeakable fate to which Weyler has doomed an innocent girl whose only crime is that she defended her honor against a beast in uniform has sent a shudder of horror

through the American people” said the Journal (August 19). That “beast in uniform” “held her father's life and liberty in his hands, and demanded of her the sacrifice of all a true woman holds dear as the price of her father's safety” (August 30).²

Evangelina was described, in various Journal articles over the next month or so, as “young, beautiful, cultured, guilty of no crime save that of having in her veins the best blood in Cuba” (August 17); “a girl of sensational beauty and great refinement...,” possessing “excellence of character, high social position, refinement and exceeding beauty...” (August 18). These descriptions can interestingly be compared to that of Ober’s Cuban heroine: “blue-black hair in a massive coil at the crown of a daintily-poised head; deep-gazing, liquid eyes, with long, curled lashes; a mouth like a heart of a red rose, teeth white as milk, and a complexion of cream and strawberries” (1897: 47). Together Evangelina and Hortensia offered an image of “acceptable” Latin-ity: dark-haired and dark-eyed, but light of complexion and of good breeding.

Dramatically rescued by Karl Decker, the Journal's own reporter, Evangelina arrived in New York on October 13. Two days later there was a reception at Delmonico's followed by a rally in Madison Square attended by 100,000 people: “Karl Decker, tall, stalwart, even ferocious looking, with his six feet two of brawn and muscle, formed a fitting foil to her spirituelle loveliness” (October 17). She was sent off to Washington to meet the President, undertook a tour of the U.S. rallying support for Cuba, and was then swiftly forgotten. The Journal brought out a small book in which she and Decker told their stories, introduced and embellished by Julian Hawthorne:

The desirable component elements are all present. A tropic island, embosomed in azure seas off . . . a cruel war, waged by the minions of despotism against the spirit of patriotism and liberty; a beautiful maiden, risking all for her country, captured, insulted, persecuted, and cast into a loathsome dungeon. None

could be more innocent, constant and adorable than she; none more wicked, detestable and craven than her enemies. All is right and lovable on the one side, all ugly and hateful on the other. As in the old Romances, there is no uncertainty as to which way our sympathies should turn.

The hero, Decker, is described as “a young American of the best and oldest strain, with the Constitution in his backbone and the Declaration of Independence in his eyes.... Beyond his frank and simple bearing was conveyed the impression that here was one who could keep his own counsel: could hide a purpose in the depths of his soul, as a torpedo is hidden in the sea, and explode it at the proper moment in the vitals of his adversary” (Cosío 17-19, 23-4). This was clearly intended to be read as a national self-image, a portrait of the U.S. in its young manhood, before it had yet exploded any torpedoes in the vitals of any adversaries, but at a moment when it was beginning to realize that it was capable of doing so. U.S. nationhood, disembodied from the manifest destiny of continental expansion was redefining itself through an identification with the prowess of the individual male body. Ironic then, tragic even, that the ‘torpedo’ would soon explode not in its adversary’s vitals but in its own, with the destruction of the *Maine* which was to follow in February 1898.

Under the Cuban Flag, aimed at an adolescent readership, can be usefully set alongside one of the best-sellers of 1897, Richard Harding Davis's Soldiers of Fortune, an adventure story firmly grounded in the actual relationships between U.S. industry and Cuba in the 1890s. The hero of Soldiers of Fortune, Richard Clay, is working for a mining company after discovering masses of red hematite ore lying exposed on the side of a mountain in the fictional country of Olancho. As he explains, “The people know it is there, but have no knowledge of its value, and are too lazy to ever work it themselves” (30). The value of the ore lies in its high iron content, making it perfect

for the Bessemer process that had recently revolutionised steel-making and therefore the twin industries of railways and armaments.

The setting for Soldiers of Fortune is very closely modelled on the development of the U.S. mining interests on the south coast of Cuba where, in the 1880s, Frederick Wood, agent to the Pennsylvania Steel Company and one the country's top mining engineers, found what would prove to be 15 million tons of hematite rock with 62 per cent iron content, making him an almost exact forerunner of his fictional counterpart, Robert Clay. Within six months he was back with engineers and plans for a railroad to carry the ore to Santiago. Mineral rights were secured free of charge. Mining began in 1884. By 1898 the Juraguá Iron Company owned eleven of the seventeen mines in the region and was called "a powerful, progressive, and well-managed American corporation, which has done more to develop the mining industries of Cuba than all the other interests combined" (Clark 409). Its output averaged a quarter of a million tons in the ten years up to 1897. All told, the U.S. iron-mining companies in Cuba represented an investment of U.S. capital of about \$8,000,000, and in the fourteen years of operation prior to 1898 they had paid \$2,000,000 in import duties on iron ore into the U.S. Treasury (Porter 323).³

Davis's Olancho, the setting for *Soldiers of Fortune*, is a northern South American country bordering on Ecuador and Venezuela, but it is not Colombia; in other words Davis deliberately rules out a direct correlation with any single country. However, Olancho's capital city, Valencia, is very clearly based on Santiago de Cuba. When he was twenty-two Davis, who was born in Philadelphia, had visited Santiago and its surroundings in the company of an old friend of his who was President of the Bethlehem Iron Company. He saw how the ore was taken down on a narrow-gauge railway across the river Juraguá to Siboney, where it was loaded onto trains running

to the docks of Las Cruces on the eastern side of Santiago harbour. This exact topography appears in *Soldiers of Fortune* ((Lubow 28; see Javis 1918, 35-6; and Foner 1972 II, 482). A few years later the U.S. historian Irene Wright was sailing towards Santiago: “We stretched our eyes towards Daiquiri and Siboney, where the American invaders landed in 1898. Commercial-minded that I am, I was more interested in the approximate situation of the iron mines of Juragua,—camp of another and more important American invasion. I desired to know just where it is that the land thrusts that closed fist into the sea which Richard Harding Davis’s ‘Soldier of Fortune’ was intent to make let go its riches at his will. The geography of this vicinity is that of the novel” (Wright 353).

