

## **“Swooning Beneath the Ardent Blaze of a Passionate Sun:” Representations of Women in Tourist Guidebooks to Cuba, 1918-1926**

*Ruby Guyot*

*Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt Universität zu Berlin*

[ruby.guyot@fu-berlin.de](mailto:ruby.guyot@fu-berlin.de)

### Abstract:

Focusing on tourist guidebooks to Cuba during the Long 1920s, this paper critically examines the ways in which Cuban women featured in tourist guidebooks authored by Americans. Using the tourist guidebook as a tool of analysis, the touristic power dynamic in Cuba is complicated by emphasizing the roles of guidebooks in the industry’s construction. By looking at instances of gendered and exoticized language as well as specific references to Cuban women in romantic and sexual contexts, this paper demonstrates the ways in which tourist guidebooks utilized gender, sex, and ethnic appearance as key attractions in selling Cuba as a pleasure paradise. The choice to represent Cuban women in specifically sexualized terms is also situated within the perspective of the US imperial dynamic, paying attention to how American men influenced the portrayal of Cuban women for the benefit of the burgeoning tourism industry.

### Author Biography:

Ruby Guyot is a Master’s student in the Global History program at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Her research interests lie in the history of tourism between Europe, North America, and Latin America, and more specifically how tourism intersects with gender, sexuality, and emotion.

A 1926 American tourist guidebook to Cuba waxes poetic about the myriad reasons why a traveller might choose to visit. It includes the basic assurances that “travel is cheap, easy, and safe,” “American money is used and much English is spoken,” and “people [are] friendly and helpful.”<sup>1</sup> Following these guarantees that the tourist’s needs for safety and familiarity would be met, the guide also promises “there is much of touristic value to be seen in small compass, where unusual and unexpected pleasures await the traveler.”<sup>2</sup> The guide does not define these “unusual and unexpected pleasures,” but readers might draw connections to later sections in the guide featuring, among other attractions, Cuban women. The guidebook features descriptions of physical attributes of women from different parts of the island, phrases to use to charm a lady, and where to find the island’s red-light district, alongside sections on food and transportation. These “unusual and unexpected pleasures,” then, were likely describing more than just the island’s unique terrain and Caribbean cuisine.

While the emphasis on Cuba’s ability to please the tourist demonstrated the island’s newfound popularity as the North American tropical playground by the 1920s, much of this perceived pleasure came from the depiction of the Cuban woman in tourist promotional materials such as guidebooks. These texts sold the island to male travellers in search of foreign adventures, both through gendered, hedonistic language and in explicit descriptions of the types of women Cuba had on offer. This paper critically examines tourist guidebooks to gain a deeper understanding of how American guidebook authors used Cuban women to market Cuba as a tourist paradise.<sup>3</sup> In addition, this paper situates these guidebook representations within a colonial

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Philip Terry, *Terry’s Guide to Cuba* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1926), iii, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89064200611>.

<sup>2</sup> Terry, iii.

<sup>3</sup> Several sparse references are made to middle- and upper-class travellers to Cuba from other regions, such as Canada, France, and Germany, in the secondary literature I consulted. However, because none of these sources provide concrete information on these travel groups, because the guidebooks referenced in this paper are marketed at

perspective, exploring the power dynamic between foreign men and local women amidst the wider context of US hegemony over Cuba. By looking at tourist guidebooks dating from 1918 to 1926, this paper will demonstrate how their authors represented Cuban women as sexualized, exoticized beings to market Cuba as a top travel site. Through their representation in tourism advertising, Cuban women became just another tool to promote Cuba as a “pleasure island,” while their own role in these representations was ambiguous, if not absent entirely. The choice of guidebook authors to represent Cuba and its women in such gendered, sensualized terms demonstrates the importance of the sexual narrative to the economics of the tourism industry, providing a clearer understanding of how gender and sexuality function in the production of guidebooks and under the neo-colonial setting of tourism.<sup>4</sup>

Few studies have thoroughly reviewed the growth and establishment of the tourism industry in Cuba, as the majority of the literature focuses on tourism post-1990.<sup>5</sup> The standout monograph on the subject is Rosalie Schwartz’s *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*, which follows the growth of the tourism industry in Cuba and the way it evolved until the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> Following similar histories of tourism, Schwartz examines the Cuban industry’s

---

and written by Americans, and also given that transportation connections were mentioned only from American ports and railway stations, this paper will limit itself to the demographic of Americans travelling to Cuba.

<sup>4</sup> Several critical works in the history of tourism have influenced the direction of my study: see Dean MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings,” *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (1973): 589–603, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2776259>; John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990); Erik Cohen, “The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues, and Findings,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984): 373–392, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083181>; and David Engerman, “Research Agenda for the History of Tourism: Towards an International Social History,” *American Studies International* 32, no. 2 (1994): 3–31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41279226>.

<sup>5</sup> For some of the available literature on later histories of tourism in Cuba, see for example Evan R. Ward, *Packaged Vacations: Tourism Development in the Spanish Caribbean* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008). Some of the literature is not explicitly historical, falling more into the social anthropology or marketing fields of scholarship. For example, see David Duval, ed., *Tourism in the Caribbean: Trends, Development, Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2004); Valerio Simoni, *Tourism and Informal Encounters in Cuba* (New York: Berghahn, 2016); and Florence E. Babb, *The Tourism Encounter: Fashioning Latin American Nations and Histories* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> See Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

foundations, peaks, and declines, connecting its development to a variety of local and global factors.<sup>7</sup> While Schwartz's study also engages with tourist promotional materials such as guidebooks in constructing her argument, it does not examine how guidebooks were constructed for a tourist audience. Schwartz also does not apply a gendered approach to her work, making only occasional references to the sexualization of women in touristic Havana. Focusing on one critical source base, this paper thus locates the Cuban tourist industry in the context of the imperial and gendered power dynamics of the Long 1920s.

**“A complete and trustworthy Guidebook has become a necessity:” The Tourist Guidebook as an Analytical Category<sup>8</sup>**

Although many different types of promotional tourist materials exist and form a part of the industry at large, this paper focuses on the American tourist guidebook as a means to understand Cuban tourism. The tourist guidebook as a genre of travel literature has a vivid history. Abridged travel suggestions could be found in ancient literature from the Middle East and the Mediterranean.<sup>9</sup> Guides about suggested routes and necessary etiquette also circulated in the age of the Grand Tour, or the travel rite of passage engaged upon by elites in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the tourist guidebook did not emerge as a distinct genre until the rise of the package tour in the nineteenth century, alongside the general development of mass tourism. Improvements in transportation technology brought people to destinations farther away in shorter times than ever before. Emergent middle-class populations

---

<sup>7</sup> Schwartz, xi-xv.

<sup>8</sup> Terry, iii.

