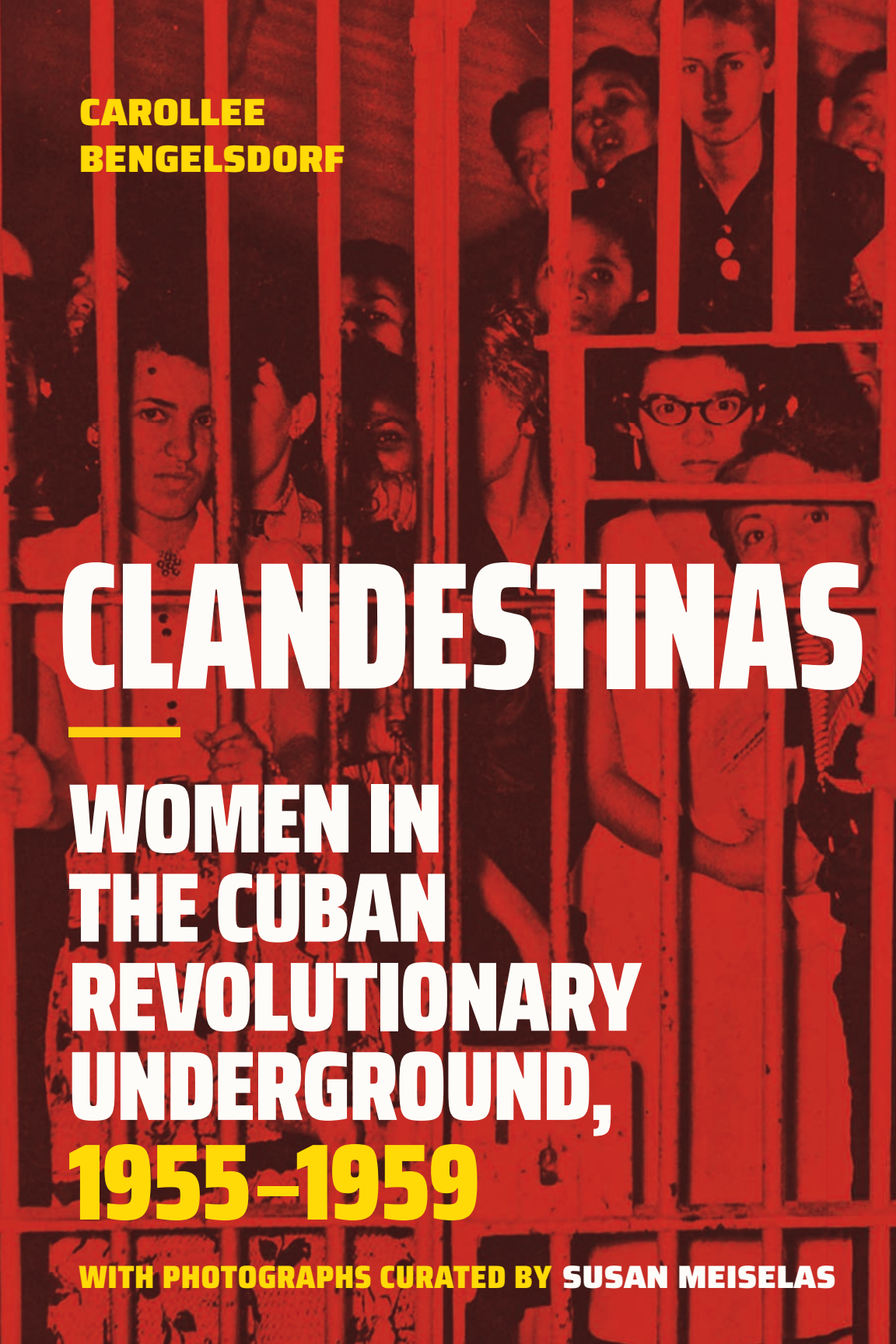

CAROLLEE BENGELSDORF

CLANDESTINAS

WOMEN IN THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY UNDERGROUND, 1955–1959

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS CURATED BY SUSAN MEISELAS

CLANDESTINAS

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Cover art: Clandestinas detained at the Cárcel de Mantilla.

FOR MIRTA, NILDA, AND CARMEN, for their belief in possibility and their courage in always striving to realize this.

AND FOR ROBERTO, for almost everything.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAA/TRIPLE A	Auténtico Party Armed Action (Acción Armada Auténtica)
ACRC	Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution (Asociación de Combatientes de la Revolución Cubana)
ANR	National Revolutionary Action (Acción Nacional Revolucionaria)
ARG	Guiteras Revolutionary Action (Acción Revolucionaria Guiteras)
ARO	Orient Revolutionary Action (Acción Revolucionaria Oriental)
BRAC	Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities (Buró para la Represión de Actividades Comunistas)
OCCC	Zero Cabaret, Zero Cinema, Zero Shopping (Cero Cabaret, Cero Cine, Cero Compra)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DEU	Directorate of University Students (Directorio Estudiantil Universitario)
DR	Revolutionary Directorate (Directorio Revolucionario)
FCMM	José Martí Women's Civic Front (Frente Cívico de Mujeres Martianas)
FDMC	Democratic Federation of Cuban Women (Federación Democrática de Mujeres Cubanas)
FEN	National Students' Front (Frente Estudiantil Nacional)
FEU	Federation of University Students (Federación Estudiantil Universitaria)
FMC	Federation of Cuban Women (Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas)
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (Frente Nacional de Liberación Farabundo Martí)
FON	National Workers Front (Frente Obrero Nacional)
FSLN	Sandista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional)

ICAP	Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos)
ICRT	Institute of Cuban Television and Radio (Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión)
INAV	National Institute of Savings and Housing (Instituto Nacional de Ahorro y Vivienda)
MNR	National Civic Resistance Movement (Movimiento Nacional de Resistencia Cívica)
MOU	Opposition Women United (Mujeres Oposicionistas Unidas)
MRC	Movement of Civic Resistance (Movimiento de Resistencia Cívica)
OA	Authentic Organization (Organización Auténtica)
ORI	Integrated Revolutionary Organization (Organización Revolucionaria Integrada)
OSPAAL	Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Organización de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de Asia, África y América Latina)
PSP	Popular Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Popular), formerly Cuban Communist Party
SIM	Military Intelligence Service (Servicio de Inteligencia Militar)
SIN	Naval Intelligence Service (Servicio de Inteligencia Naval)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first went to Cuba in June 1969 with the Committee of Returned Volunteers, former Peace Corps members who opposed the war in Vietnam. At the Cuban Mission to the United Nations (UN) in New York, we had been told that we would travel through Mexico City and, after six weeks on the island, return via Algiers. This seemed something of a strange itinerary but then Cuban relations with the world at large were equally weird. In Havana the Cuban officials who greeted us on our arrival literally guffawed when we mentioned planes to Algiers. This was not apparently in our future after all. Rather, we would wait for a boat to Canada. And wait we did: for three and a half months. First we spent two weeks traveling around the island doing harm to various crops (I am from the Bronx, which is not known for the agricultural prowess of its inhabitants). Then we spent a third week on the Isle of Pines (renamed the Isle of Youth in 1976) living in a campamento with a group of very engaging and friendly teenagers, who we had been told were juvenile delinquents. The grapefruit we planted together blew away in a hurricane the next month. When we returned to Havana our Cuban guardians, seemingly bored with us, left us free to do whatever and go wherever we wished to, which we did. It was a time of crisis in Cuba, although the word may seem somewhat overused in the context of the island. The Cuban leadership had launched the country's heresy, challenging the established orthodox path to the "achievement of socialism and communism." Posters across the island stated "We will create wealth with consciousness and not consciousness with wealth," which no one seemed to understand, but the effects became all too clear. In 1968 whatever remained of private enterprise down to the small corner stores was nationalized, but by all appearances no one seemed to have given much thought to alternate means of distribution. And this was accompanied in 1969–70 by a yearlong effort involving the entire population in producing ten million tons of sugar, a goal that everyone who was familiar with sugar production knew was impossible. Except Fidel. He was wrong as it turned out.