Clay's association with Cuba is emphasised when a young girl asks about his father: “My father, Miss Hope,’ he said, ‘was a filibuster, and went out on the Virgin-ius to help free Cuba, and was shot, against a stone wall. We never knew where he was buried” (Davis 1916: 175). The reference is to the summary execution of fifty-three U.S. citizens in 1873 for running guns onto the south coast of Cuba, an incident that came close to causing an earlier war between Spain and the United States. The filibusters were killed in Santiago, Davis's Valencia, close to where this fictional conversation takes place (see Bradford 1980).

Frederick Albion Ober (1849-1913) was a travel writer, journalist, novelist, naturalist, public lecturer, children’s writer, biographer, and historian, successful enough in his day, though without the public profile of Richard Harding Davis. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century he was an almost constant traveller, principally in the Caribbean. Ober initially saw himself as a scientist, but after the commercial success of his travel book, *Camps in the Caribbees: The Adventures of a*

Naturalist in the Lesser Antilles (1879), he broadened his horizons and made a career for himself as a writer. Since his death nobody has taken much interest in Frederick Albion Ober but during the last decade of the nineteenth century he probably knew as much about the Caribbean as anyone in the U.S. He had travelled widely in the region, especially in the more remote parts rarely visited by other travellers, met with many of the statesmen and leading figures, and read broadly in the area's history. In one sense, though, this made Ober an atypical figure: after 1898, when the stream of writing about the Spanish-speaking Caribbean became a torrent, he would seem like a minor voice, an amateur drowned by the instant expertise of economists, sociologists, and other analysts of the backward islands that had fallen into U.S. hands.

Like Davis, Ober had previous knowledge of Cuba to draw on. In his case, the success of his travel book about the Caribbean and his connections at the Smithsonian Institution had led to his appointment as Special Commissioner to the West Indies for the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition, charged with arranging loans of Columbus-related material: he took the opportunity to write a book about his journey through the islands, modestly entitled *In the Wake of Columbus*. Ober headed from Massachusetts to Washington DC to receive his instructions on 31 December 1890 (121-2), therefore passing through New York just as Martí's essay "Nuestra América" was published and as more extensive accounts filtered through of the massacre at Wounded Knee which had taken place on 29 December. After visiting Havana, he travelled east by steamer to Gibara, then past the Bay of Nipe, to Baracoa, taking the opportunity of recounting the story of the Indian genocide: "Nothing remains now of the native population, and the only reminders of them are the rude implements of warfare and agriculture sometimes discovered" (165); and noting how Spanish soldiers "are devastating the land like a curse of grasshoppers and locusts" (162).

Setting, date, and genre all therefore link Under the Cuban Flag with Soldiers of Fortune. More importantly, both novels deal with what they see as the kind of relationship that should pertain between the United States and Cuba. The connection between indigeneity and mining will emerge more slowly.

Under the Cuban Flag ties the political moment of 1897 to a notion of Cuban indigeneity. In the U. S., the 1898 invasion of Cuba was seen as in some sense a continuation of its own Indian wars, so the Indian-Cuba link might not in any case seem so strange. Many of the military personnel involved in the invasion had fought, like Major Carrolton, against the Apache and the Lakota during the 1870s and 1880s: Generals Shafter and Wood were both renowned Indian fighters. Roosevelt, the leading proponent of intervention, had written a long book, The Winning of the West (1900), in praise of westward expansion over Indian lands, and the unit he commanded in Cuba was known as the Rough Riders, named after Buffalo Bill Cody's Congress of Rough Riders. To confirm the connection, Buffalo Bill's show soon included a version of the so-called Battle of San Juan Hill taken from Roosevelt's 1899 description in The Rough Riders, displacing their previous representation of Custer's Last Fight. More ambiguously, one of Roosevelt's horses was named by his black body-servant as Rain-in-the-Face, famous as the name of the Sioux warrior popularly supposed to have killed Custer, cut his heart out, and eaten it: a story which seems not to have been true, despite Longfellow's eloquent poem on the subject (Utley 1962: 126-31). Ironically, the horse was drowned off Daiquirí.

From within Cuba, a factor in the political relevance of indigeneity is clearly the development in the Caribbean from the early nineteenth century of the use by creole intellectuals of the symbols of a pre-Hispanic past to provide an alternative to

Spanish identity. The terms borincanos and quisquellanos come into use at this time, although no Cuban equivalent is necessary since the island had managed—like Jamaica—to retain its indigenous name. From these years, the most resonant event is the naming of Haiti, a black republic surprisingly taking an indigenous name (Geggus 1997). Associated with creole consciousness is the development of literary movements that explored indigenous themes and vocabulary. The Cuban variant, ciboneyismo, has frequently been seen as insignificant and artificial, even by distinguished Cuban critics (Vitier 159-60; Arrom; Pérez Firmat 95-111; but cf. Schulman). At its best, ciboneyista poetry can summon the image of the lost utopia of an Indian world, an invocation that has always had a strong political charge. As José Fornaris wrote, in the 1888 edition of his Cantos del Siboney (1855), drawing out the political implications of ciboneyista writing:

Only in a symbolic way could a poet express his love for his country and protest against the unjust and insolent manner in which it was governed. The word patria was heard by those governors as an insurrectionary shout... I know full well that this corresponded to the idea contained in the verses. In them could be seen a symbolism in which the Ciboney indians represented the oppressed Cubans, and the Carib indians represented the unjust oppressors. (qtd Vitier 158)

