Lisandro Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution: The Making of Cuban New York* (New York: NYU Press, 2018). vii + 399 pp. (Cloth US\$35.00)

Sugar, Cigars, and Revolution is a thoroughly researched study on the early history of Cubans in New York. Beginning roughly in 1823 with the exile of Father Félix Varela and ending in 1898 with the Cuban War for Independence, Lisandro Pérez chronicles an important history of Cuban migration and settlement in New York during the nineteenth century. He organizes the book in two parts—"Sugar: 1823–1868" and "War: 1868–1895"—highlighting what he argues are the two defining events in the history of Cubans in New York. Threaded throughout are the workings of capital, revolution, and insurgency.

Although Pérez views Varela's exile as an important marker in Cuban migration history, he writes that to fully understand the origin of the city's Cuban community, one must go "all the way back to the eighteenth century," noting that trade between New York and Cuba was "older than the United States itself, dating back to the British military victory in 1762" (p. 20). The U.S. interest in Cuba's sugar and later cigar industry made the island attractive as both a trading partner and possible extension of U.S. influence via annexation.

What distinguishes Pérez's research from other studies on the subject is his focus on the elite Cuban community, an important element of the historical narrative that rarely gets discussed in such great detail. We learn that from 1823 to 1868 many of the Cubans leaving the island were "boys and young men from wealthy families seeking an education and work experience, and [that] the counting houses had a direct role in bringing them from Cuba" (p. 30). The merchants who ran the counting houses would "make the arrangements for the sons of merchants and planters to be enrolled in boarding schools in the New York area" (p. 30). We learn about the wealthy Cuban families, including the Aldamas, Madans, Mestres, and Bentancourts, whose connection to U.S. politicians, government officials, and businessmen laid the groundwork for establishing effective and powerful economic and political networks. These networks would serve them well before and during the Ten Years' War when Cuba would be plunged into a bloody, chaotic war for independence.

The onset of the Ten Years' War (1868–78) and La Guerra Chiquita (1879–80), as well as the failure of annexation and reformism, led to what Pérez calls a movement toward "total independence." This, he argues, inspired a growing and more diverse Cuban community, one that was no longer dominated by the "elite planter interests" (p. 117). Here too, Pérez offers a history of exile revolutionary activity and insurgent politics from the perspective of elite Cubans in New York. His focus on the many meetings, conflicts, and alliances among the more powerful and well-to-do elements of the exile community is fascinating

and very well researched. His chapter on the Cuban revolutionary leader José Martí sheds new light on a familiar historical figure, doing a good job of locating Martí within the context of New York and showing how this “city on the cutting edge of urban modernity” deeply influenced Martí’s thinking, writing, and actions (p. 117).

Pérez ends the book with the death of General Calixto García, with the Spanish flag being lowered and the U.S. flag being raised in Cuba—and of course, the might of Manhattan-based corporations that “launched huge investments in the island and that defined the Cuban Republic” (p. 320). He concludes, that it was “those long-established economic social and cultural connections that made New York that important ‘other’ place in the Cuban consciousness” (p. 321).

Sugar, Cigars and Revolution makes an important contribution to Cuban diasporic history in New York and Pérez’s attention to detail and crafting of narrative is impressive. Yet it only tells one side of the story. While Pérez does mention some key Afro-Cuban male figures, notably Rafael Serra, more is needed on the history and experiences of the Afro-Cuban men and women as well as working-class white Cubans who migrated after 1868, and worked in the industries owned by the elite Cubans that Pérez so carefully documents. More on the impact of the Haitian Revolution, slavery, and emancipation in Cuba and the United States, as well as the role of labor movements, would have allowed for a capacious discussion concerning annexation and the growing divide among Cubans, especially in regard to nation-building and independence. While perhaps not numerically significant, Afro-Cuban revolutionaries greatly influenced Martí’s thinking, the political direction of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano, and the future of the Cuban diaspora in New York.

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