<sup>9</sup> Eric G. E. Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 6-9.

around the globe, but particularly in Europe and the United States, developed new ideas of health, leisure, and culture that drew them beyond their native lands. Finally, imperialism in the nineteenth century inspired more Europeans and Americans to travel into the lands they colonized, thereby facilitating the growth of tourism industries. The oft-cited example of British-controlled Egypt and its connection to the Thomas Cook enterprise demonstrates how tourism could fall under the imperial toolkit as a means of cultural control, connecting the business of tourism with the apparatus of the colonial state.<sup>10</sup>

Tourist guidebooks were born out of the demand for accessible, affordable destination knowledge, and took off in earnest in the early nineteenth century. Publishing pioneers such as John Murray in Britain and Karl Baedeker in the German Rhineland gained notoriety for producing pocket-sized informative guides on specific routes or locations, opening a new market for travellers with the means of mobility in search of concise, trustworthy books to take on their journeys.<sup>11</sup> Guidebooks indeed often functioned alongside other types of travel literature, such as travel writings and advertisements published in newspapers and magazines, to provide would-be travellers with both the incentive and the information to undertake trips of their own. By the beginning of the twentieth century, guidebooks were a veritable literary genre, relied on by travellers and published by those seeking profit and recognition.

Scholars have frequently used guidebooks to explore sociohistorical elements of the tourist experience and the ways in which particular destinations were framed for foreign eyes.<sup>12</sup> They

---

<sup>10</sup> See Waleed Hazbun, "The East as an Exhibit: Thomas Cook & Son and the Origins of the International Tourism Industry in Egypt," in *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History*, ed. Philip Scranton and Janet F. Davidson (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 3-33; Zuelow, 1-59, 91-111.

<sup>11</sup> Zuelow, 78-79.

<sup>12</sup> Several highly informative studies that use tourist guidebooks as primary sources in the history of tourism are worth noting here. They include John M. MacKenzie, "Empires of Travel: British Guidebooks and Cultural Imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity, and Conflict*, ed. John K. Walton (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2005), 19-38; Rudy Koshar, "'What ought to be seen':

often factor as primary sources in a variety of studies, but have only recently been critically examined as an analytical category themselves.<sup>13</sup> In these studies, the guidebook has been separated from other types of tourist literature, such as travel writing and short-form advertisements, distinguished by its audience, format, and intended use. Guidebooks were not written for local inhabitants and instead typically catered to foreigners. Moreover, they were often written by authors who spoke the tourist's language, on both literal and cultural levels. Guidebooks also existed as tentative roadmaps for how to navigate a new place, with specific instructions or suggestions on what to see and how to see it. Finally, guidebooks also acted as both explicit and implicit curations of a foreign place. They included detailed information on a destination's history, culture, and people, constructing a specific vision of an area the traveller expected to see upon their arrival. In this way, guidebooks helped cultivate a national identity, and encouraged a tourist to contend with the things that made their destination foreign and unfamiliar. In other words, tourist guidebooks not only guided tourists on their pursuits for leisure abroad, but also constructed difference, positioning the tourists in opposition to the people and cultures they would encounter.<sup>14</sup>

Utilizing the guidebook as an as an object of analysis allows us to explore the intricacies of the tourism dynamic in greater detail, particularly when it comes to tourism as a form of power relations. While early literature understood tourism through a bipolar power structure between

---

Tourists' Guidebooks and National Identities in Modern Germany and Europe," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (1998): 323–340, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/261119>; Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Ben Looker, *Exhibiting Imperial London: Empire and the City in Late Victorian and Edwardian Guidebooks* (London: Centre for Urban and Community Research, 2002); Alan Sillitoe, *Leading the Blind: A Century of Guidebook Travel 1815-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1995); and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> See Victoria Peel and Anders Sørensen, *Exploring the Use and Impact of Travel Guidebooks* (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2016); Maya Mazor-Tregerman, Yoel Mansfield, and Ouzi Elyada, "Travel Guidebooks and the Construction of Tourist Identity," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 15, no. 1 (2017): 80-98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2015.1117094>; Nicholas T. Parsons, *Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook* (Sutton, UK: Stroud, 2007); Zuelow, 76-90.

<sup>14</sup> Peel and Sørensen, 15-29; Koshar, "What ought to be seen," 325-326.

“hosts” and “guests,” recent scholarship has diversified the perspective of who wields power within a touristic setting.<sup>15</sup> Rather than focusing solely on travellers and locals, some have argued for the inclusion of a third group: brokers, or any individuals, mechanisms, or larger entities involved as middlemen within the business of tourism.<sup>16</sup> This would necessitate the integration of guiding materials into the evaluation of power, as Erik Cohen has argued in his work on the role of tourist guides.<sup>17</sup> Tourist guidebooks fit seamlessly into this discussion: their role as intermediary between tourists and destinations negotiates the relationships between them, while also serving as an extension of power, arming the tourist with knowledge and images of their travel destination.

Understanding that guidebooks contribute to and uphold touristic power structures, guidebooks can then be read as discursive materials that are part of larger processes, including imperialism. Historians of tourism have long argued that tourism and imperialism are simultaneous developments of modernity, as they embolden and fortify each other; once an area has been colonized, tourism industries accommodating foreigners easily follow.<sup>18</sup> This was true in Cuba, where the tourism industry developed alongside emergent US influence in the country following Cuba’s independence from Spain. Schwartz’s study details the role of American capital in developing the tourism industry, and as Christine Skwiot has shown, the promotion of tourism to Cuba was a key facet of the American imperialistic program.<sup>19</sup> Although the US did not formally

---

<sup>15</sup> On the hosts and guests paradigm, see Valene L. Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> This argument is detailed in So-Min Cheong and Marc L. Miller, “Power and Tourism: A Foucauldian Observation,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 27, no. 2 (2000): 371-380, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00065-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00065-1).

<sup>17</sup> Erik Cohen, “The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 12 (1985): 5-29, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(85\)90037-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(85)90037-4).

<sup>18</sup> A thorough and engaging panel of several prominent and emerging tourism scholars provides much food for thought regarding tourism and imperialism: see Shelley Baranowski, Christopher Endy, Waleed Hazbun, Stephanie Malia Hom, Gordon Pirie, Trevor Simmons, and Eric G. E. Zuelow, “Tourism and Empire,” *Journal of Tourism History* 7, no. 1-2 (2015): 100-130, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2015.1063709>.

<sup>19</sup> See Christine Skwiot, *The Purposes of Paradise: US Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawaii* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 1-2. For more on the theoretical framework of cultural imperialism

colonize Cuba, American influence and power had concrete implications for the development of tourism to the island, and American writers, proprietors, and companies created many of the promotional materials for tourism. Cuba's tourism industry was thus designed within "the fabric of the colonial," demonstrating how tourism functions as an expression of neo-colonialism.<sup>20</sup> As such, by encouraging the exploration of faraway destinations under the political and economic control of their home government, guidebooks facilitate the cultural colonialism that tourism enables.<sup>21</sup>

Tourist guidebooks can also be read as critical representations of gender and sexuality. Understanding gender as a continually negotiated social performance, where roles both signify power and structure ways of being, tourist guidebooks often both implicitly and explicitly used gender and (hetero)sexuality to reinforce the tourist's authority in a new destination.<sup>22</sup> Guidebooks

---

between North and Latin America, also see Ricardo D. Salvatore, "The Enterprise of Knowledge: Representational Machines of Informal Empire," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 69-104.