By the 1890s the ideological battle against Spain, waged by Cubans and others, often turned on Spanish treatment of the aboriginal population of the Caribbean (rather than, as with Fornaris, on Carib attacks on native Cubans). In Under the Cuban Flag this criticism comes from the mouth of a beautiful, upper-class Cuban woman, Emilia Del Monte, whom Carlos Lopez eventually marries:

“Spain was recreant to her high trust; she not only neglected the great oppor-

tunity given her of God, to save the souls of the heathen millions but she sent them rather into perdition. We all know, for Spain's own priests and bishops have left it on record, that their country plundered and murdered the innocent, inoffensive people of this island; and, within the century that it was discovered, she had nearly exterminated them all, to the number of hundreds of thousands." (270)

A letter by Antonio Maceo from early 1897 sets the Cuban struggle within the context of Spanish cruelties dating back to the early sixteenth century, a connection made more compelling by Weyler's policy of reconcentración. Maceo himself was often compared to sixteenth-century Taino leader Guamá, with Máximo Gómez as the Haitian Hatuey (Morote 369-370; García Arévalo 24; Ortiz 1993, 10). So, from both the U.S. and Cuban sides, there were Indian reference points for the 1890s rebellion and therefore a possible logic to the plot of Under the Cuban Flag.

At the end of the novel, the cacique's treasure is sold for \$80,000 to a U.S. museum, and with this money a filibuster fund is established at Indian Key. The very last paragraph of the novel reads:

At all events, the papers of late have been full of the doings of a trim little schooner, filled with arms, ammunition, and medical stores, which has repeatedly run the blockade off the Cuban coast, and cheered the hearts of the insurgents mightily. It was their own venture, and as it was fitted out with funds furnished by the Cacique's treasure: thus had time at last avenged the poor Indians of Cuba! (316)⁴

There are certain ironies here. The United States—in the novel still providing filibusters rather than full-scale invaders—“avenge the poor Indians of Cuba” against the Spaniards who exterminated them, just seven years after one key event, the mas-

sacre at Wounded Knee, in the U. S.'s attempted extermination of its own Indian population. Meanwhile, within the fiction, the "poor Indians" can only be thought of as "avenged" through the occlusion of their fictional survival in the Sierra del Cristal, which provides the novel with a dramatic encounter, but one whose narrative consequences are then ignored. The survival of an Indian community is ideologically important (for reasons which will soon emerge) but it turns out to be a narrative cul-de-sac. As a result of all this, the genocide of the Cuban Indians can be "avenged" by military assistance purchased with the sale of indigenous "treasure" whose ownership is never even questioned—it simply belongs to its finder, not to the descendants of those who made it. The Indians here have survived against the odds, helped by the mountainous terrain but also by the lack of development of the Cuban economy under Spanish rule. The Indians have only survived, the novel suggests, because Cuba has been inadequately modernized by Spain. That situation will change once the U.S. becomes fully involved with the island—a process of modernization which would inevitably lead, as the novel does not point out, to the disappearance of those Indians.

Despite widespread U.S. sympathy for the Cuban cause, it was always clear that, for the usanos there were significant differences between the two peoples, usually ones that demonstrated how much the Cubans would need U.S. help to win a military victory. In the first few pages of Under the Cuban Flag the rebels have to be taught how to use their new rifles by the Major. The three visitors are then drawn into a fight. The rebels could, Ober writes, have stood their ground and shot the advancing Spaniards—this would have been the properly rational approach:

But the fiery Cuban nature would not allow them to pursue this safe plan; they could not stand still and merely pump bullets into an enemy when he was

hardly an arm's length away. "Al machete! Al machete!" shouted their Colonel, waving his sword in the air and setting the example by charging into the face of the coming column. (29)

The Major and the Doctor stick with Gomez when his men fall back after the failure of this charge (31). The unworldly Professor shoots the Spanish commander as he's about to kill Gomez; and "The Major and Doctor... formed a rallying point for the encouraged Cubans, who followed wherever they led, charging madly upon the now retreating foe, and pursuing them so long as a vestige of opposition remained" (32).

This language of "rescue" dominates U.S. accounts of the invasion of Cuba: as Andrew Draper's 1899 title has it—The Rescue of Cuba: An Episode in the Growth of Free Government. According to this motif, the U.S. is a modern knight in shining armour and Cuba should be a beautiful but helpless maiden, just like Evangelina Cisneros or Hortensia in Under the Cuban Flag, a fitting wife for her chivalrous rescuer. U.S. descriptions of Cubans in 1898 are deeply revealing of the disappointment felt when this proved not to be the case. Some recall Spanish descriptions of native Cubans in 1492: "a collection of real tropic savages," in Stephen Crane's words; with another writer complaining more bluntly that the Cubans were happy to "go around half-naked." However, the Cuban soldiers were clearly not Indians: "They are nearly all half-naked and a large proportion are of negro blood" reported the New York Evening Post. Winston Spencer Churchill saw volunteer service with the Spanish army and reported: "If the Revolution triumphs, Cuba will be a black Republic.... Their army, consisting to a large extent of coloured men, is an undisciplined rabble"; "[t]he Cuban soldiers were almost all blacks and mulattos," said Roosevelt.⁵

One description of "the Cuban" is especially revealing. It comes from John Parker who commanded the Gatling Gun detachment of the Fifth Army:

He is a treacherous, lying, cowardly, thieving, worthless, half-breed mongrel; born of a mongrel spawn of Europe, crossed upon the fetiches of darkest Africa and aboriginal America. He is no more capable of self-government than the Hottentots that roam the wilds of Africa or the Bushmen of Australia. He can not be trusted like the Indian, will not work like the negro, and will not fight like the Spaniard; but he will lie like a Castilian with polished suavity, and he will stab you in the dark or in the back with all the dexterity of a renegade graduate of Carlisle. (76)

If quality of insult is a sign of disavowed admiration, then Parker was deeply impressed by Cubans. The first sentence is an extraordinarily dense combination of everything that is frightening to usanos of, in Julian Hawthorne's words, "the best and oldest strain," about miscegenation, more deeply horrid for being a mixture of the European, the African, and the Indian. Indeed, the indigenous component seems, rhetorically at least, the most important of the three. Other indigenous societies—the Hottentot and Bushmen—provide the comparisons for governmental incapacity; and the essentially treacherous nature of the Cuban can only be conveyed by reference to Carlisle, the famous school for turning Indians into good U.S. citizens which, when it failed, produced the ultimate nightmare of an educated and vengeful savage.