The last thing Cubans whom we met while wandering the streets of Havana guessed was that we were from the United States. We were

strange animals who had not been around for quite a while. But that did not stop them and indeed actually encouraged them in typical Cuban fashion to invite us into their homes for coffee, although since there was no coffee this was usually an odd mixture of ground chicharos (yellow peas) and a grain or two of the real stuff. In the course of these visits, I began to fixate on the manner in which women moved through their environments and to hypothesize about the ways in which the revolution had changed or not changed this. And I decided that hypothesizing would not do: It required that I investigate.

But life, as is its wont, got in my way. Over the years I scribbled a few articles dealing with Cuban women and produced a book, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba: Between Vision and Reality*, but I got drawn into other endeavors. But the project of coming to understand women's positioning in the wake of the revolution and exploring the degree to which the insurrection itself impacted this positioning found a place in my mind and refused for decades to slink off silently.

I once observed in an article I wrote years ago that Havana was a city governed by rumors, almost all of which were true. Although *rumor* is not quite the right word here. Just as I was beginning to undertake fieldwork, proceeding methodologically with what one Cuban friend once labeled my "investigaciones de esquina," I received a call from two women who had fought as teenagers in the underground movement in Havana in the 1950s insurrection. They asked me to come talk with them. Mirta Rodríguez Calderón was nineteen when she was caught by Batista's police trying to set off fósforo vivo in the fur department of the upscale department store El Encanto. (Fósforo vivo is a paste of dynamite powder or any other type of explosive, which, when combined with a capsule of acid, produces an explosion.) Many years later, she became the organizer of MAGÍN. Nilda Ravelo, who joined with Mirta in speaking with me, had the distinction of being one of the first women to be held in Mantilla, the women's holding prison, where she served a total of sixteen months for her involvement in multiple insurgent activities. I explained my reasons for undertaking my investigation and my intention to carry it out drawing entirely on the lives and experiences of women who are either absent from or pictured as peripheral in the narratives of the underground movement in Havana. In response they proposed that they would assist me in whatever they could. For reasons I did not understand at the time, Mirta said that they themselves would not do such a study. But she emphasized that the last thing either of them wanted was for me to be their

mouthpiece. Whatever I wrote, whatever I argued, whatever I concluded was mine alone. Rather, they would help to put me in contact with other women like them, who as teenagers had been part of the clandestinidad.

As it turned out, their help went immeasurably beyond this. While I carried out virtually all my interviews on my own, each was preceded by a call from Mirta, paving my way. The circles of former clandestinas have grown ever smaller with the passage of time, but there remains a network of women who knew and know about one another. And among these women Mirta's introductions carried great weight: Her personal intervention meant that my initial approach to the women I interviewed had a certain openness, almost familiarity. As a result, these interviews tended to go beyond simple recitations of facts to provide more nuanced, complex, and, on occasion, deeply personal and conflictive accounts of each woman's time as a clandestina. These first interviews were sometimes followed by second and even third sessions, which allowed me to clarify and delve more deeply into what had emerged in earlier meetings. Further, on several occasions and after I had pestered them endlessly with queries, a small group of former clandestinas organized themselves into gatherings to speak collectively about what they had lived through. These sessions were orchestrated by Sonnia Moro and Pilar Sa, and included Mirta, Mariíta Trasancos, Hidelisa Esperón, Digna Abreu, and Consuelo Elba. At times their accounts built on each other; at other moments, in timely ways, they reflected subtle or not-so-subtle differences in interpretation and perspective.

Nilda took a somewhat different approach to helping me. As I will elaborate, Nilda still lived in the clandestinidad, and in her mind she harbored an encyclopedia concerning it. She spoke about the insurrection with no one except trusted others, one of whom was Mirta. I believe that this was why I was so immensely fortunate as an outsider that she came to give me her trust, at first within some limits. Nilda would sit on my porch without notice, telling no one why she was there and simply waiting until I appeared. And then she took me to meet and interview people I am sure I would have otherwise had no access to: Sor Acela, who had been closest to Pastorita Núñez during her years at the Santovenia retreat; Carlos Enrique Pelayo, the son of Aida Pelayo; Dianita Ramonín Domitro, the only child of América Domitro; José (Pepito) Robustillo, the son of Ibia Robustillo and the godson of Pastorita Núñez (the three lived together). And I was able to interview Ángel Fernández Vila (Horacio), who had driven the car in which 26th of July insurgents kidnapped

the Argentine race-car driver Juan Manuel Fangio for two days. Horacio in turn took me to interview Agnes de los Ángeles Afón, one of the two daughters in the house in which Fangio was sequestered, who had been most involved in caring for him. Nor did we miss the wakes and the funerals and memorials in the Colon cemetery for former insurgents trusted and therefore most dear to her.

My imposition on people in Havana did not end here. I dragooned a small crew to read and critique various drafts of chapters. The first of these readers was Mirta, who sat me down beside her and literally read every line of a number of draft chapters in a language that was not her own. She challenged none of the arguments that I was trying to make. Rather, she identified factual errors, elaborated on actions in which she had participated, and sent me to meet others who might provide me with further accounts of these actions. The sociologist/historian Juan Valdés Paz, who passed away several years ago, leaving virtually the entire Cuban academic world and others in perpetual mourning, would appear on my porch to complain vociferously in his booming voice as I handed him a revised draft of the same chapter he had just read and had come to discuss. This did not stop him from giving me hours-long accounts of Cuban history in the last half of the twentieth century, complete with his characterizations of the individuals who inhabited the period. During Sunday evening chats, the Dra. Graziella Pogolotti described to me what it was like to live in Havana as the times grew darker after 1957. And she regaled me with tales of characters she knew well who would play a central role in my text: in particular Aida Pelayo, Marta Frayde, and other founders of the Frente Cívico de Mujeres Martianas. Julio Dámaso, who during the insurrection was a captain in the 26th of July Movement in Havana and is now historian of the Asociación de Combatientes de la Revolución Cubana, spent hours with me going through the piles of papers and old books and magazines in his office in search of any material dealing with the women who were in the clandestine movement in Havana. Certainly foolishly on his part, he generously responded at any time of the day to the barrage of questions that I pelted him with in my efforts to fill both major and minor lacunae. Consuelo Elba, who was in the process of making her film *Mujeres de la clandestinidad*, invited me to tag along—which I did.

