Dalia Antonia Muller, *Cuban Émigrés and Independence in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xiv + 306 pp.
(Paper US\$ 29.95)

For historians of empire, the year 1898 evokes U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean, Philippines, and Pacific, while for Cubans, it represents the culmination of a thirty-year struggle for independence from Spain. Yet, as Dalia Antonia Muller demonstrates in this book, U.S. empire and Cuban nationalist frameworks alike fail to capture the multiple political agendas of the era. Muller shifts our perspective from a three-way conflict over the future of the island between the United States, Cuba, and Spain to reveal alternate views from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.

She does this primarily through a transnational methodology that traces the hemispheric movements of exiles and émigrés during the era of Cuban independence. Scholarship on nineteenth-century Cuban emigrant communities and their revolutionary activities has focused on Key West, Tampa, New Orleans, and New York City. Muller develops new geographies of the movements, networks, and ideologies that extend to the port of Veracruz and Mérida in Mexico. Indeed, Veracruz became known as the “Key West of Mexico,” with its mixed-race and working-class populations supporting Cuban independence. José Martí is recognized as the well-known, eloquent spokesman of the revolutionary movement, but also as one of thousands of Cuban migrants who claimed political voice.

This narrative of migrants and independence engages multiple scholarly literatures of both Cuba and Mexico. As Muller follows the movements of people, goods, and ideas through archival documents in Cuba, Mexico, Spain, and the United States, she weaves together a social history of migrants’ daily lives with an intellectual history of revolutionary thought in political organizations and the press. She deftly reads the records of the Asociación Nacional de los Emigrados Revolucionarios Cubanos (ANERC) alongside other sources such as consular reports, patriotic club minutes, and newspapers to uncover the lives of the nearly 300 Cubans living in Mexico during the 1890s. The ANERC records alone display a mostly white, male, and upper-class membership. But, as Muller shows, a much broader political participation of Cubans in Mexico extended to non-Whites, women, and workers. She contrasts elite Cuban patriotic gatherings “where measured tones and piano recitals were the standard” with the activities of more humble émigrés that “featured guitars, boisterous song, and loud hispanophobic [sic.] pronouncements” spilling out from club meeting rooms into the streets of Veracruz (pp. 106–7). In addition to the hand-

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ful of women who publicly claimed their revolutionary status and are listed in the ANERC archives, Cuban women in Mexico also became involved in political clubs, fundraising, and letter-writing in support of Cuban independence.

Through its “Gulf World” perspective, this book extends the remapping of the region by scholars such as Sidney Mintz, who defined a geographically, historically, and thematically interconnected “greater Caribbean” or “circum-Caribbean.” Cultural, political, and economic exchanges in the nineteenth century between an expansionist United States, a modernizing Mexican state, and a war-torn Cuba are intertwined. Whereas in the United States, Cubans’ efforts at gaining foreign support for independence ultimately fed into an imperialist agenda, in Mexico, they attracted liberal students and journalists who increasingly opposed the decline of political democracy under Porfirio Díaz. Muller’s portrayal of the reverberations of political and revolutionary movements in the hemisphere can be read fruitfully in dialogue with Ada Ferrer’s *Freedom’s Mirror* (2014) on early nineteenth-century interconnections between Cuba and Haiti in the age of revolution and Lara Putman’s *Radical Moves* (2013) on the twentieth-century Afro-Caribbean migrants whose everyday actions abroad planted the seeds for black internationalist and anticolonial movements.

The book departs from a singular focus on U.S. imperialism in Cuba and the Caribbean after 1898, which remains a prominent paradigm for much scholarship. Instead, Muller demonstrates *how* U.S. imperialism shaped international politics. For example when fear of U.S. encroachment in the Caribbean drove some Mexicans to abandon support for Cuban independence, liberal newspaper editors countered with essays and cartoons that decried Mexico’s neutrality during the Spanish-American War and portrayed Mexico and the United States as equal partners in defending the hemisphere from European expansion.

This research also undermines the notion prevalent in some academic and popular circles, especially today, of Cuba as exceptional in the hemisphere. The opening quotation is from a journalist in 1909 who criticized Cuban propaganda that framed the independence struggles as apart from the rest of Spanish America. The Gulf World framework also offers a corrective to the unfounded (yet still-prevalent) view of Cuba, and the Caribbean, as somehow peripheral to “mainland” Latin American history. Finally, for those interested in contemporary transnational political and social movements, it demonstrates a longer tradition of politics that crossed nation states extending back to the nineteenth century.

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