Parker's description is deeply offensive and yet, slightly recast, and bearing in mind the much more positive current connotations attaching to the word "mongrel," it could almost operate as a definition of a transculturated Cuban national identity. It could, for example, be set alongside Fernando Ortiz's famous invocation of the ajiacó, its name a trope of its substance, an indigenous dish promiscuously mixed with African and European ingredients (1993: 5-6; cf Pérez Firmat 24-33). Ortiz's notion of transculturation and its culinary metaphor date from 1940 but clearly has its roots in

Martí and his development of the idea of “our América” as “a mestizo people” (1992: I, 110). Ortiz provides an important link back to the 1890s in his story of how, in 1895, aged fourteen and recently returned to Cuba, he had been instructed by his grandfather that all Cuban separatists were either black or mulatto. When Fernando came up with the name of the recently-dead Martí, his grandfather’s response was: “he was a mulatto on the inside” (1993: 111).

A similarly uncomplimentary U.S. comment on Cuban soldiers in 1898—“They were of another race and the greater part of them were unable to understand the steady nerve and the businesslike habits of their American rescuers” (quoted Pérez 1983: 200)—is interestingly foreshadowed in a description of the U.S. boy, Archie Goodwin, in Under the Cuban Flag: “As he was a sturdy young fellow, with a smile and a greeting for all, and a brisk air of business quite at variance with the bearing of the native boys, he made friends wherever he went” (80-1). By “native,” Ober here means “Cuban.” And Ober’s description of the aboriginal community in the mountains is very different from that of his native Cubans: “they were beautiful examples of vigorous youth and manhood; every one lithe of limb and shapely, their frank, open faces wreathed in smiles, their speech soft and gestures amiable” (204). These are not the terms in which either North American Indians nor Cuban soldiers could or would be described by U.S. journalists or fiction writers at this period. But the vocabulary does recall both the description of Archie in the novel, and of Karl Decker in Hawthorne’s encomium. Vigour, frankness, amiability—this was the white, male, U.S. self-image recognising itself in the aboriginal population of Cuba.

There is a logic to this unexpected identification, though it takes a little disentangling. Anthropology emerged as a professional discipline in the 1890s, with American Indians as its primary object of study, an object in the process of “disappear-

ing”—or more accurately, being swept away by the forces of capitalist modernity (Dip-
pie 1982). Underlying the language of “disappearance” is a theory in which cultures
begin as full or plenary, and are drained of their essence until extinct. Under Dar-
win’s influence, indigenous peoples were seen as analogous to animal species,
watched with morbid fascination as their numbers decreased to single figures before
the “last man” and “last woman” died, their remains ghoulishly fought over by west-
ern scientists (see Ryan, Brantlinger, and Stafford). According to this model, initial
contact in the Caribbean had been between well-defined groups (usually Ciboney,
Taino, Carib, European, and African) which then got larger or smaller during the co-
lonial period—and of course the native Caribbean groups were seen as getting smaller
as African and European groups got larger.

As Frederick Putnam put it in 1893, when organising the anthropology exhibits at
the Chicago Columbian exposition:

We know well that four hundred years has brought the last generation upon the
stage of action, when it will be possible to bring together the remnants of the na-
tive tribes... in anything approaching purity of stock, or with a precise knowledge
of the ways of their ancestors. These peoples, as great nations, have about van-
ished into history, and now is the last opportunity for the world to see them and to
realize what their condition, their life, their customs, their arts were four centuries
ago. The great object lesson then will not be completed without their being
present. Without them, the Exposition will have no base. (Qtd in Hinsley 1990)

The anthropological interest in American Indians was in what they were four cen-
turies ago, because that provided the base line against which white progress could be
measured. But all over the continent, Indians weren’t what they used to be. In the
Caribbean, according to Ober's own account of his visits to Dominica and St. Vincent,

the Caribs were different from what they had once been, the clearest marks of which were the loss of their language, of their fierce behaviour, and of their physical features: more and more of them had interbred with blacks

Sanctified by the undisputed aboriginal claims to the land, the Indians in Under the Cuban Flag respond to the anthropological ideal of the Indian untouched by outside presence. In order to conform to that ideal, they have to be removed from the perceived reality of Amerindian identity in the Caribbean at this time as an aboriginal nation tainted through its association with Africans. The isolation of the Cuban Indian community has served to protect it as much from miscegenation with Africans as it has from extermination by Spaniards.

In narrative terms, the political novel, rooted in the events of the 1890s, has to be linked with the purity of aboriginal survival in the Sierra del Cristal. That link is provided by the brother and sister, Juanita and Felipe, described respectively as mez-tiza and “half-breed” (253). Juanita leads Hortensia and the Major to safety amongst the Indians when the Cuban rebels are ungrateful enough to condemn him to death. Felipe is left to represent the “unconscious of the text,” the unmotivated evil force who tries to kill the Spanish prisoner Archie has taken, attacks Archie, betrays the Major, sets the fiercesome bloodhounds on his trail, and wishes his own sister dead. Felipe is not on any particular side; rather, he is antagonistic to everyone (and thus useful in moving the plot along). Not accidentally, the female mixed-blood is assimilated and the male mixed-blood is a renegade. The suspicion is that, ideologically if not physically, Juanita is a white/Indian mix, Felipe a black/Indian half-breed.