My coven of friends and colleagues at Hampshire College, who regularly read and comment on one another's work, reviewed drafts of chapters in different incarnations and then used various chapters in courses,

providing me with both their own feedback and that of their students. Margaret Cerullo and Lynne Hanley in particular read the entire manuscript in its unfinished and finished forms, and as a result they offered a steady stream of suggestions about what needed elaboration and what needed to be irrevocably disappeared. And Carmen Diana Deere, who escaped our coven some years ago by moving on to the University of Florida, Gainesville, has over the years subjected herself to reviewing the entire scant body of my academic production. Masked by her gentle manner, Carmen has always been merciless in her reading of my work and thereby supremely helpful. Only one of her strenuous efforts with regard to what I write has failed completely: her futile efforts to keep me from spending the equivalent of a lifetime on each of my projects.

And then there is Susan Meiselas, who conceived and realized the photographic essay that concludes the book. Susan is, of course, among the finest documentary photographers anywhere in the world: This is a given. For decades she has provided us with the visual language to grasp the toll that crises and conflicts in the world have taken on the lives of peoples and communities; to recover and bring into the light the stories of these peoples who have been confined to oblivion, erased from history or on the precipice of being erased.

On a far smaller scale and in a very different context than *Kurdistan*, her magistral book, Susan followed the same pattern in constructing the visual essay she made for this book. With the images she gathered from former clandestinas and their families, and with the help of her assistant Kristina Sumfleth, who played a critical role in the organization and production of the visual essay, Susan surfaces a powerful story about the presence and the involvement of women in the clandestine movement. For me, this narrative in images underscores what I sought to do in words in the text itself. It was pure pleasure to work with her and to watch her work.

Now to the actual production of the book itself: It is a bit embarrassing to say how many people were involved or to note the geography of this involvement. First, of course, my editors at Duke University Press, initially Gisela Fosado and for the long haul Alejandra Mejia. Ale managed to overcome my stubborn tendencies with unfailing grace combined with firmness. In this same spirit she dealt with the multiple if varied concerns that Susan and I had, and throughout she maintained amazing patience. Liz Smith ushered the production process through brilliantly. The readers to whom the manuscript was sent for review did remarkably close readings

of it, providing detailed critiques that helped me enormously in clarifying arguments and revising the manuscript.

But my debts extend far beyond this, to individuals on a couple of continents and a handful of countries. In Havana, Emilio Heredia and his 1984 Moskvitch, given to him forty years earlier as the first trumpetist of the National Symphony Orchestra, were my chariot and chariot driver for the interviews I did. While he never intervened in the interviews themselves, Emilio is constitutionally unable not to be interested in everything. As a result he is in the midst of his own inquiry into the clandestine movement and has become a loyal friend and helpmate to some of the women he met. And each night when I came home to the wonderful and genealogically complex house in which I lived, its regular inhabitants, Silvia and her sons Max and Ale, were waiting for me in the kitchen, ready to regale me with their version of the day's events in that dry, rapid-fire, distinctly Cuban humor. Loren González, with occasional input from her brother David, produced transcripts of my interviews almost before I gave them to her. Nury Acosta labored over her computer trying to make sense of my mixed-up ordering of paragraphs and sentences. When she truly despaired in doing this, she consulted with a favorite former student of mine, Alana de Hinojosa, who after years of working with me knew my ways. Linda Rock dealt with my life while Kate McGregor dealt patiently with my minute-by-minute computer tragedies. Indeed after a while it seemed a good idea to simply set up a bed for Kate in my home. And Linda Thompson, with endless cheer, became my eyes in making her way through days of work on the entire edited manuscript.

However, this rainbow of support does not begin to come anywhere near matching what it was that I subjected my great friend Roberto García to. I dragooned Roberto over many a year into truly unreasonably demanding and equally unreasonable intensive work on almost every aspect of the book, with the exception of its writing. His microscopic vision never missed an out-of-place comma and certainly not a repeated phrase or a missing endnote. Far more enjoyably for him, he worked closely with Susan in tracking down and identifying photographs for possible use in the visual essay. Given all this, and given the fact that I may not be the easiest person with whom to work, Roberto has clearly earned the right to do me bodily harm. But he has promised not to do this as long as I promise never to write another book.

INTRODUCTION

> Flores y palabras lindas han recibido . . .
> [Flowers and pretty words they have been given . . .]

MIRTA RODRÍGUEZ CALDERÓN / "MUCHACHAS EN EL CLANDESTINAJE"

> There can never be a single story. There are only ways of seeing. So when I tell a story, I tell it not as an ideologue who wants to pit one absolutist ideology against another, but as a storyteller who wants to share her way of seeing.

ARUNDHATI ROY / "COME SEPTEMBER"

The Cuban revolution as it burst onto the world stage in the 1950s seemed a most extraordinary, almost impossible happening. And what was perhaps most extraordinary about it was the ages of those who fought to bring it about: Fidel Castro, thirty-three, was among the oldest insurgents. With this, a legend was born of a revolution made by a group of young bearded men in the Sierra Maestra mountains in eastern Cuba fighting an improbable battle against equally improbable odds to successfully overthrow a dictatorship. And they accomplished this in two short years. This legend has managed to prevail, has seemingly indelibly embedded itself as actual historical fact both on the island and in the world at large.

But in truth it is a misrepresentation of historical fact. In its telling of what is at best a partial story, it occludes far more complex, messy realities. Above all, these complex, messy realities rotate around the critical, indeed perhaps even the central, role in overthrowing the Batista regime played by the insurgency fought not in the sierra but in Cuba's cities—the llano.[1]

And because it was in the llano where the overwhelming numbers of female insurgents actively fought, the occlusion of the story of the llano

further underpins a tale that with few exceptions focuses exclusively on the centrality of men in the making of the Cuban revolution.

The youths who brought down the Batista regime in both the sierra and the llano are, of course, no longer youths. Many, including Fidel himself, have died; those still alive are in their late seventies or eighties. But the legend somehow lives on as the official story of the revolution, taught in schools, reproduced in television documentaries and in frequent re-creations of events, and given concrete form in monuments.