<sup>20</sup> Malcolm Crick, "Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences: Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings, and Servility," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989): 322, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2155895>.

<sup>21</sup> Crick, 322-323. It is also important to note, as ever, that tourism is not solely a colonial endeavor dominated by one powerful actor, but it rather sees multiple forces engage with each other in a sort of struggle for influence and control. See Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). For more studies specifically using guidebooks as tools to examine colonialism under tourism, see Aparajita Mukhopadhyay, "Colonised Gaze? Guidebooks and Journeying in Colonial India," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37, no. 4 (2014): 656-669, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2014.952972>; Gerrit Verhoeven and Nina Payrhuber, "'Les pèlerins de la saison sèche': Colonial Tourism in the Belgian Congo, 1945-60," *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no. 3 (2019): 573-593, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009418761215>.

<sup>22</sup> Studies on gender and tourism, particularly in history, are continually being undertaken, although the field is still in need of development. Some important texts include Cara Aitchison, "Theorizing Other discourses of gender, tourism, and culture. Can the subaltern speak (in tourism)?" *Tourist Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001): 133-147, <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879760100100202>; Margaret Byrne Swain, "Gender in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 22, no. 2 (1995): 247-266, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(94\)00095-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(94)00095-6); Soile Veijola and Eeva Jokinen, "The Body in Tourism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 11, no. 3 (1994): 125-151, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327694011003006>; Vivian Kinnaird and Derek R. Hall, ed., *Tourism: A Gender Analysis* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley, 1994); Cynthia Enloe, "Lady Travelers, Beauty Queens, Stewardesses, and Chamber Maids: The International Gendered Politics of Tourism," in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014); Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Tamar Diana Wilson and Annelou Ypeij, "Introduction: Tourism, Gender, and Ethnicity," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 6 (November 2012): 5-16, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41702290>; and Barbara Grubner, Kerstin Tiefenbacher, and

catered specifically towards the needs of the male traveller, emphasizing his comfort, pleasure, and control even in the most foreign of locations.<sup>23</sup> Language that gendered and exoticized the tourist experience—emphasizing romantic, alluring destinations that were available to be explored, penetrated, or conquered—further promoted a dynamic which positioned masculine domination over feminine submission.<sup>24</sup> Given the image of Cuba as a pleasure island, or later as the “brothel of the Caribbean,” there is a need for a more critical, historicized analysis on gender and sex in Cuban tourism. Schwartz’s examination of pleasure focuses on class, exploring how wealth and class status were connected to the pursuit of pleasure for bourgeois Americans.<sup>25</sup> But pleasure, similar to other emotions, is a highly gendered concept, suggesting romantic and sexual fulfillment, as defined from a male perspective. By deconstructing the imperialist, gendered, and exoticized nature of tourist guidebooks to Cuba, one can unveil the underpinnings of the tourist industry’s rise and the impact of guides and brokers in creating images of the Caribbean for American consumption.

### ***Standard Guide to Cuba, 1918: Cuban Women as Tourist Attractions***

The tourism industry in Cuba developed initially rather slowly, owing to violent conflict and a lack of touristic infrastructure in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> In spite of these obstacles, however, some Americans still made the journey. Individuals with chronic illnesses

---

Patricia Zuckerhut, “Transnationale Intimbeziehungen: Zur aktuellen Transformationslogik von Gender und Sexualität im Ferntourismus,” *Anthropos* 108, no. 1 (2013): 205-218, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23510272>.

<sup>23</sup> Annette Pritchard and Nigel J. Morgan, “Privileging the Male Gaze: Gendered Tourism Landscapes,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 27, no. 4 (2000): 885-886, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00113-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00113-9).

<sup>24</sup> Pritchard and Morgan, 889-895.

<sup>25</sup> Schwartz, 1-15.

<sup>26</sup> Schwartz, xxi, 5-6; Richard E. Morris, “Hosts and guests in early Cuba tourism,” *Journal of Tourism History* 8, no. 2 (2016): 172-175, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2016.1212936>.

occasionally made trips to Havana and the Cuban inland for purposes of recuperation.<sup>27</sup> As they did so, they established connections with wealthy plantation owners and created demand for improved travel conditions through their travel accounts, which, as Richard Morris argues, facilitated the birth of the tourist industry in Cuba at-large.<sup>28</sup> As wealthy Americans increasingly pursued travel in the United States and beyond, and as their trust in travel literature increased, the Caribbean island soon became a destination of interest.<sup>29</sup>

Only after the Cuban independence of 1898, and the subsequent American military and political interventions, did tourism brokers begin to transform the island. Changes came rapidly in the period between 1907 and 1919, with real estate developers and politicians seeking to take advantage of potential financial gains.<sup>30</sup> In just over a decade, the Cuban state, in cooperation with foreign investors and tycoons, implemented new developments to accommodate tens of thousands of prospective visitors. For example, new luxury hotels sprang up across Havana, boasting hot water and electricity for all rooms as a result of public works projects designed to make Cuba a more comfortable travel destination.<sup>31</sup> Improvements to the island's transportation infrastructure and sanitation were explicitly billed by the Cuban government as not only beneficial for Cubans, but also in support of the tourism initiative.<sup>32</sup> Railways and steamship companies also increasingly promoted voyages to the island, emphasizing the fast, enjoyable experience of taking a well-equipped, modern vessel.<sup>33</sup> Journeys to Cuba from ports in New York and Florida provided ease

---

<sup>27</sup> Morris, 182.

<sup>28</sup> Morris, 182-183.

<sup>29</sup> For more on how tourist guidebooks became relevant in American tourism, see Will B. Mackintosh, "The Prehistory of the American Tourist Guidebook," *Book History* 21 (2018): 89-124, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2018.0003>.

<sup>30</sup> Schwartz, 17-38.

<sup>31</sup> Schwartz, 17-20.

<sup>32</sup> Schwartz, 17-20.

<sup>33</sup> Examples of these advertisements can be found in both tourist guides (no pagination).

of access for urban travellers, who could expect a certain standard of comfort from established transportation lines backed by American and foreign financiers. It was these investments and collaborations, spurred on by American capitalists and the Cuban government, that allowed for Cuba to be made into a holiday destination, whilst also further embedding the US into the island's economic structure.