Soldiers of Fortune offers the best clue as to what the Indians of Under the Cuban Flag actually represent. There was something in Cuba that was, like Evangelina Cisneros and the Indians of the Sierra del Cristal, genuinely hidden and passive

and helpless and in need of rescue—the iron-ore of the province of Santiago, extracted by U.S. mining companies, which, turned to steel in the mills of Maryland and Pennsylvania, would provide the guns and ammunition for the filibusters and, more important, the ships and the torpedoes to protect the commercial and strategic interests of the United States, as Roosevelt and Mahan’s ideas were put into practice. Clay makes the point to Mendoza, the rebellious villain of the book: “The mines have always been there, before this Government came in, before the Spaniards were here, before there was any government at all” (Davis 1916: 52). In other words, both novels rescue what is primordial, authentic, natural, pre-Spanish, about Cuba: the natural resources and the indigenous inhabitants—or rather, their treasure. Both novels operate a separation: in Soldiers of Fortune between the mineral resources and the Spaniards and Cubans who “own” them but who are incapable of exploiting them; in Under the Cuban Flag between the pure but unworldly Indians and the treasure of their ancestors of which they know nothing and to which they are assumed to have no claim. The U.S. “recognition” of similar moral qualities to their own amongst the indigenous population acts as a claim that the rescuers are the proper protectors and rightful inheritors of the island’s resources. Ober’s novel works ultimately as a claim to rightful possession of the island. However, since it is the cacique’s treasure that avenges the Indians, U.S. agency in the matter is itself underplayed: the U.S. is seen as carrying out the vengeance of history rather than being—as it in fact was—a modern state acting out of self-interest.

Both novels employ frontier rhetoric: beyond the frontier, which is where Cuba was situated in U.S. eyes, “exists a world of naturally abundant and unappropriated resources” (Slotkin 1994: 41). Adventure, exploration, geology, science, treasure: this is an old Caribbean combination. An interest in natural history—such as first took

Ober to the region (1879a and b)—is rarely innocent. The transformation of Europe began with Caribbean gold and silver, a process not unconnected with the initial genocide of the indigenous population; and Cuba suffered many centuries of extraction from what Eduardo Galeano memorably called the “open veins” of the continent.

According to histories of the U.S. invasion of Cuba, the landing of the military forces on the south coast of the island was a haphazard affair, its sites decided only at the last minute (see Cosmas; Trask; Bradford 1993; and United States 1993). That may be so. In which case it was only of symbolic interest that one part of the U.S. Army landed at Siboney, securing the interests of the Juraguá Iron Company, controlled from Pennsylvania, and the Fifth Army landed at Daiquirí, securing the interests of the Spanish-American Mining Company, their main rival, controlled by John D. Rockefeller. What's for sure is that both operations made a swift return to mining after the capitulation of Santiago.⁶ Claims at Juraguá and Daiquirí were set to expire in 1903: General Wood extended them indefinitely and for good measure exempted all future mining claims from Cuban property taxes or mining royalties in an addendum that was not published with the original ruling (Reutter 76). In that sense the indigenous ore of the island was successfully rescued.

In a peculiar way, anthropology then proceeded to imitate fiction, cementing the relationship between indigeneity and mining interests. After 1898, engineers from Philadelphia working for U.S. mining companies reported coming across “wild Indians” in the Sierra Maestra, and Stewart Culin, from the Free Museum of Science and Art at the University of Pennsylvania, came haring down to investigate this dramatic survival.

Culin carried a letter of introduction from Josiah Monroe of the Juraguá Iron

Company, Philadelphia, addressed to Louis V. Placé, Havana, stating that Culin “is especially interested to get all the information possible on the subject of the original Indian inhabitants of the Island, of which some are said to still live somewhere near the centre of the eastern end” (Culin 1901 [16 May]); and Culin mentions Soldiers of Fortune early in his account, confirming that the crucial nexus for these years is the one that runs from Santiago to Philadelphia. Culin’s short work (1902) is important because of its clear demonstration of the distinction between the myth of cultural survival—which brought him to Cuba—and the reality of the transcultural process which he literally faced and which was of no interest to him.⁷ After this article Culin never wrote another word about the Caribbean.

1898 brought into view, in the title of José de Olivares’ huge photographic survey (1899), our islands and their people: new territories for anthropological practice and for collecting the items to stock our new museums. The natives of the Caribbean held a special position as the first Americans encountered by Columbus and had therefore been favoured with some attention, especially in connection with the quartercentenary in 1892, but it was only after 1898 that any serious anthropological and archaeological work was undertaken in the islands by U.S. scientists. Before the end of 1898, Daniel Brinton was already suggesting “promising localities for research” (256) and W. H. Holmes and Otis Mason visited from the Smithsonian Institution. In 1904, encouraging Jesse Fewkes to pursue a thorough ethnological research of the Caribbean, Mason remarked that the region would open “a new and rich field as a relief from the overthrashed straw of our own native tribes” (qtd in Hinsley 1981, 116). The Heye Foundation—and its associated Museum of the American Indian—took an immediate interest. Of its first set of nine “contributions” to scholarship on the American Indian, seven related to the Caribbean (New York: Museum of the American

Indian, 1913-15).

Then in 1915 the Heye Foundation sent to Cuba the young anthropologist Mark Harrington. Harrington spent nearly a year in Cuba, travelling extensively in the area around Baracoa, collecting materials and taking notes. He was in many respects a transitional figure of great interest. He represented the latest in anthropological training in the United States (at Columbia) at a moment when anthropology was becoming established as a discipline. Unlike many of his successors, he had read extensively in the locally-produced literature and both learned from and engaged with it. His work was also warmly welcomed by Cuban scientists, prompting for example Fernando Ortiz's Historia de arqueología indocubana (1922), which is at once a summary, an appreciation, a critique, and an extension of Harrington's work.

