
Reviewed by Toloo Riazi

The focus of *The Guerrilla Legacy of the Cuban Revolution* by Anna Clayfield, published in 2019, is the guerrilla origin of the Cuban Revolution that helped not only the creation, circulation, repetition and perpetuation of certain statements, but also the legitimacy of certain beliefs and values in Cuba’s public imagination (p. 11). Clayfield basically investigates the ways in which the guerrilla legacy of the Cuban Revolution is employed to shape the Cuban people’s perception of the revolution in its aftermath. As indicated by Fidel Castro, the Cuban Revolution is ‘olive green . . . the color of the uniform of the Rebel Army’ (quoted on p. 165). In her book, the author argues that the replication of the past and of revolutionary heroes has been present for six decades after the triumph of the revolution. Evidence is displayed throughout the book. Analysis of slogans and images, verbal and visual languages, political culture, and veneration and emulation of revolutionary heroes are some of the tropes at the disposal of the author to develop her thesis. Clayfield adopts a chronological structure to analyse the revolution and its aftermath. She puts an extensive range of newspapers, Fidel Castro’s speeches, history books, Che Guevara’s writings, and army manuals under scrutiny to prove her argument.

Clayfield’s first chapter provides a brief yet important history of guerrilla warfare and the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. She assigns primary importance to romanticised images of rebels and shows how Fidel Castro and his comrades constantly bound themselves and their cause to the martyrs of the Cuban War of Independence and Che Guevara, as the ultimate embodiment of sacrifice, in order to create a line of continuity that would reinvent those glorious days and grant them historical legitimacy. Clayfield explores, in particular, the figure of Che Guevara in this chapter and works on Che’s doctrine on sacrifice, *foco* theory, subjective conditions, conversion, and redemption, inter alia. She discusses that the guerrilla legacy has as much to do with the utopian future as with the past. The official discourse, as Clayfield discusses, found Guevara to be useful in keeping the revolutionary mandate alive.

The second chapter offers a convincing argument about the role of language promoting *guerrillero*sm and in constituting the Cuban people’s conception of the revolution, which is also a matter of ‘words and wordings’ (quoted on p. 8). Clayfield draws on Michel Foucault and his regime of truth and explores some

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1 Toloo Riazi is a lecturer at University of California, Santa Barbara.
primordial traits of the politics of established truth, such as the way truth is produced, transmitted or excluded. The author minutely investigates Castro’s speeches through the use of ‘presupposition’ and ‘intertextuality’ to show how certain ‘symbols and slogans represent certain beliefs and values that have been consciously promoted to mould the way Cuban citizens respond to the revolutionary project’ (pp. 6–7). She continues analysing the use of these methods in the following chapters. What is at the quest of this chapter is the ideological resonance of words in contributing to social changes. Clayfield’s study of lexical items, such as ‘lucha’ and ‘deber’ reveals how these words are stamped with specific military and ideological connotations and are also loaded with ‘Cuba’s history of struggle’ (p. 76). She draws attention to the ways in which manipulative presuppositions appeal to people’s background knowledge through constant allusions to different symbols and myths.

The third chapter examines the 1970s, or the period of ‘militarization’ or ‘Sovietization’ in Cuba, and the ongoing promotion of guerrilla values originated in the early 1960s (p. 81). To this end, she studies texts such as *Instrucción política FAR*, *Hombradía de Antonio Maceo*, *Verde Olivo*, and *Moncada*. This chapter successfully keeps the line of continuity with the previous chapters and the general thesis of the book in proving the use of guerrillerista language in the service of official discourse and its hegemonic control.

The next chapter focuses on the 1980s, the period of siege and socialism (p. 110). Clayfield compares the previous periods and this period and concludes that ‘self-sacrifice’ was the culminating point of the last stages, whereas the 1980s was characterised by ‘protecting the dignity and legacy of a Revolution and nation that were at risk of annihilation’ (p. 111). Besides this, encouraging people to rectify all that was far from revolutionary spirit and virtues are crucial at that point. By the same token, the author’s study of texts published in the period indicates that although a religious undertone is still noticeable, there is a shift in tone from the ‘ideological’ to the more ‘practical’ (p. 112).

The fifth chapter spans the period from 1989 to 2003 and most importantly highlights the so-called Special Period. The chapter studies the regime’s attempt to muster mass support through *guerrillerismo* in a moment when people were facing a tough economic crisis. Clayfield argues that the image of Guevara was evoked on different occasions to remedy Cuba’s siege and economic hardships.

In the next chapter, covering the years from 2006 to 2018, the author aims to demonstrate how official rhetoric has employed history to legitimise its political doctrine. The evoked image of the martyrs of the Revolution, such as Camilo Cienfuegos and Guevara, remind people of their historical past and as a result their ‘deber’.
Clayfield, in her last chapter, offers an interesting summary and conclusion to her own argument. *The Guerrilla Legacy of the Cuban Revolution* is a well researched and instructive book that sheds light on Cuba’s political culture through the lense of *guerrillerismo*. Clayfield’s research background and her close reading of other texts are obvious in her argument. I believe that one of the most important contributions of the author is her analysis of the concept of militarism in the Cuban context. She includes the guerrilla origins and Cuban political culture to rightly conclude, ‘If discourse is seen to produce truth, then guerrillerismo has aimed to create a reality in which what appears to Western observers as militarism is made to seem otherwise in the Cuban context’ (p. 168). It is guerrillerismo that would tell people what a correct action is, individually and collectively, in a given situation.