US influence in Cuba at the beginning of the twentieth century was heavy-handed, with military occupations and direct political interferences under the guise of the Platt Amendment.<sup>34</sup> The US also exerted influence in Cuba's legal debates over the growth of tourism, specifically regarding proposed legislation to increase the construction of leisure sites such as casinos. A so-called "Monte Carlo bill" introduced in 1910 was met with widespread disapproval from the US, the tension of which contributed to the bill's ultimate failure.<sup>35</sup> For the most part, however, American influence in the growth of Cuban tourism favoured its development, with US investors pouring money into buying up land, building new leisure sites, and improving the material conditions of Havana in particular.<sup>36</sup>

As tourism promoters and the Cuban government primed the country for visitors, tourist guidebooks began to cater to a larger market. Previous guidebooks to Cuba tended to be written for specific kinds of tourists—the wealthy Havana-goer, the adventure-seeker, or the "invalid"—and they offered scant, outdated advice, often combining Cuba with other Caribbean islands.<sup>37</sup> Newer versions of guidebooks instead emphasized the changing political situation since Cuban

---

<sup>34</sup> Louis A. Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 151-159.

<sup>35</sup> Schwartz, 26-27.

<sup>36</sup> Schwartz, 42-47.

<sup>37</sup> A good example of this type of guidebook was one such text that included Cuba as a part of several other islands, focused on Havana, had a section specifically for "invalids," and implored the traveller to take firearms with them on their journey, as safety was a prime concern. See C.D. Tyng, *The Stranger in the Tropics: Being a Hand-Book for Havana and Guide Book for Travellers in Cuba, Puerto Rico and St. Thomas* (New York: American News Company, 1868), 14, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89095796835>.

independence (and American interference) and improved infrastructure that allowed for more extensive travel. The *Standard Guide to Cuba*, published by two American proprietors who organized tourist activities in Cuba, was one such guide that met this need.<sup>38</sup> The guide was written by Charles Reynolds, one half of the Foster and Reynolds publishing duo, who had been publishing the *Standard Guide* since at least 1905.<sup>39</sup> At under 200 pages and costing only 50 American cents, the guide was intended to function as an easy-to-consult, inexpensive overview of Cuba, to prepare the tourist for travel abroad, and to inspire interest and intrigue in the destination.

As a guidebook, the *Standard Guide* lives up to its name, providing a standard overview of Cuba for a general audience. It contains concise yet detailed descriptions of the island's history, and provides cultural tidbits appropriate to the traveller, from stories on Havana in the days of Spanish rule to the increasingly popular pastime of baseball.<sup>40</sup> The guide appealed to the tourist who was comfortable but still careful to find the best value, since it notes the prices of rail tickets while also still featuring advertisements for goods such as pianos.<sup>41</sup> It also presents the view that US intervention in Cuba was not only for the best, but that it was also supported by many Cubans.<sup>42</sup> In subtle ways, however, the guide seems to cater especially to the male traveller. Although the guide contains two advertisements for women's clothing, it otherwise envisions its audience as primarily male, with the use of masculine pronouns in conjunction with "the traveller." The guide

---

<sup>38</sup> Charles B. Reynolds, *Standard Guide to Cuba* (Havana, Cuba and New York: Foster & Reynolds Co. Publishing, 1918).

<sup>39</sup> It appears as if Reynolds was the author of the duo, while Foster was the 'on the ground' source; the book contains many instructions that if the tourist has any want or need, to simply 'Ask Mr. Foster' at his traveller's office in Havana. The duo also published guides to Florida and St. Augustine from the 1890s. The earliest catalogued version of the *Standard Guide to Cuba* I found was from 1905; see Charles B. Reynolds, *Standard Guide to Cuba* (Havana, Cuba and New York: Foster & Reynolds Co. Publishing, 1905), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100489610>.

<sup>40</sup> Reynolds, 29, 99.

<sup>41</sup> Reynolds, 12-13, advertisement without pagination.

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds, 49-50.

also describes the island using exoticized language, presenting it as “seductive,” “soft and balmy,” and “alluring and delightful.”<sup>43</sup>

Other sections of the guide explicitly discuss Cuban women, further connecting the romance of the island to the “pretty girls” who inhabited it.<sup>44</sup> Alongside a note on the common behaviour of leaving windows open for the circulation of air, for example, the authors state that this lifestyle “has an effect on the physique of the people.”<sup>45</sup> They suggest this sentiment is so common that it is “a subject of frequent remark by travelers,” before then quoting a famous American poet, who noted, “The girls as well as the young men have rather narrow shoulders, but as they advance in life, the chest, in the women particularly, seems to expand from year to year, till it attains an amplitude by no means common in our country.”<sup>46</sup> This sensualized depiction of Cuban women entices the tourist by comparing their bodies to those of women from their own country. By insisting that this observation about Cuban women’s physique was shared frequently by other presumably male visitors, the guidebook sanctioned the tourist’s desires, thus inviting him to experience Havana and its women for himself.

Scattered descriptions of Cuban women and their typical mannerisms also appear throughout the guidebook. One such reference is part of a small section on the behaviour of women who carried fans. The paragraph is mostly descriptive, elaborating on the various moods a lady might express by wielding a fan, but the authors also note that “the language of the fan in the Cuban’s hand is an adroit and expressive pantomime that requires no foreign interpreter.”<sup>47</sup> This suggests that a traveller could expect to communicate easily with Cuban women, giving tourists in

---

<sup>43</sup> Reynolds, 172, 175, 183, and advertisements without pagination.

<sup>44</sup> Reynolds, 175.

<sup>45</sup> Reynolds, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Reynolds, 22-23.

<sup>47</sup> Reynolds, 44.

pursuit of female company more reason to visit Havana. In case the subtle cues of the fan were not enough, the guidebook also includes a small Spanish-English dictionary, which contains useful words or phrases for everyday encounters. However, amidst the rather mundane sections like “Washing List” and “Food,” one section, ambiguously titled “Personality,” offers an interesting set of vocabulary words. The section, although short, features words such as *una rubia* (a blonde), *tez blanca* and *moreno* (fair complexion and “swarthy”), and *hermosa*, *bella*, and *bonita* (beautiful and pretty).<sup>48</sup> The guidebook therefore prepared the tourist with phrases that could be useful in charming a Cuban woman, or in asking for a woman of a specific hair and skin colour, all for his pursuit of pleasure. A tourist reading this guide could thus feel at ease knowing Cuba and its women would be available for him to discover.

While the guide does not make many explicit references to the diverse racial makeup of the Cuban population, it does make one specific remark related to the city of Camagüey.<sup>49</sup> Described rather romantically in the guide as a destination of “attractive pictures which lure the visitors to extended explorations,” the section goes on to discuss race in Camagüey’s population.<sup>50</sup> In particular, the guide notes that Camagüey is one of the least racially mixed parts of the island, containing the highest population of white settlers. Immediately following this information, the guide also remarks that Camagüey is reputed for its “beautiful women, more than any other town on the island.”<sup>51</sup> Although the author does not make the connection explicit, the juxtaposition of these statements suggests that female beauty is connected to whiteness. Such a statement, alongside other descriptions of Cuban women, reflects the intended reader—an educated, upper

---

<sup>48</sup> Reynolds, 143.

<sup>49</sup> Reynolds, 98.