On the other hand, despite the substantial nature of Cuba Before Columbus (1921), what Harrington published was supposed to be merely a preliminary to the major study of indigenous social structure he promised, but which was never completed. In several respects, then, Harrington's unpublished work set an unfortunate precedent. He was not the last U.S. anthropologist to use one of the Caribbean islands as a stepping stone to professional advancement into more prestigious areas. Neither was he the last foreign archaeologist to leave the Caribbean with materials—physical or informative—which were not only never returned, but which have never entered the public realm at all. And his failure to address indigenous social structure has set a pattern only recently challenged by a Latin American social archaeology in which Cuban scientists have played an increasingly important role (see Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1984, 30-39).

Harrington was employed by George Heye, who was infamously more interested in collecting objects than he was in developing the science of anthropology and, in

this respect, Harrington follows in the thoughtlessly acquisitive footsteps of Ober's Professor Brown. Take, for example, the stunning petroglyph Harrington found in the Cueva Zemi, in La Patana:

The removal of the image, or zemi, seemed impossible at first, for it weighed 800 or 900 pounds; but the problem was finally solved by sawing it into five pieces with the aid of a two-man lumber saw (which had to be sharpened frequently), carrying these pieces by hand out of the cave and up out of the pit, loading them on mules and thus transporting them to Maisi, where they were packed in boxes made of wide cedar boards sawed out by hand from the trees of the forest, and loaded on a little schooner which touched occasionally to bring provisions to the lighthouse when the weather was good. This in turn took them to Baracoa, where they were shipped on board a Norwegian fruiter to New York. (II: 270-1)

Where, as Ortiz rather sharply puts it, "we Cubans will have to go to admire it and to study it, if we want to do work on national archaeology" (1922: 87). This is exactly the route that the cacique's treasure takes in Under the Cuban Flag. So much for "harmless" professors. Harrington was later to work undercover for the U.S. intelligence services (Patterson 1995: 60).

That archaeological treasure remains in New York. But Harrington's booty also contained the human remains of seven Cuban Indians excavated from cave burials. After extensive discussions those remains were repatriated to Cuba by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in June 2002, and then received in January 2003 by Cacique Panchito Ramirez and the Taino descendant population of Caridad de los Indios from the eastern mountains of Cuba, where they were reburied with due ceremony.

Harrington's removal of this petroglyph in 1915 is probably the factual incident most closely related to Professor Brown's removal of the cacique's treasure in Under the Cuban Flag, eighteen years earlier, and therefore brings to a close any proper extrapolation from the fictional text as indicative of ideological attitudes that would be put into practice after 1898. But what connections can be made between this material and the questions that face us today? In conclusion, I'll suggest a number of present imperatives that might be illuminated by this rather insistent attention on events of more than one hundred years ago.

According to the account of Caribbean anthropology established in the English-speaking world, the subject effectively began with the setting-up of the Caribbean Anthropological Program at Yale in 1933, with the first proper archaeological work in Cuba carried out by Cornelius Osgood in Pinar del Rio and Irving Rouse in Holguín in the early 1940s and published in 1942. In this picture, Harrington counts as a precursor, but doesn't belong to the full history: Rouse calls him, rather dismissively, an "excavator" (ms.: 6).

A revisionist history of the kind that has begun to emerge in recent years would cast its net rather wider. The origins of the Caribbean Anthropological Program would themselves be traced back to 1898. When U.S. anthropology followed the course of empire, it was the archaeologists and collectors who were put to work in Cuba and the other islands, not the ethnographers: the seminal articles from the early years of the century are entitled "Prehistoric Puerto Rico" and "Prehis-
toric...Cuba" (Fewkes 1902 and 1904), sealing the indigenous population of the islands into the dark world of "prehistory," not only exiled into another time, but put outside history altogether. Eventually followed by those working under the aegis of

the hegemonic patterns of U.S. anthropology, which in this case means the typological study pioneered in the 1930s (Patterson 1995: 76), this path has been well-financed, fully professionalized, and supported by major institutions and universities. According to this paradigm, the indigenous cultures of the Caribbean, belonging to “prehistory,” must be studied through burial-sites, dwelling-places, and ceramic sequences. Cultural materials are severed from living populations, becoming objective evidence, which must be under the control of the scientific disciplines. Under this account the Yale Program marks a professionalization of anthropological study, but not a fundamental shift from the paradigm effectively established by Fewkes, Culin, and Harrington in the twenty years after 1898.

However valuable the Yale and Yale-inspired work has been in providing materials towards an understanding of population movements and cultural processes in the Caribbean before 1492, interpretations of the social and political dimensions of those materials have usually reproduced the stereotypes that served the European colonial powers so well during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Work pursued under the Yale paradigm has had almost nothing to say about the Caribbean after 1492. For the “plenary” model of culture, the indigenous Caribbean was never properly itself after 1492 and therefore scientific inquiry has to end at that date.

Revisionist work—which might properly be described as postcolonial—has various overlapping strands: the work of intellectual critique carried out by cultural historians (for example Sued Badillo 1992, 1995; Whitehead, ed. 1995); the work of social and economic analysis, often employing a Marxist perspective (Moscoso 1987, Tabío and Rey 1985); and the social archaeology which has its roots in Venezuela, but which is beginning to influence Latin American practices more widely (Vargas-Arenas 1996). This work tends to be multidisciplinary, ethnohistorical, attuned to national

imperatives, sceptical both about colonial sources and about the interpretation of archaeological evidence, especially where social groups have been invented on the basis of ceramic innovation: it is postcolonial work in the true sense, serving to question, challenge, and replace the deeply embedded colonialist assumptions through which the history and present of the Caribbean have so often been viewed. Particularly important aspects of the revisionist paradigm are: its rewriting of the history of Caribbean anthropology; its insistence on giving equal weight to the colonial period; and its concern with the social dimensions of questions of identity.