There have been efforts on the island, particularly recently, in Kristin Ross's apt phrase, to "emancipate" this history,[2] in part by surfacing the story of the llano. But this has happened in a disjointed fashion, largely in autobiographical and testimonial form (both oral and written) and therefore accessible only to limited audiences. Among the most recent and perhaps most promising of these is the Club Martiano de Herencia Rebelde, formed by the children of those youths who decades ago made a revolution. These children are themselves no longer children: They are middle-aged, and most are women. Their goal is to preserve, really to bring alive once more, the memory of what their parents did in the underground movement in Cuba's cities to bring down the dictatorship. They are intent on building a museum in Havana on the former site of the Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities, a center of imprisonment and torture during the dictatorship. The building housing the Bureau had been torn down on Che Guevara's orders, given what it symbolized. This museum would make available to the public the many unpublished personal documents and letters written or given to them by their parents concerning the insurrection, which remain in their possession. That is, it would be a physical site of remembrance.

But more immediately, they seek to tell the story of the insurrection in which their own parents took part in effect by re-creating it with children in primary and secondary schools. And they do this by actually taking these children to the places in the neighborhoods in which they live that during the insurrection were active sites of insurgents' actions, or houses in which they took refuge, or even places where they were killed. Their purpose is to bring alive the clandestine struggle for these children. The visual material that the group uses in talking to children is a chart composed of a mixture of the faces of the heroes, mainly of the insurrection, in Cuban history. Each face is used to represent a distinct neighborhood in the city. Among these faces none is of a woman.[3] In effect then, in the very act of trying to bring to life the experiences of the

clandestinidad in Havana, they are inscribing on a new generation a clear definition of who were and who were not the insurrection's protagonists.

My intention in what follows is to interrupt this story, to excavate an alternative reading of women's positioning in the narrative of the nation by reinterpreting the manner in which they lived their lives in the underground movement. And thereby to situate them not simply as protagonists in the male construct of the nation but implicitly or explicitly as transgressors upon this construct.

This re-reading asks of us a prior interrogation: to address yet again the question that has been the central concern of countless books, novels, and essays dealing with Cuban history—the question of national identity. In the pages that follow I argue that national identity in Cuba from the time of the wars of independence and for the century following them has been a male construct, excluding women as active subjects. And the manner in which the story of the insurgency against Batista has been told and retold has reproduced and further embedded this construct.

The issue of national identity is, of course, everywhere fraught and in every case necessarily fragile and constantly the subject of reinterpretation, re-creation, and reconceptualization: Nations are, after all, the products of both history and the myths in which that history is entangled. The parameters of the nation are never fixed and always subject to multiple contestations. Given this, the idea of the nation seems always to require the assertion or rather the myth of unity, a coalescing around a single dominant historical narrative which, in its need for unity, must exclude constructions that potentially pose threats to it. The Cuban sociologist Juan Valdés Paz has aptly observed that history is the enemy of unity.[4] But perhaps better said, histories are unity's most dangerous adversaries. In the name of the nation, unity seems always to demand the channeling, erasure, retelling, and even suppression of other histories.

For Cubans, history and myth are woven together in a particular way. The long wars of independence in the nineteenth century had not produced independence. Rather, as the historian Louis Pérez Jr. has written, they left "a brooding sense of a history gone awry . . . of an unfinished history, of an incomplete nation."[5] What they had produced, however, was a vision of the nation and a cast of characters who were understood as embodying this vision, giving form to the yet-to-be-realized idea of the patria. They served as the touchstones on which the story of the nation has been told and retold for a century and a half in a narrative whose theme was constantly evoked, exactly because its aspirations remained

unfulfilled. The 1950s revolutionary leaders understood this and declared themselves the inheritors of one hundred years of struggle for the country's liberation, thereby embedding themselves and the revolution they made in this constancy. The nineteenth-century wars of independence, in the course of which the idea of the Cuban nation coalesced, are largely the story of the male heroes who led these wars: Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, José Martí, Antonio Maceo, Maximo Gómez.[6] And in like fashion, the story of the making of the 1952–59 revolution focuses almost entirely on the male guerrilla leaders in the Sierra Maestra and, above all others, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos.

My agenda is to challenge this story by surfacing one of its exclusions at one of its most decisive moments: the overthrow of the Batista regime during the 1950s. And I interrogate the narrative of his overthrow from the perspective of this exclusion: specifically, the manner in which the narrative of the Cuban insurrection positions the girls and young women who fought in the underground movement in Havana to rid the island of Batista. Although it is beyond the subject at hand here, it can be argued that this construction affected concretely their positioning in the years after 1959. Subverting the dominant narrative requires resignifying its terms to fundamentally understand the girls and women who fought against Batista not as subordinate to the main, almost always male, actors, but rather as among its protagonists.

But to do this, first another buried story must be surfaced: the role played by the llano in ridding Cuba of Batista. The overwhelming majority of the girls and young women who risked their lives to overthrow the dictatorship were concentrated in the cities: Without excavating this prior story we cannot begin to discuss the positionality of women in the 1950s insurgency. Therefore, another layer needs to be peeled back: Even when the story of the llano is told, it too is almost always a tale of male heroes and martyrs to the nation. Thus, if we are to challenge this portrayal, the story of the llano itself must be interrogated.

This undertaking requires first a brief accounting of the manner in which the idea or ideas of "cubanidad" began to take form. The complexity of the issue of national identity in Cuba, of coming to terms with what and who is Cuban, was made historically almost irresolvable due to slavery in all of its ramifications. In the mid-nineteenth century those classified as slaves or free people of color composed 53 percent of the Cuban population.[7] As so many have written, the abolition or continu-

ation of slavery fractured or at least exacerbated the deep divisions of nineteenth-century Cuban society along every line, between slaves and free people of color, between africanos de nación and Cuban-born (criollo) slaves, between blacks and whites, between peninsulares and white criollos (both groups deeply invested in their own divergent interests), between different regions of the not-yet-coalesced nation, between the dramatically contrasting social and economic structures of life in eastern and western Cuba, and related to this, among the white population itself divided by legal, social, political and economic statuses.[8] These fragments, all of them inextricably wound into each other and unable to find common ground, prevented Cubans in contrast to much of the rest of Latin America from fighting for a Cuban nation until the last half of the nineteenth century.

The seemingly unresolvable, fractious nature of mid-nineteenth-century Cuban society reflected life on the island. And it found expression in cultural production: thus, for instance, Cuba's "foundational fiction," to use Doris Sommer's classical term.[9] The foundational novel of virtually every Latin American country always seems to reach for some sort of melding, or a path to the consolidation of the imagined nation. Cuba's "foundational fiction," the novel *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde, centers on incest and ends in assassination, murder, and lunacy.

