

emphasizes history's connection to social change while questioning, investigating, and understanding the tenuous relationship between nature and humans. Furthermore, his extensive research highlights this link and includes published works focusing on the environmental history of Brazil and Latin America during the colonial period. Awarded the 2008 Melville Book Prize for Environmental History, this work is useful for historians, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, and researchers in other natural and social science disciplines as it expands the realm of historical players outside of human constructs and encourages interdisciplinary research methods.

*Jennifer Huerta*

Louis A. Perez Jr. *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Pp. 333. Cloth. \$34.95.

Tracing the origins of an international conflict is a difficult and risky task for historians. Yet, Louis A. Perez Jr., professor of Cuban history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, succeeds in providing a fresh look at U.S.-Cuban relations. Perez argues that in the 1890s, Cuba became a figment of the American imagination as it recreated its national identity on the path to building imperial power. By comparing itself to Cuba, the U.S. carved out a moral high ground in which to measure itself. The use of metaphors allowed the ideas of U.S. politicians, journalists, and private citizens to re-shape unfamiliar international events into a simplified version based on American moral and cultural creations.

As the United States's global ambitions increased, Americans developed a self-image that depicted expansion as morally acceptable. Capitalizing on atrocities against Armenians in the mid-1890s, the American government and press compared Ottoman war crimes to Spanish offenses toward Cubans. U.S. policymakers urged Americans not to stand for violence near their borders. Pastors warned of the sins in abandoning the needy and private citizens responded by staging pro-Cuban plays advocating for a U.S. defense of Cuba. Perez proposes that a

collective psychological self-image coalesced around U.S. morality and, through the use of metaphors, the desire to shape other countries to suit America's position in the world.

Two metaphors Perez explores are Cuba as a woman in need of help and Cubans as children unprepared for independence. Prior to the 1898 U.S. intervention in Cuba, the American press titillated the imagination of Yankee masculinity by framing Cuba as a woman in need of rescue. Pictorial depictions included women in chains begging for American help.

However, Perez notes that changing social mores in the U.S. during Prohibition caused the metaphor to shift. As Cuba developed a reputation for casinos, alcohol, and gambling in the 1930s, the damsel in distress metaphor blurred into the image of a prostitute. Social expectations altered the metaphor, but the message remained that Cuba, bereft of masculine U.S. support, fell into disrepute. Perez shows that the association of Cubans as children also provoked the interest of American men. Perez analyzes political cartoons from American newspapers that depict a benevolent Uncle Sam lecturing a group of toddlers labeled "Cuba." Such characterizations by the U.S. press provoked the "chivalric duty" of American men and encouraged volunteers to protect Cuba from Spain (71). In each case, Perez demonstrates the moral authority and cultural superiority the American government and press asserted over Cuba.

The strengths in Perez's analysis lie in his ability to weave together cultural history with traditional political discourse that offers historians a new way to analyze the United States' emotional investment in Cuba. Perez consulted government documents to show the top-down policy of U.S.-Cuban relations and reviewed songs from pro-Cuba plays that demonstrate the bottom-up support for American goals toward Cuba. Government documents alone could not set the cultural tone nor could political cartoons prove that government officials responded to popular pressure. By consulting both types of sources and introducing the use of metaphors, Perez creates a new direction for approaching U.S.-Cuban relations that highlights the tremendous impact of American public opinion on diplomats.

Perez's combination of cultural and political history

offers answers to the wider question of the American government's obsession with Cuba. Perez succeeds in showing that, for the U.S., the fate of Cuba is linked to America's self-image. Students of cultural history and diplomatic relations will find this book useful and engaging for the creative way it reintroduces a heavily studied topic. The casual reader will appreciate the liaison between American political and cultural agendas during war.

*Rafael Mazon*

Marc Levinson. *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. Pp. 376. Paper. \$24.95

As our commercial world increasingly connects through new technological advancements, many admirers of this trend overlook one of the most fundamental building blocks of the modern globalized economy. In *The Box*, Marc Levinson, former finance and economics editor for *The Economist*, gives a telling narrative of Malcolm Mclean, a trucker turned business magnate who first successfully implemented containerization, or cargo shipping as we now know it today. However, the book's larger narrative serves as a biography of "the box" itself, with Mclean's implementation in 1956, the years of obstacles before its general acceptance and international standardization, and the dramatic economic results of containerization. In all, Levinson argues that container shipping fundamentally changed the world by making it smaller through cheap efficient shipping, while at the same time making the worldwide economy bigger through the global opening of markets to ready companies.

With its first implementation by Mclean in April of 1956, the history of modern containerization has been fraught with obstacles nearly as great as the changes it brought. The narrative dives deeply into necessary details on Longshoremen's unions who fought tooth-and-nail against what they understood as the end of their line of work, the Interstate Commerce Commission's restrictions of the price of transport, and the international standardization of container sizes by the