



Cuban Palimpsests (Cultural Studies of the Americas, Vol. 19)

Jose Quiroga

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Four decades ago, the Cuban revolution captured the world's attention and imagination. Its impact around the world was as much cultural as geopolitical. Within Cuba, the state developed a strictly defined national and collective memory that led directly from a colonial past to a utopian future, but this narrative came to a halt in the early 1990s. The collapse of Cuba's sponsor, the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War preceded the so-called "Special Period in Times of Peace," a euphemistic phrase that masked the genuine anxiety shared by leaders and people about the nation's future.

In *Cuban Palimpsests*, José Quiroga explores the sites, both physical and imaginative, where memory bears upon Cuba's collective history in ways that illuminate this extended moment of uncertainty. Crossing geographical, political, and cultural borders, Quiroga moves with ease between Cuba, Miami, and New York. He traces generational shifts within the exile community, contrasts Havana's cultural richness with its economic impoverishment, follows the cloak-and-dagger narratives of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary spy fiction and film, and documents the world's ongoing fascination with Cuban culture.

From the nostalgic photographs of Walker Evans to the iconic stature of Fidel Castro, from the literary expressions of despair to the beat of Cuban musical rhythms, from the haunting legacy of artist Ana Mendieta to the death of Celia Cruz and the reburial of Che Guevara, *Cuban Palimpsests* memorializes the ruins of Cuba's past and offers a powerful meditation on its enigmatic place within the new world order.

José Quiroga is professor and department chair of Spanish and Portuguese at Emory University. He is the author of *Understanding Octavio Paz* and *Tropics of Desire: Interventions from Queer Latino America*.

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