The dominant discourse in the first half of the nineteenth century concerning "what is to be done" about forging or not forging the Cuban nation, was carried out largely by white male intellectuals living in exile or by choice abroad in Europe and, as the century proceeded, increasingly in the United States. And the acknowledged or unacknowledged heart of this discourse had to do with the black population. Solutions ranged, complicated in no small measure by geography. Until late in the century the owners of the large plantations in western Cuba saw slaves as vital while in eastern Cuba sugar was not as central an economic concern. The solutions proposed by these white intellectuals were conflictive and contested; none resolved the conundrum. Meanwhile, Spanish rule, odious and restrictive, continued.

It was José Martí who, in his untiring work to forge unity among the disparate and conflicting interests and beliefs of Cubans both in exile and on the island, articulated most clearly another vision of the nation-to-be: Martí's Cuba would be at its heart a nonracial society. To be Cuban, he declared, was to be more than white, more than black. Martí's elaboration

on this vision was essentially performative. He was not redeeming the Cuban patria, but building on the Ten Years' War (1868–78), he was constructing it (hacer patria). He was, in short, defining cubanidad.

Martí spoke of the Ten Years' War as a "conflagración purificada necesaria" (a purifying and necessary conflagration). Ada Ferrer writes that, for Martí, the Ten Years' War "had resolved materially and morally the dilemma of slavery and nationality."[10] The coming of a second war of independence, for Martí, would continue this process and see its culmination: By shedding blood together, black men and white men would dissolve the chasm between the races that had so impeded the possibility of realizing it; "Barefoot all and naked all, blacks and whites became equal." This embrace, he wrote, conquered death itself: "The souls of whites and blacks [rose] together through the skies."[11]

Ferrer notes that the embrace Martí evoked was transcendentally fraternal, always between men and at its core productive of a community that was inherently masculine.[12] Or, as Vera Kutzinski concludes from her reading of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Cuban literature and cultural artifacts, the construction of this true and pure independent Cuban nation was a male homosocial project which in Martí's vision, was forged by black men and white men of all classes.[13]

It can surely be argued that every national project in the modern era could be described as a male homosocial construct. I do not point to the Cuban national project as unique in this regard, but rather I account for the matter in which the specificities of this construction are melded in the Cuban context. The first of these specificities takes us once again to slavery, formally abolished on the island only in 1886, thereby excluding black voices in the construction of the nation-to-be and in its aftermath.

The realities of the independence wars revealed the underside of Martí's vision: Unity was not so easily forged. Years before Martí articulated his vision of a nonracial Cuba, at the very onset of the Ten Years' War the terms were set. The 1869 Asamblea Constituyente de Guáimaro (Constituent Assembly of Guáimaro), which declared Cuban independence, was an elite, white, male-only gathering. These men in doing so positioned themselves as the trustees of the nation-to-be, the sole arbiters of its structures and its laws, and, by their absence in the documents, determined its exclusions: Women, writes Ada Ferrer, were "excluded . . . from the symbolic birth of the nation."[14] These upper-class white men understood their roles in combat as further confirming their right to define the nation-to-be. Almost a century later, in the wake of

the victorious 1952–59 revolution, the reconstruction of the nation with few exceptions would once more be the domain of white leaders who understood themselves and would largely be understood to have the inherent right to frame and to determine the future of the nation.

A second specificity concerns the extreme evocation, celebration, and glorification of martyrdom and death, virtually without exception of men, which are embedded in the narratives of the nineteenth-century wars and recapitulated in the 1950s revolution.[15] In *Cuban Memory Wars*, Michael J. Bustamante cites "spectacles of historic righteousness" in a February 1959 commemoration overseen by Fidel Castro and the short-lived president Manuel Urrutia in which the bodies of the men who died in the *Granma* landing, and in the skirmishes with Batista's air force directly after, were put on display in the Capitolio in Havana for public viewing.[16]

The physical display of these corpses explicitly fed the myth of the *Granma*'s landing and its aftermath, in which the story tells us dedicated revolutionaries sacrificed their lives for the nation. Fidel, in placing these bodies at the very seat of the deposed government, underscored the unchallengeable right of the revolution under his command to determine the form and content of the nation and its reconstruction.

These specificities bring us back to a further consideration of the moment at which the nation-to-be was proclaimed. Blacks were not alone in their exclusion from the symbolic birth of the nation. As I noted, the 1869 Constituent Assembly of Guáimaro was a men's-only affair. The single woman in attendance, Ana Betancourt, was representing her sick husband Ignacio Mora. But Betancourt is remembered above all for her declaration at the Assembly. The undercurrent during the debate at the Assembly rotated around deciding on the definition of who was Cuban. Betancourt, intervening, raised the issue of those who were excluded from the debate, who were therefore in effect condemned to be nonmembers of the new nation, non-Cubans: slaves and women. She drew the parallels between these noncitizens: "Citizens: The Cuban woman, in the dark and still corner of her household waited patiently and with resignation for this beautiful hour when a new revolution would break her free from her yoke and release her wings. Citizens: in Cuba everything was enslaved: cradle, color and sex. You wanted to destroy the slavery of color, emancipating the slave. The moment has come to liberate women."[17]

Nydia Sarabia writes that when Betancourt spoke these words, Clara Zetkin, who would become a leading feminist voice in the socialist movement in Germany, was twelve years old, and movements for women's rights in Europe and North America were just beginning. Sarabia postulates that there might have been concrete links between Betancourt's call for the rights of women and slaves and demands being made by women in the 1848 revolutions in Europe.[18] The content and phrasing of Betancourt's intervention seems to evidence as well her familiarity with both Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" declaration at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, and the contemporary writings of Harriet and John Stuart Mill.

Betancourt's intervention has been absorbed into the lore of the Cuban revolutionary narrative. Her interjection into the debate, with some notable exceptions, served a specific purpose in the way in which history has recorded the Assembly. Its male delegates, hearing but not acting on her declaration, along with the majority of those who have celebrated Guáimaro's progressive nature in their writings, used it as an indicator of the enlightened bent of those males who were beginning to constitute the patria. Indeed, her very presence at the Assembly served and serves to underscore this image. But Betancourt, at the moment when the story of the nation took form, became a footnote. As Elda Cento writes, at Guáimaro her words "remained floating in the wind."[19] Her bold attempt to make visible both slaves and women had no concrete resonance. The potential challenge it represented to the homosocial framework within which the nation to be was shaped went unheeded. Only later, in the twentieth century, when her remains were returned to the island, was she formally celebrated as a prescient forerunner of women's rights in Cuba.