In one sense, the revisionist model is just that: it contests the assumptions, protocols, and tropes of the hegemonic model. However, it also has a history that would allow us to see it running in tandem with what it would—in the 1980s—eventually contest. That history can hardly be rehearsed in detail here, but it is important to acknowledge the centrality of the concept of “transculturation” for this revisionist paradigm. Fernando Ortiz’s work has a long and complex development, but several of his key essays, including “The Social Phenomenon of Transculturation,” were published precisely when Osgood and Rouse were undertaking their archaeological work in Cuba; and transculturation clearly has its origins in the notion of cultural mestizaje elaborated in the 1890s by José Martí, at the very moment when the “plenary” model of identity was becoming enshrined as the anthropological norm in the United States. So, in at least two respects, the histories share key moments, allowing illuminating comparisons to be made.

When Ortiz put forward his concept of transculturation in his great work, Cuban Counterpoint in 1940 (1978; 1995), he famously had the support, in an introduction, of Bronislaw Malinowski, the distinguished Polish anthropologist, who agreed that the term was preferable to the more common “acculturation” (see Coronil 1995).

At this very moment, the first of the Yale archaeologists to work in Cuba (in 1941), Irving Rouse, was preparing his visit. Rouse was well aware of the historical literature on the survival of Cuban Indians, and had this to say about Culin's 1902 report:

Governor Mazariegos was shocked by their condition when he inspected the interior of the island in 1556. He ordered all Indians to be gathered together into towns near the principal Spanish settlements... The Indians survived well into the nineteenth century... It is unfortunate for the anthropologist that these towns were not isolated like the Indian reservations in the United States, thus preserving the aboriginal culture for modern study. In Cuba the aborigines gradually intermarried with their white neighbors and adopted the Spanish language and culture... The process of acculturation is well illustrated by the archeological data to be described below... In 1901, Stewart Culin... searched for descendants of the aborigines in the mountains of the province of Oriente... Everywhere the Indians were halfbreeds, who spoke Spanish and differed little from their Cuban neighbors. Only two aboriginal customs (besides those prevalent among the white population of Cuba) still survived..." (Rouse 1942: 29-30)

Those final brackets implicitly suggest that within this paradigm only that which is different from what has survived to become part of normal social or economic practice is of interest to anthropologists: the term "acculturation" simply serves to cloak what has survived and been widely adopted. That aboriginal customs should have survived and "become prevalent among the white population of Cuba" is irrelevant to Rouse—although it would be deeply important to a student of transculturation.

Felipe Pichardo Moya put it exactly in 1945 when he wrote that the indigenous absence from Cuban history owed most to historian's attitudes that "prevented them

from seeing the properly vernacular content of our past, of which indigenous survivals formed a part” (6)—the failure is often a failure of vision, of not seeing properly: a matter of ideology and therefore of language and interpretation. “Survival” itself is the key term here, itself a survival from the earliest anthropological theory (Tylor 1871), rich in theoretical connotations but also full of emotional resonance. Most historical sources say that the region’s indigenous population had disappeared by the middle of the sixteenth century. In the sense that indigenous social formations as they had existed before 1492 were no longer functioning in the same way by 1550, that assertion has an element of truth; and yet it may also be deeply misleading.

Let me offer a few tentative distinctions. That what was once thought “lost” has in fact survived, is a powerful myth—most recently exploited in Spielberg’s dinosaur films, which themselves draw on Arthur Conan Doyle’s novel, The Lost World (1912). The “survival” of indigenous Caribbean communities into the nineteenth or twentieth centuries is a myth that has its versions on almost all Caribbean islands. It is a powerful and consoling myth, but one whose temptations need to be resisted. Only if the myth of survival is resisted, can the historical and attested presence of indigenous communities be properly understood. One of the potent ironies that all indigenous communities face is that the myth of “survival” can only gain its power when peddled against the supposed “historical reality” of complete indigenous disappearance: “survival” in its plenary sense is simply the other side of the coin of “extinction” or “extermination.” However, inadequate as this language might be to deal with the complexities of cultural change, we need to remember that it is the chosen textual model of the victims of genocide and therefore intrinsically worthy of attention. It’s also important to recognise that there is a record of “survival” in the unmodulated sense of that word still properly to be registered in most parts of the Caribbean, where recog-

nisably indigenous communities certainly survived much later than almost all historiographic accounts allow.

How to discuss the survival of indigenous elements in the larger process of transculturation is a problem of a different order. Clearly there is a massive amount of work to be done—anthropological, archaeological, historical, linguistic; and a massive amount already done but largely unknown (or ignored) outside Cuba.⁸ In 1944, Pedro Henríquez Ureña noted with reference to the Caribbean that “At the important and visible level the European model was imposed; at the domestic and everyday level many autochthonous traditions were maintained” (qtd by García Arévalo 11). It is precisely the domestic and everyday that produces—to use related distinctions—the vernacular and the subaltern as opposed to the elite ostentation of official languages and monumental architecture. Attention to that vernacular world has begun to reveal its indigenous components: in adaptation to peasant life under Spanish control, possibly within such forms as the guajiro and jíbaro traditions of Cuba and Puerto Rico; in indigenous participation in unofficial Creole communities on the margins of authorised areas of settlement; in guerrilla warfare, sometimes, especially in the eighteenth century, in conjunction with African maroons; in a process of ethnic reconstruction and identity reformulation.