<sup>50</sup> Reynolds, 146.

<sup>51</sup> Reynolds, 154.

middle-class American male, who was curious enough about the alluring nature of the island but not yet enticed by more blatant sexualization and exoticization.

The *Standard Guide to Cuba* is a concise advertisement for the island, focusing on the most important details a traveller would need to know in planning a trip. Suggestive references about white Cuban women are telling, as they demonstrate the possibilities for romance and sex during travel, albeit in a veiled way. In this regard, the guide contributed to the cultural colonization of Cuba, as it aimed to open up the island for further visitors, with careful, deliberate details on romantic encounters. Indeed, the *Standard Guide* provides a glimpse of what was to come for promotional tourist materials to Cuba, as the tourism industry continued to expand. Cuba's passage of a tourism bill in 1919 allowed for the construction of new lodgings, roads, and "recreational centers," which encompassed, among other things, movie houses and casinos.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the bill established a committee for the promotion of tourism known as the Cuban Tourism Commission, which was made up of government officials, business proprietors, investors, and promoters, ensuring the island would continue to be marketed to wealthy Americans looking for pleasure abroad.<sup>53</sup> Future marketing efforts continued to capitulate to the desires of tourists, and as Cuba was increasingly identified with vices such as gambling and drinking into the 1920s, promotional materials used Cuban women to tempt tourists and market the island.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Terry's Guide to Cuba, 1926: Selling Sex under the Sun***

---

<sup>52</sup> Schwartz, 31-33.

<sup>53</sup> Schwartz, 33.

<sup>54</sup> Schwartz, 31-34, 44; Tony L. Henthorne, *Tourism in Cuba: Casinos, Castros, and Challenges* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2018), 11-12.

By the mid-1920s, tourism to Cuba had increased rapidly, with the 1919 tourism bill incentivizing the construction of new leisure sites and easier travel routes. The years between 1924 and 1931 saw the peak of early tourism in Cuba, with the industry experiencing steady growth and revenue until the arrival of the global economic depression.<sup>55</sup> Americans were lured to Cuba for a variety of reasons, among them the steady economic boom in the US, which provided the middle- and upper-classes with an influx of cash to spend. Cuba was also elevated to the spotlight after a series of particularly devastating weather seasons in Florida, a previous hotspot for sun-seeking travellers.<sup>56</sup> Hurricanes which destroyed and killed thousands of people on the Florida coastline merely knocked over a few lampposts in Havana, making it a more attractive destination for cautious visitors.<sup>57</sup> Finally, Americans could count on Cuba as a place where alcoholic drinks could be easily procured, as Prohibition shuttered bars back home.<sup>58</sup> As such, the development of the industry was intricately linked to the emergent travel desires of an increasingly mobile group of adventurous Americans.

The increase in the number of tourists travelling to Cuba during this time period—with statistics being unreliable, but suggesting vacationers exceeding hundreds of thousands in any given season—was not merely due to material improvements in Cuban touristic facilities or in conditions at home.<sup>59</sup> Their arrival was engineered in large part by the burgeoning market in travel

---

<sup>55</sup> Schwartz, 80.

<sup>56</sup> See Tracy J. Revels, *Sunshine Paradise: A History of Florida Tourism* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2011), 63-78.

<sup>57</sup> Schwartz, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Henthorne, 12. For a closer look at Prohibition and its connections with Cuba, see Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, “U.S. Prohibition and Smuggling from Cuba,” in *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*, trans. Russ Davidson (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 17-30.

<sup>59</sup> Statistics are found sporadically in Schwartz’s text. For example, one sentence mentions 600,000 tourists to Cuba between July 1928 to July 1932, and another mentions at least 80,000 tourists per year in the 1920s. More tangible breakdowns of these numbers were not available. See Schwartz, 68.

literature, including magazine columns, advertisements, and the now-ubiquitous guidebook.<sup>60</sup> Articles dedicated to selling Cuba as a must-see destination, promising lavish entertainment and picturesque sights, appeared frequently in the pages of popular travel magazines. Stories of elegant social gatherings after a day at the horse track or of ringing in a new year under the sun circulated widely in travel literature, luring Americans with means to Havana and beyond.<sup>61</sup>

Although the audience of travel literature represents a broader demographic, as women were also fervid magazine readers, the ideal tourist in many guidebooks was still male and white. In his exemplary study of travel literature in early twentieth-century Germany, Rudy Koshar highlights the proliferation of “by gaslight” guidebooks, which were designed for male travellers.<sup>62</sup> Originating in the mid-nineteenth century, these guides show the ‘underworld’ of the city in question, particularly its seedier spots and activities, catering specifically to businessmen on sojourns in new locales. These guidebooks were especially popular in the Interwar era, when leisure culture and changing perceptions of gender and sexual behavior made seeking out romance and sex while travelling an especially exciting holiday venture. The Cuba of the 1920s, which had been primed for nearly two decades as a site for pleasure, made a perfect destination for such “by gaslight” guidebooks.

It was in this context that *Terry’s Guide to Cuba* (1926) was published by the major publishing company Houghton Mifflin, as part of a series of T. Philip Terry’s travel guides for destinations ranging from Mexico to Japan.<sup>63</sup> The Cuba guide, at over 500 pages and costing \$3.50, served as a comprehensive tool for Americans planning a trip, from a name and imprint that might

---

<sup>60</sup> Schwartz, 55.

<sup>61</sup> Schwartz, 80-82.

<sup>62</sup> See Koshar, “Sex and Class,” in *German Travel Cultures*, 81-97.

<sup>63</sup> Not much else is available on his background, other than advertisements for his other books in this one.

be familiar to vacationers. Although more expensive than the *Standard Guide*, *Terry's Guide* is packed with information, including extensive sections on the history, art, culture, fauna, and cuisine of Cuba, from Havana to the lesser-known cities and towns. With plenty of attention to money-saving tricks, it also appealed to the more middle-class traveller, suggesting that the market for tourist guidebooks was diversifying its audience by seeking to accommodate differing types of individuals.

But if *Terry's Guide to Cuba* appealed to a broader market, it still centered the male American as its target audience. Like other tourist guides, the opening pages offer brief glimpses of the various destinations a tourist might visit during *his* stay, and all of these descriptions include alluring and sexually suggestive language. For example, Terry recommends an area called the Isle of Pines, arguing that, “No traveler who loves romanticism and tropical beauty charmingly blended [...] will omit a visit.”<sup>64</sup> Another site, Ancient Santiago, features as “one of the loveliest and most romantically historic bays in the southern world, [and] possesses a lure which the most blasé traveler finds difficulty in resisting.”<sup>65</sup> Finally, for the athletically inclined, Terry suggests Pico de Turquino and its “virgin fields of such richness that a long lifetime will not suffice to exhaust their interest.”<sup>66</sup> The guidebook’s references to an area’s romantic charm, its temptation and lure, and its unexplored potential denote male desire. Even in its descriptions, the guidebook centres Cuba’s romantic and sexual charms before it even mentions Cuban women.