The exclusion of women's voices from a role in determining a national project was hardly unique to Cuba, and certainly prevailing patriarchal societal structures on the island were central to the seemingly unquestioned and unquestionable assumptions inherent in a male homosocial construct. But almost a century later, on a vastly different terrain and despite the evolution over decades of societal norms with relation to women, visible threads still wove together the positioning of women in the insurrections. Constructs by their very nature are fraught and thereby permeable; their borders require policing, sometimes explicit, sometimes unspoken. For women the most fundamental and enduring effect of this policing in both the nineteenth-century wars and the 1950s revolution was

to confine and define what they could do and thereby what they could not do. The male leadership were the sole active subjects: They did the fighting.[20] Women were almost always cast in the role of enablers for these men, and if what this involved clearly differed, given the dramatically different circumstances of these insurrections, by definition women were therefore secondary; they were not those who would determine the wars' direction. Their positioning as secondary served to naturalize and thereby legitimate their exclusion from a role in framing the nation.

Further, the permeable borders of the male construct of the nation made indispensable varying forms of policing around female sexuality. In the narratives of both the nineteenth-century wars and the 1950s insurrection, the desexualization of women fed into defining the degree of their adherence to the project of the nation. And this required policing. During the Ten Years' War this policing was filtered through the myth of the eternally faithful wife. Unlike the male mambises, whose commitment to the nation-to-be was inherent in their combat with the Spaniards, the narratives of the war make clear that a woman's positionality in the nation-to-be was mediated through her undying faithfulness to her mambí husband, even after his death. Her loyalty to the nation was therefore entirely determined by and measured through her loyalty to him.[21]

In the 1950s insurrection, young clandestinas' commitment to the battle to overthrow the dictatorship was of course not mediated through men. Nonetheless, a violation of sexual abstinence was seen as a betrayal of the insurrection itself, as a deviation from commitment to the struggle to rid the island of Batista. The narrative of desexualized relationships in the devotion to a purified nation would surface once again, this time, particularly in the stories of the men and women who lived together in close contact.[22] When a woman in the insurrection engaged openly in a sexual relationship, knowledge of this was passed among the close-knit rebel groupings and policing was expressed in various ways: verbal denigration, suspicion, indignation, condemnation. That is, a woman's sexual involvement colored negatively her very presence in the underground movement. On the other hand, the men in these relationships suffered no such consequences. Their status and position in the hierarchy of the movement were never challenged; the power they exercised never diminished. The most well-known of these sexual relationships involved Norma Porras and Ángel Ameijeiras (Machaco), head of Action and Sabotage in Havana from March 1958 until his assassination in November of that year.

I discuss this relationship and the controversies around Porras herself in greater depth in chapter 4.

In what follows in this book I have attempted, however inadequately, to meld together a variety of different types of sources—historical texts, oral histories, interviews, and testimonies—to frame and then analyze the positionality of women, and specifically the girls and women in the urban underground arena in Havanna, the clandestinas, in the battle to overthrow the Batista regime. First, I must add a caveat: I did not intend to write nor have I written a history of the Cuban insurrection. Rather, what I seek to do is employ a thematic lens through which to view this history by what I argue is one of its most profoundly consequential silences. This is intended as a work of excavation, of surfacing another story about the making of the revolution.

First, as Michelle Chase and Lorraine Bayard de Volo have so cogently shown, in the years following Batista's coup and prior to the onset of the guerrilla war, women played a most critical role, taking upon themselves in multiple contexts the mantle of the nation's "moral authority."[23] In doing so, they effectively denied the Batista regime any possible path to legitimacy, thereby undermining it in a manner in which it would never recover.

In chapter 2 I turn to an in-depth discussion of one of the first among the oppositional groupings, made entirely of women. The women who formed the core of the Frente Cívico de Mujeres Martianas (the José Martí Women's Civic Front, FCMM), or the Martianas, began organizing in the days following Batista's seizure of power. Although the Frente has been reconsidered in greater depth in recent studies,[24] it is generally referred to as one of a number of civic organizations, in this case made up of mainly middle-aged women, who provided support for the insurgent movements and engaged mainly in more public actions.[25] I argue to the contrary that while the group undertook and joined in public demonstrations of various stripes, the core members were integral to the underground struggle and must be understood as such. My reasons for discussing the FCMM early in this study and prior to the later chapters on women in the clandestine movements is first to underscore that women had begun to organize themselves into anti-Batista fronts before the later male-dominated groups (in particular, the Directorio Revolucionario and the 26th of July Movement). Second, the Martianas, as I understand them, served as one of the indispensable spines of the

insurgency in Havana. That is, in themselves they represent a fundamental challenge to the very roots of the official narrative of the making of the revolution.

If a nation is always in the process of rewriting itself, reinscription implies an original inscription. In the wars of independence, this original inscription with the passage of time and the absence of women's voices has meant that a great deal of their history is forever lost. In the case of the 1950s revolution, however, a number of the young girls and women who over a half century ago actively participated in its making are still living and able to provide their own accounts, perhaps clouded or perhaps clarified (or both) by memory. I will turn to what these women related to me about their experiences in the clandestinidad in chapters 3–7.

In chapter 8, I seek to get at complex questions of memory and of inheritance by listening to the voices of the children, mainly the daughters, of these same insurrectas. What did they know or understand about their mothers' actions and lives in the urban insurrection? How did they fit this into the narrative that surrounded them everywhere as they were growing up: a tale, again, of a revolution made by young bearded men coming down from the mountains?

In the course of my work on this project I spoke with thirty-one women, twenty-two of whom were teenagers during the years of the insurrection. Twenty were in the 26th of July Movement; seven were in the Directorio Revolucionario; one claimed militancy in both the Directorio and the 26th of July Movement; three were members of the Juventud (the youth branch of the Partido Socialista Popular), and one of these three said she worked with both the Juventud and the 26th of July Movement.[26] I focus my text overwhelmingly on the triumphant 26th of July Movement because most clandestinas were insurgents in that movement. But I do this somewhat reluctantly, particularly because with the exception of the Directorio's March 13, 1957, attack on the Presidential Palace and its tragic immediate aftermath, the official narrative of the revolution has virtually erased the actions of the Directorio. Further, although I bring into my discussion women involved in the insurgency on a range of fronts, my focus in these chapters is almost entirely on the young girls and women, ages thirteen to twenty-five, who were engaged in various ways in Action and Sabotage. And another qualification: The women with whom I spoke were not involved in mobilizations or actions in factories or trade unions.

In undertaking work with and about these women, I relied primarily on multiple in-depth interviews with individual clandestinas, which led fairly regularly to very personal reflections on their lives in the underground movement, as well as extended conversations between and among clandestinas, to explore collective memory. I drew on existing published interviews and accounts written by women on the island and elsewhere and on unpublished interviews and correspondence that the women with whom I spoke so generously shared with me. In the case of seven women I discuss who have died (five of whom were the founders of the FCMM), I depended on the reminiscences of their closest friends and their families, unpublished letters, and brief published accounts of their lives. Although I certainly drew from these sources, my intention is not to provide life histories: This to some degree has been done, albeit in abbreviated form, both on the island and by scholars elsewhere.[27] Given my purposes in undertaking this study, I very specifically sought out women not among the handful of those whose names are engraved in the official narrative of the revolution.