We need to know much more, though, about the modalities of the term “survival.” There is, in fact, a theoretical dimension to the discussion, perhaps illuminated in a small way by the intermittent dissension over the “survival” of Cuban Indians in the area around Baracoa, close to the setting of Under the Cuban Flag. In an article in Granma a few years ago, Dr. Estrella Rey—seemingly responding to the work of Oscar Tejedor Alvarez (see Gutiérrez 1987)—was quoted as saying that, because of the history of mixing, “there are no absolutely legitimate Indians left in our country”

(Blanco 1989). The introduction of the law into these matters always leads to trouble. Does this statement imply that there are “illegitimate” Indians left? Who gets to decide? When the term “legitimate” is employed, it usually means that the state has taken an interest. According to this understanding, there is such a thing as a “true Indian,” much as imagined by Ober locked in the fastnesses of the Sierra del Cristal; and any actual twentieth-first-century Indian will by definition appear inadequate to the fullness of that example. Often, as in the U.S. case, the state arrogates the power to define who is and who is not a “legitimate” Indian, a definition that is not easily challenged and which anyway serves to define those who seek to challenge it. Too often, historians seeking to count Indian populations, in the Caribbean and elsewhere, have relied on censuses in which state officials have taken decisions based purely on the presence or absence of what they take to be significant markers of “Indianness,” often long, black hair.

The language of “legitimacy” can be challenged in two ways. The dangerous route goes into the language of science to demonstrate that those deemed “illegitimate” are really, authentically, on some level Indians. There are twin dangers here. Scientific observation has not progressed beyond the deeply subjective analysis offered by Culin and Harrington, again rooted in the presence or absence of certain features. For example, Gates’ 1953 study of the area is based purely on physical features, with a pseudo-scientific codification of skin colour and a set of tabular remarks such as “Indian features,” “Looks Indian,” or “Nose depressed (Negro)” (1953: 80-81). It is also marked by a tendency to read off the supposed inheritance of psychological characteristics (“in all these mixed families where there is considerable Indian ancestry the quiet temperament of the Indian makes itself apparent” (93)). Pospíšil’s account of a 1964 expedition to central Oriente (1971) concludes that the group stud-

ied—in Felicidad de Yateras and Caridad de los Indios—“can be considered as Indian” on the basis of a schema put forward in 1910 by Giuffrida Ruggeri that is deeply embedded within the racist discourse of its moment. The subjective nature of these exercises is not disguised by the tables of measurement. Identity is a social category. Its somatic component is undeniable, but we should not imagine that the complexities of identity are resolvable by any form of quantification. In these circumstances, a more significant yardstick may well be self-perception, what José Barreiro, in a felicitous phrase, calls quite simply “a casual sense of Indian identity” (58). The historical irony here is that just as more sophisticated notions of identity seem to offer the prospect of a break with the blood quantum obsession that has been the constant companion and weapon of colonial categorisation, there appears on the horizon, in the shape of the Human Genome Diversity Project, the “promise” (better “illusion”) of a supposedly conclusive and scientifically objective index of ethnic identity through genetic analysis (Wilkie 1993, Moore 1994). The real problem with all such measurement, whether of skull size or genetic make-up, is that it relies upon a notion of race. There are temptations in this game: if the one-drop rule that raised the black population of the U.S. were applied to Indians, indigenous numbers in that country would increase a hundred-fold overnight. But such fantasies only demonstrate in the long run the reductio ad absurdum involved in all racial calculus—a point that José Martí understood better than anyone at the end of the nineteenth century, and that Fernando Ortiz franked in his 1934 homage to Martí, words with which I conclude, not least because they speak a truth that the rest of the world still struggles to recognise:

At the end of the day it's clear that there are no pure races and that all of us, as human beings, are the mixed product of innumerable crossings. The Cuban José Martí, like everybody else, was just a drop of blood, one of those always

spilt when loving couples cleave together in their eternal humanity. And, like all geniuses, he carried in his mind the essential outcome of all that mixing of ideas that occurs when the cultures of the world embrace each other. (1993: 135)

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¹ For a general account of Ober’s work, see Hulme 2000: 37-96. A kind of companion piece to this essay (Hulme 1997) analyses another of his novels, The Last of the Arawaks (1901).

² For longer analyses see Hulme 1996, Campbell 2002, and Prados-Torreira 2005: 137-146.

³ The iron ore supplemented U.S. supplies; but the eastern half of Cuba also had extensive manganese deposits, an essential raw material in the manufacture of Bessemer steel, for which U.S. demand greatly exceeded supply. The Cuban deposits were the nearest available (Porter 1899: 323). See also Lisandro Pérez and Iglesias.

⁴ In his eighteenth-century history of the West Indies, Bryan Edwards had presented the rebel atrocities in St. Domingue as retribution for the sixteenth-century genocide of the indigenous population—“as if the blacks were punishing the cruelties of the conquistadors, not those of the planters” (Geggus 1982: 129). This was part of common anti-Spanish rhetoric employed by the English (a continuation of the Black Legend), which conveniently forgot that the English were at that time (the 1790s) fighting one of the remaining parts of the Caribbean’s indigenous population into virtual extermination in St. Vincent.

⁵ All quoted from Pérez 1983: 199-204, except Churchill, from an 1896 newspaper article quoted in Thomas 1971: 326.

⁶ Reutter 1988: 73-4; and cf. Pérez 1982. The iron-mining of Santiago features prominently in Leonard Wood’s first report on insular affairs (U.S. Army 1899), and in Robert Porter’s spe-

cially commissioned report (1899), as it had in William J. Clark's well-timed Commercial Cuba: A Book for Business Men (1898).

⁷ Culin begins his article with the story, heard from an Englishman he meets on the steamer, that survivors of the original Lucayans are still living “in primitive savagery” on the island of Little Abaco in the Bahamas (185). That such a possibility could be mooted for so small an island suggests the depth of the psychic investment in the idea of indigenous survival.

⁸ See, for example, Pichardo Moya 1945; Rivero de la Calle 1973 and 1978; Barreiro 1989; Yaremko 2006; and cf. Davis 1996.