Terry also dedicates an entire section to “The Cuban People,” quickly jumping to a discussion of Cuban women. This section sits between the typical topics of guidebooks, like recommendations for restaurants, travel routes, and public safety. The paragraphs on Cuban

---

<sup>64</sup> Terry, 12.

<sup>65</sup> Terry, 12.

<sup>66</sup> Terry, 12.

women are mostly fawning, characterizing them as “noted for their beauty, vivacity, and charm.”<sup>67</sup> The descriptions focus almost entirely on their winsome appearances and affable personalities, providing an image to tourists of what may await them on their visit. Terry even includes a section on Cuban women’s desires, describing them as fond of “bonbons, bright colours, music, dancing, and flowers” rather than the more scholarly pursuits of “books and reading.”<sup>68</sup>

Although the section aims to “correct” stereotypes about the Cuban woman, portraying her as “by no means the passionate creature she is sometimes represented to be,” Terry goes on to detail when Cuban women become available for romance.<sup>69</sup> Immediately following a line on how the Cuban woman is maternal and well-suited for marriage, Terry suggests that, “In Cuba women mature early, and at 16 the alluring tropical bud is ready to evolve into a winsome and adorable flower.”<sup>70</sup> He makes a similar comment on the sexual maturation of Cuban girls later in the guide when describing the types of people the tourist might encounter at a train station. Amidst a sea of colourful Cuban characters, Terry observes “that under this quickening sun the Cuban girls are almost as generously developed at 14 as their pale Northern sisters are at 20, and also that genuine beauties are more common than in the colder regions.”<sup>71</sup> The obvious sexual connotations and the depiction of Cuban women’s suitability for marriage and motherhood are striking in a tourist guide. Terry’s remarks on the sexual availability of Cuban girls have seemingly little to do with the typical tourist pursuits of sun and sand, but were still considered important enough to note more than once in the guide. While other sections throughout the book also focus on ostensibly non-essential information, including those on art or national history, these deliberate representations of Cuban

---

<sup>67</sup> Terry, 37.

<sup>68</sup> Terry, 37.

<sup>69</sup> Terry, 37.

<sup>70</sup> Terry, 37.

<sup>71</sup> Terry, 313.

female sexuality sell the island to tourists seeking pleasures beyond alcoholic beverages and late-night gambling.

The frequent references to Cuban women in *Terry's Guide to Cuba* are also punctuated by explicit discussions of their racial backgrounds. Although the *Standard Guide* is reticent to make remarks about non-white women, *Terry's Guide to Cuba* does not hesitate in using the image of *La Mulata* (the mixed-race woman) to show off the island's allure.<sup>72</sup> The famous nineteenth-century Cuban play *Cecilia Valdés*, for example, is mentioned throughout the guidebook, in various historical and literary asides. The story portrays a beautiful mixed-race woman who falls in love with her half-brother, a white Spaniard, while rebuking the advances of a Black lower-class musician. Although the play ends in tragedy for Cecilia, who is thrown in prison after attempting revenge on her former upper-class lover, Terry deploys the allure of *La Mulata* Cecilia to encapsulate the island as a land of romantic availability. The guide lauds the play as perfectly portraying "Cuban life, feminine intrigue, slavery and Spanish colonial episodes," the central charms of the island to American tourists.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Terry presents *Cecilia Valdés* as "a masterpiece of power, beauty and charm; fairly drenched with tropical grace and a woman's consuming love of love."<sup>74</sup> In this way, the guide invokes the celebrated and widely-known image of the sexualized, mixed-race Caribbean woman to invite the tourist to seek out his own Cecilia Valdés in the harbours of Havana.

---

<sup>72</sup> By the 1920s, this mixed-race woman as a symbol of (specifically Latin American) sexuality had become commonplace in tourism advertising. See Schwartz, 86; L. Kaifa Roland, *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha: An Ethnography of Racial Meanings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9; and Catherine Cocks, "Lands of Romance," in *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 124-149.

<sup>73</sup> Terry, 102.

<sup>74</sup> Terry, 102.

Aside from preparing the tourist with descriptions of Cuban women's appearances, personalities, and desires, as well as their sexual availability, the guide also directly informs travellers of amorous entertainment in Havana. Some of these remarks warn the tourist of particularly seedy establishments, where the pursuit of pleasure came at a cost. For example, Terry alludes to certain theatres "for men only (*para hombres solamente*)" where one could find "vulgar pantomime and obscene suggestion."<sup>75</sup> The "plays" at these establishments were performed by "globular females with violent complexions and belladonna eyes" that only a truly desperate or "prurient" man would desire.<sup>76</sup> The guide emphasizes that visits to such establishments, although technically legal, could land the tourist in hot water. Patrons could be subjected to police raids, having their wallet stolen, or perhaps worst of all, exposure to "an entomological congress in which *pulex irritans* or *Phthirus pubic* are inconspicuous but hungry elements."<sup>77</sup> Informing the tourist of the potential for public embarrassment or even parasites, Terry takes responsibility for protecting travellers from their unchecked impulses, or at least by suggesting which establishments were not worth the risk while still providing the details for said pleasure dens.

While the guide warns the tourist against seedier or more dangerous destinations for sexual pleasure, it also hints at where to go or what to look for instead. When describing the intricacies of windows in Havana, Terry notes in an aside that in "certain naughty places where the bud and blossom of the half-world foregather and practice wicked arts," a tourist might find himself greeted by "an impish courtesan face" who calls "*venga para acá* (come here!)".<sup>78</sup> Immediately following this passage is another picture of what the tourist might see through an open window, from "generous, fugitive glimpses of alluring interiors" to "feminine forms in provocatively revealing

---

<sup>75</sup> Terry, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Terry, 54.

<sup>77</sup> Terry, 54. The Latin terms in italics are house fleas and pubic lice, respectively.

<sup>78</sup> Terry, 193.

negligee.”<sup>79</sup> Although these sentences describe different scenes, one suggesting a potential brothel and the other detailing an accidental intimate glance into a regular home, both rely on sexualized representations of Cuban women. The tourist is thus primed to see Cuba’s culture of open windows as not just an interesting example of cultural difference, but also as an opportunity for voyeurism, to spot beautiful women in a state of undress—or, depending on the neighbourhood, to purchase sex.

In its dedication to informing the tourist about everything he could desire during his trip, the guidebook also addresses prostitution directly, despite its taboo status. Prostitution in Cuba was dubiously legal and deregulated at the time although it was looked down upon by many Cubans and, in Havana, restricted to a specific area of town.<sup>80</sup> The guide includes several paragraphs on prostitution in its section on Havana’s nightlife, teasing that “those in the know easily find delirious haunts where star-eyed, radiant-faced *señoritas* and surprisingly emancipated demoiselles dance the winsome and beguiling *habanera* without fear of being pinched by some horse-faced minion of the law.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, to further assure the tourist that local police would employ a hands-off approach, the guide stresses the authorities’ “solicitude for one’s safety rather than an inquisitorial boring into one’s private affairs.”<sup>82</sup> The tourist might thus conclude that he could pursue his desires without fear of the repercussions he might experience in North America, making Havana an attractive destination for those seeking out sexual encounters.