A further note concerning the manner in which I approached the women interviewed. My intent was not simply to gather accounts of what they did in the underground movement but to anchor these accounts in a discussion of their lives. These were young girls who chose to radically transgress the norms of the societies into which they had been born, to risk their lives by doing this, and in the course of their actions to suffer consequences, for some physical and for others long-term trauma. What was it that motivated them to make the choices they made? My intent was to capture their lives in a manner that would allow them to be seen as persons. I sought thereby to anchor their time in the clandestinidad in multiple dimensions in order to underscore their physical presence in the uprising and the critical role they played in it.

What I attempted to convey in the text with words, the documentary photographer Susan Meiselas achieves with perhaps far greater impact in her visual essay that concludes this book. Meiselas developed this photographic narrative by engaging with former clandestinas and their families, gathering and compiling photographs of them at various moments of their lives. Various former clandestinas returned with her for the first time to the sites that profoundly resonated in their memories of their time in the insurrection. She melded her photographs of these reencounters with her narrative. She drew from diverse materials she found in various archives in Havana, as well as from distinct personal and public collections that were

often disorganized and poorly preserved. Through this research, Susan Meiselas molded a photographic narrative that is intended to breathe life into the stories of these women and make visible their presence as rebels in the uprising that brought down the Batista dictatorship.

In an investigation such as this, one must inevitably confront the problematic of memory and subjectivity. What can we understand about these years now more than six decades later, relying in the main on the insurrection's participants? Elizabeth Jelin, in her discussion of women's representation in history, argues that given the faint traces of this representation, the reconstruction of history through personal testimony must be prioritized.[28] But memory is always a site of ongoing construction; it is never static or fixed. As Alessandro Portelli observes, it cannot be taken as a "passive depository of fact but must be understood as an active process of the creation of meanings."[29] How then does one distinguish between memory and representation and the manifold and multiple layers of subsequent representation in which they have been inevitably enveloped?

In the case of Cuba this is made all the more complex by the ways in which the story of the llano has been suppressed in favor of the "official truth." The problematic, then, as Kristin Ross writes, is to account for how the "official story" came to claim for itself alone the mantel of the "official truth."[30] And then, how to dismantle this? In her analysis of the manner in which the "official story" of the May 1968 events in France came to be constructed, Ross chose to rely not on interviews with participants but on accounts published in the aftermath of the events. Given what she calls the problematic of social memory and amnesia, "what possible controls could govern [her] selection of the testimony of participants in a mass movement that extended throughout France?" Rather, she chose to set against one another multiple competing analyses claiming to tell the story of the May events, and she traces the manner in which the "official story" emerged from these analyses.[31]

The problem with applying Ross's methodology to the Cuban revolution is that on the island itself there existed no competing narratives. The official story of the revolution is not solely the product of its aftermath, and it did not emerge from competing narratives. It began to form during the initial episodes of the very making of the revolution. Michelle Chase, examining clandestine ephemera produced during the insurrection, argues that the icon of the guerrilla as the sole representation of

the insurrection consolidated late in 1958, specifically in the wake of the failed general strike in the cities in April of that year. She points to the disappearance in insurgent propaganda portraying images of urban insurgents and women.[32] While this may be true, in fact the symbol of the Cuban guerrilla revolutionary gained a kind of dominance both on the island and in the world generally even at what was perhaps its weakest moment. Two months after the disastrous landing of the *Granma*, it was given distinct form and a specific point of reference in February 1957 when *New York Times* reporter Herbert Mathews visited the rebel camp and published an account of his interview as well as photographs of himself with Fidel in the camp itself. Wrapped in the imagery of romance and desire, the legend of the young bearded guerrillas in the mountains led by the increasingly legendary figure of Fidel and beside him Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos, only gained further authority in the "afterlife" of the insurrection itself.[33] In the year after the taking of power, on the island itself all possible competing narratives were either erased or subordinated to a single tale.

The disputes between different sectors of the insurgent forces both within and without the 26th of July Movement which followed the taking of power were largely overwhelmed by denunciations. Accounts by those who left Cuba carried little weight on the island. Even decades later, few published accounts by those who fought in the llano, supplemented by collections of brief testimonies of participants, exist to provide any degree of alternative reading of the official story. This story of course is told by those who have been and remain in power on the island who came quickly and decisively to control its telling. And in this telling it fits precisely into the historical narrative of the construction of the nation. For all of these reasons, I did not have the option of pursuing the course charted by Ross. In order to surface an alternative narrative of women in the making of the Cuban revolution, I would have needed to carry out a significant number of interviews with those women who were actively a part of it but had left the island in the years following 1959.

Ross's critique of the temporal and geographic reductions that had come to bound the events in France to a single month and a single city resonates in the official tale of the Cuban revolution. Time is bounded by *Granma*'s return to Cuba in December 1956 and the arrival of the guerrilla columns in Havana on January 8, 1959. Place is circumscribed by the Sierra Maestra mountains and by the procession of the Caravan of Liberty across the island following the collapse of the dictatorship.[34]

But drawing on the testimony of participants about events that took place almost sixty years ago presents a land mine of problems for obvious reasons. My subjects are now decades older, with all that this might imply. How does one measure the effects of events and relationships on the discursive memories told sixty years after the fact? Memories have inevitably been colored and reshaped by years of personal experiences intertwined with rapid and radical changes that have characterized the complex and crisis-filled history of the island after 1959, and by the very dominance itself of the official narrative concerning the insurrection. Forgetting is sometimes as powerful as remembering. In some cases, personal or political antagonisms still hold, seemingly unabated. Some of these antagonisms are present in early collections of testimonies in which the names of those who subsequently left the island are often followed by the word *traitor* (added apparently by the editors). Needless to say, directly following the taking of power, innumerable Cubans for innumerable reasons falsely claimed involvement in the insurrection. Among the women with whom I spoke, when I could identify an account that was largely fictional, it might have been rooted in an explicit desire to enhance what they actually did or they might simply have repeated an episode so frequently that with the passage of time it had become fiction.[35] All this is made more complex since by definition, those in the underground movement could not and did not operate as a collective community.

I tried wherever I could to sort this out by repeating interviews with the same woman in an effort to trace possible variations or for that matter the absence of variations in her story. Further, I sought to clarify accounts by bringing together small numbers of clandestinas in informal settings to discuss actions in which they were jointly involved; by speaking separately with those involved in these same actions; and by reading whatever I could find about these actions. But obviously this process of sifting has its limits. I have sought in what I have written here to take these into account.