Finally, for ever-curious travellers explicitly looking for sex, the guide provides more specific information on where to find brothels or prostitutes in Havana. While remarking that

---

<sup>79</sup> Terry, 193.

<sup>80</sup> Tiffany A. Sippial, *Prostitution, Modernity, and the Making of the Cuban Republic, 1840-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 163.

<sup>81</sup> Terry, 200.

<sup>82</sup> Terry, 200.

“hetairism” remains a “delicate sociological evil,” and that “brothels and harlotry are not supposed to exist in Havana but it is believed that they do,” Terry seemingly ignores his own moral judgement and his supposed doubt of the industry’s existence to provide further information.<sup>83</sup> Terry then lists a series of roads and wharves where “the salaciously-inclined may witness startling scenes in the flesh or by means of moving pictures.”<sup>84</sup> In case the exact roads were not enough for the tourist to find his way, the guide also provides a helpful hint to look for “the cryptic number *soixante-neuf* (sesenta y nueve, or 69)” on the houses in order to locate said establishments with ease.<sup>85</sup>

These pseudo-warnings against Havana’s nightlife continue, as the guide illuminates the particular perils of the women on the wharves. Terry describes these areas after dark as “a prurient spot resorted to by courtesans varying in complexion from peach white to coal black; 15-year old flappers and ebony antiques [...] studiously displaying their physical charms.”<sup>86</sup> The women are portrayed as “gossamer wantons with loving dispositions, who are brutally referred to as p—s and *prostitutas*,” known to “practice the scarlet arts of Aspasia and sacrifice themselves on the altar of Aphrodite.”<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, despite a tepid suggestion that tourists avoid these areas, Terry includes precise details on where to find women selling sex, indicating that readers desired such information despite prevailing North American social mores regarding prostitution. Regardless of how Terry might have personally felt about the trade, evidenced by his numerous cautions against seeking out sex workers in Cuba, prostitution was relevant enough to the tourist experience that

---

<sup>83</sup> Terry, 200. “Hetairism” has several meanings, but in a general sense it refers to sexual relations outside of wedlock.

<sup>84</sup> Terry, 200.

<sup>85</sup> Terry, 200.

<sup>86</sup> Terry, 200-201.

<sup>87</sup> Terry, 201. The word censored by the book, by my educated guess, is likely *putas*. The name Aspasia references an Athenian woman who was the lover of Pericles, reputed to have been a prostitute.

he includes it amongst more banal travel tips. In other words, Terry's considerable effort in marketing Cuba as a lust-filled destination required the commodification of Cuban women's bodies through advertisements for Havana's sex trade.

*Terry's Guide to Cuba* demonstrates succinctly how tourist guidebooks both created and facilitated male visitors' desires. While emphasizing repeatedly the beauty of the island through enticing feminine descriptions, as well as the physical beauty of Cuban women, the guidebook creates a sexual expectation for men travelling to Cuba. Allusions to Havana's "many beautiful Cuban women" and boasts that travellers would be "swooning beneath the ardent blaze of a passionate sun" alongside explicit guides to Havana's sex trade were meant to draw men to Cuba as a pleasure destination.<sup>88</sup> These guidebooks contributed to the sexualized, exoticized representation of Cuban women in the promotion of the tourist trade, as their bodies became intimately tied to the landscape of tourism and the entertainment that tourists sought out during their short stays.

### **Conclusion: Women's Agency in the Tourism Dynamic**

During the golden years of Cuban tourism in the Long 1920s, tourist guidebooks relied heavily on sexualized, racialized representations of Cuban women. Painting Cuba as a land of beautiful and sexually available ladies, promoters of tourism enticed male travellers to the island, so they might empty their wallets for the possibility of a romantic or sexual encounter. Through a mixture of coy descriptions of Havana's maidens' sexual availability and appearance and explicit information on the sex trade, these guidebooks constructed Cuba as a pleasure island filled with

---

<sup>88</sup> Terry, 333, 480.

seductive landscapes and irresistible entertainment, as well as alluring, racially diverse women, eager to satisfy North American men's desires. In doing so, these guidebooks centred the pursuit of sex as a mainstream tourist attraction in Cuba, giving the island its long-lasting reputation as the "brothel of the Caribbean," which haunted it throughout the twentieth century.

Given that tourism advertising was developed, promoted, and written by a select group—namely, the Cuban Tourism Committee, the foreign industry investors, and private guidebook authors—the Cuban women whose representations were central to the industry's marketing strategy likely had little to do with their depictions. Although it is impossible to ascertain how Cuban women felt about their representations in guidebooks, it is unlikely that they had much input on decisions to portray them as physically attractive, romance-seeking, and sexually available. Promotional materials like guidebooks were usually written by "experienced travelers," who, in the interwar years, were mostly men. In other words, these guidebooks were written by and for white American men. The authors spoke their audience's language and shared similar cultural understandings and social expectations, making them a trustworthy source for would-be travellers. Besides relating the benefits of the US intervention in independent Cuba, and the supposedly near-universal consent of the Cuban people to American intervention, these authors harnessed the image of Cuban women to further a narrative of American sexual domination over the island, in both metaphorical and literal terms. Although it is possible that guidebook writers consulted with local Cubans and had an understanding of Cuban culture—as suggested by the many pages dedicated to explaining cultural and social intricacies to a foreign audience—ultimately, they wrote from their own perspective as privileged foreigners. The fetishization of Cuban women as objects of desire and adventure for American men thus reflects the power

imbalance maintained by foreign, American men over the local population, entrenching these specific roles for Cuban women in the burgeoning tourism industry for decades to come.

Understanding the significance of representation in the tourist dynamic in independent Cuba is an ongoing process. We may never know, for example, how American men who consulted these guidebooks actually used them, and whether guides to romance on the island truly inspired dogged pursuers to roam the wharves looking for sex. Even the women who were represented may have had their own stake in these representations—some Cuban women may have benefitted from the increased tourist attention, whether financially, socially, or even personally. However, it is clear more work must be done to understand how women in particular experienced the emergence of the tourism industry in Cuba and their representations within it. The conventional portrayal of women as supposedly lacking engagement with historical processes—women as spectators, or as counterparts to the transformations driven by men—continues to be an untenable and uncritical way of examining the past. A more thorough examination of tourism in Cuba, which fully incorporates the perspectives of locals, and more specifically local women, is necessary to understand the complex power dynamics at play in the cultivation of the industry.

The tourism boom in Cuba did not last forever, with the economic depression of the 1930s temporarily tapering the desire for international travel, and the 1920s represented the peak of the island as a tropical playground. Nowhere else could Americans find salacious entertainment so close to home, with tourists lured into casinos and clandestine movie houses throughout the decade. For eager travellers and industry makers alike, the construction of Cuba as a pleasure island through the proliferation of guidebooks provided ample opportunities for sun, sand, and sex, where American men could fulfill romantic fantasies sold to them by clever advertisers. For the

women on sale, however, the realities of having their bodies exhibited as attractions for the benefit of foreign men were not as idyllic as these advertisements made them out to be.

### Works Cited—Primary Sources

- Reynolds, Charles B. *Standard Guide to Cuba*. Havana, Cuba and New York: Foster & Reynolds Co. Publishing, 1918.
- Terry, T. Philip. *Terry's Guide to Cuba*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926.  
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89064200611>.
- Tyng, C. D. *The Stranger in the Tropics: Being a Hand-Book for Havana and Guide Book for Travellers in Cuba, Puerto Rico and St. Thomas*. New York: American News Company, 1868. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89095796835>.

### Works Cited—Secondary Sources

- Aitchison, Cara. "Theorizing Other discourses of gender, tourism, and culture. Can the subaltern speak (in tourism)?" *Tourist Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001): 133-147.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/146879760100100202>.
- Babb, Florence E. *The Tourism Encounter: Fashioning Latin American Nations and Histories*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Baranowski, Shelley, Christopher Endy, Waleed Hazbun, Stephanie Malia Hom, Gordon Pirie, Trevor Simmons, and Eric G. E. Zuelow. "Tourism and Empire." *Journal of Tourism History* 7, no. 1-2 (2015): 100-130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2015.1063709>.
- Cheong, So-Min, and Marc L. Miller. "Power and Tourism: A Foucauldian Observation." *Annals of Tourism Research* 27, no. 2 (2000): 371-380. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00065-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00065-1).
- Cocks, Catherine. "Lands of Romance." In *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas*, 124-149. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Cohen, Erik. "The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues, and Findings." *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984), 373-392. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2083181>.
- . "The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role." *Annals of Tourism Research* 12 (1985): 5-29. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(85\)90037-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(85)90037-4).
- Crick, Malcolm. "Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences: Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings, and Servility." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989), 307-344.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2155895>.
- Desmond, Jane. *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

- Duval, David, ed. *Tourism in the Caribbean: Trends, Development, Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Engerman, David. "Research Agenda for the History of Tourism: Towards an International Social History." *American Studies International* 32, no. 2 (1994): 3–31. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41279226>.
- Enloe, Cynthia. "Lady Travelers, Beauty Queens, Stewardesses, and Chamber Maids: The International Gendered Politics of Tourism." In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014.
- Grubner, Barbara, Kerstin Tiefenbacher, and Patricia Zuckerhut. „Transnationale Intimbeziehungen: Zur aktuellen Transformationslogik von Gender und Sexualität im Ferntourismus.“ *Anthropos* 108, no. 1 (2013): 205-218. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23510272>.
- Hazbun, Waleed. "The East as an Exhibit: Thomas Cook & Son and the Origins of the International Tourism Industry in Egypt." In *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History*, edited by Philip Scranton and Janet F. Davidson, 3-33. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Henthorne, Tony L. *Tourism in Cuba: Casinos, Castros, and Challenges*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2018.
- Kinnaird, Vivian, and Derek R. Hall, ed. *Tourism: A Gender Analysis*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley, 1994.
- Koslar, Rudy. *German Travel Cultures*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.
- . "'What ought to be seen': Tourists' Guidebooks and National Identities in Modern Germany and Europe." *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (1998): 323–340. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/261119>.
- Looker, Ben. *Exhibiting Imperial London: Empire and the City in Late Victorian and Edwardian Guidebooks*. London: Centre for Urban and Community Research, 2002.
- MacCannell, Dean. "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings." *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (1973): 589–603. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2776259>.
- MacKenzie, John M. "Empires of Travel: British Guidebooks and Cultural Imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century." In *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity, and Conflict*, edited by John K. Walton, 19-38. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2005.
- Mackintosh, Will B. "The Prehistory of the American Tourist Guidebook." *Book History* 21 (2018): 89-124. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bh.2018.0003>.

- Mazor-Tregerman, Maya, Yoel Mansfield, and Ouzi Elyada. "Travel guidebooks and the construction of tourist identity." *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 15, no. 1 (2017): 80-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2015.1117094>.
- Merrill, Dennis. *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Morris, Richard E. "Hosts and guests in early Cuba tourism." *Journal of Tourism History* 8, no. 2 (2016): 167-183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2016.1212936>.
- Mukhopadhyay, Aparajita. "Colonised Gaze? Guidebooks and Journeying in Colonial India." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37, no. 4 (2014): 656-669. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2014.952972>.
- Parsons, Nicholas T. *Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook*. Sutton, UK: Stroud, 2007.
- Peel, Victoria, and Anders Sørensen. *Exploring the Use and Impact of Travel Guidebooks*. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2016.
- Perez, Louis A. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Pritchard, Annette, and Nigel J. Morgan. "Privileging the Male Gaze: Gendered Tourism Landscapes." *Annals of Tourism Research* 27, no. 4 (2000): 884-905. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(99\)00113-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(99)00113-9).
- Revels, Tracy J. *Sunshine Paradise: A History of Florida Tourism*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2011.
- Roland, L. Kaifa. *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha: An Ethnography of Racial Meanings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. "U.S. Prohibition and Smuggling from Cuba." In *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*, translated by Russ Davidson, 17-30. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Salvatore, Ricardo D. "The Enterprise of Knowledge: Representational Machines of Informal Empire." In *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, 69-104. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Schwartz, Rosalie. *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Sillitoe, Alan. *Leading the Blind: A Century of Guidebook Travel 1815-1914*. London: Macmillan, 1995.

- Simoni, Valerio. *Tourism and Informal Encounters in Cuba*. New York: Berghahn, 2016.
- Sippial, Tiffany A. *Prostitution, Modernity, and the Making of the Cuban Republic, 1840-1920*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
- Skwiot, Christine. *The Purposes of Paradise: US Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawaii*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- Smith, Valene L., ed. *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.
- Swain, Margaret Byrne. "Gender in Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 22, no. 2 (1995): 247-266. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(94\)00095-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(94)00095-6).
- Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage, 1990.
- Veijola, Soile, and Eeva Jokinen. "The Body in Tourism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 11, no. 3 (1994): 125-151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327694011003006>.
- Verhoeven, Gerrit, and Nina Payrhuber. "'Les pèlerins de la saison sèche': Colonial Tourism in the Belgian Congo, 1945-60." *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no. 3 (2019): 573-593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009418761215>.
- Ward, Evan R. *Packaged Vacations: Tourism Development in the Spanish Caribbean*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.
- Wilson, Tamar Diana, and Annelou Ypeij. "Introduction: Tourism, Gender, and Ethnicity." *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 6 (November 2012): 5-16. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41702290>.
- Zuelow, Eric G. E. *A History of Modern Tourism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.