My decision to focus this study with some exceptions on women insurrectionaries in Havana and my use of terminology require elaboration. First, my choice to center my inquiry on Havana. If the clandestinidad everywhere on the island was, as Frank País, the national coordinator of the 26th of July Movement until his assassination in July 1957, described

it in a letter to América Domitro, like living in a "ratonera" (mousetrap) the realities in Havana proved particularly difficult.[36] It was in the capital that the full weight of Batista's repressive apparatus was concentrated. And, as I will elaborate in chapter 3, Havana's size, geographic location, social and kinship networks, heterogeneous class structure, the existence of multiple oppositional movements, and even its architecture, by comparison for instance to Santiago, Cuba's second and easternmost largest city, profoundly complicated the daily threats faced by the insurgents in Havana. Santiago, from the time of the nineteenth-century wars of independence, is celebrated in Cuban lore always as "la ciudad héroe" (heroic city), the cuna (cradle) of Cuban revolutions.[37] If Santiago is the site of revolutionary impulse and success, Havana is the "difficult" or "problematic" city, the site of impediments to revolution and of their fracasos (failures). This was never more so than in the verdict drawn by the 26th of July Movement leadership in the sierra about the failure in Havana of the critical April 9, 1958, strike, which was to finally end the Batista regime. The diminution and at moments even the dismissal of the centrality of the revolutionary movement in Havana in bringing down the Batista dictatorship must inevitably have the effect of making even less visible the roles played by clandestinas in Havana during the years of the insurgency. Here too these implications in the official narrative need to be interrogated.

Second, the terms *clandestina/o* and *clandestinidad* in the literature about the llano and even more so in accounts of individual insurgents' involvement in the urban insurrectionary movement are confused and confusing. They are sometimes used to designate all those involved in the struggle, and sometimes to describe those who are forced to leave their homes because word had come that they were specifically being hunted by Batista's various esbirros (henchmen). At times the designation *clandestina* is applied only to those women involved in action and sabotage, and other times it designates those living in safe houses as the fictive wives in order to mask the identity of males in the leadership.

Indeed, this is one of the definitional confusions that led Julio César Rosabal García, in his authoritative 2013 doctoral dissertation specifically concerning the operations of the 26th of July Movement in Havana, to replace the term clandestina/o entirely and to use instead geographically determined descriptions of the movement to bring down the Batista regime: urban insurgents, sierra insurgents, and insurgents operating outside Cuba to garner money, arms, and international publicity for the struggle on the island.[38]

Despite the slippery definitional edges, I found it hard to abandon *clandestina/o* and *clandestinidad* given that the words capture an imaginary that seems to me missing in collapsing the struggle in the llano, the sierra, and the exterior into three geographically based categories. And even more, those who fought in the insurrection in the llano refer to themselves and to each other as clandestinas/os. With only a few exceptions, most of the women on whose experiences I primarily draw led in some form or other and at great cost to themselves underground lives in their struggle to put an end to Batista's dictatorship. I therefore continue to refer to them as *clandestinas* while at moments using the designation *insurgentas* as synonymous. I do this although personally I reject for instance the distinction drawn between collaborators and clandestinas exactly because the phrasing itself diminishes the critical role played by numberless anonymous women and almost always women in families who took on the very dangerous responsibility of giving shelter to insurgents in their homes, thereby risking not only themselves but even their children. In my definition, every one of these women was involved directly in the underground movement. Therefore, I understand all of them as clandestinas. But given my focus in this study, I examine in chapter 3 in detail the actions of only one such woman.

Third, further clarifications regarding terminology: Throughout this study I use the phrase *the official story/narrative/account/telling of the making of the revolution*. By this, I am using a shorthand to refer to a generally projected narrative that centers the insurgency against the Batista dictatorship almost exclusively around the rebels who fought in the Sierra Maestra mountains and particularly around the figure of Fidel Castro.

Finally, a caveat or, perhaps better said, an unconvincing excuse. Julia Sweig, in her study of the the final year of the 1950s insurrection, underscores what she sees as a central problem in writings about this period: the myth in which the year 1959 is wrapped. She points out, in particular, that any account of this period must recognize the multiple influences and effects that the 1930 revolution had on the 1950s insurgency and insurgents.[39] This is most certainly a primary deficiency of my study as well. Cuban historians have written and have continued to write extensively about the 1930 revolution.[40] But what is absent from these writings is any substantive consideration, or any consideration at all, of the women who were a part of that revolution. This is problematic in multiple contexts. As the historian Gladys Marel García Pérez adamantly asserts, it is impossible to fully grasp women's involvement in the 1950s revolution without

grasping the nature of women's presence and participation in insurgencies dating from the nineteenth century. The women who took part in the 1950s revolution, as she says, did not just fall from the sky.[41] Nor, I might add, were they awakened from a deep sleep by Fidel. Bayard de Volo, heeding García Pérez's caution, devotes a section of her study of women in the Cuban revolution to those she notes were veterans of the 1930 insurrection, with brief paragraphs highlighting what they did in the 1950s.[42] But for the purpose of this study there is yet another problematic. What for me is critical is to get a concrete sense of what it was that women in the 1930 revolution brought from it to their involvement in the insurgency twenty years later. That is, how they understood the situation on the ground and how they formulated what was to be done in terms of the strategies and tactics they would bring to bear. At least for the insurgency in Havana, only the women who formed the core of the Frente Martiano begin to provide us partial answers. I will explore these in chapter 2.

This book is about a specific revolution in a specific country, made by the people of that country, and it focuses on a very specific time period. But my impetus in undertaking this project went beyond the bounds of what is here: that is, beyond my desire or my need to try to illuminate certain silences surrounding the Cuban revolution and to reconsider it using other lenses. I spend no time exploring these other dimensions, but let me at least mention them here because I believe there have been and are real-life consequences born of the story of the Cuban revolution as it has been told, not just for and on the island itself.

The first of these involves the generalized idea that the 1950s revolution was made in the countryside, in the mountains, by a small band of guerrillas. This version of the making of the revolution, the foco theory as it came to be called, affected a generation of Cubans and indelibly reverberated in the ways in which others sought to copy it. Or, better said, the effect of its lessons in the third world, particularly in Latin America, was nothing short of tragic. The exaltation of the role of the sierra, and within this the focus on the role of the peasantry, was adopted elsewhere and not just by Che Guevara in Bolivia, establishing for decades a profoundly misleading blueprint for revolutionary change.[43]

The second consequence involves the positioning of women in the historical tales of revolutionary situations. While the Cuban formulation of this has, of course, distinct roots in terms of its expression, it

is true that in their telling no modern revolution or really any revolution has ever portrayed women as anything but at best secondary actors: Men have always been the protagonists, in both physical and ideological terms. Feminists, in early attempts to challenge this, searched with utmost diligence through dusty tomes and dustier archives to rescue the names of individual women who played key roles in assorted revolutions. But the problem here is twofold. First, in too many cases, these individual women were then celebrated for having taken on in their actions what were regarded as men's roles. Second, this work of excavation of the examples and names of individual women too often resulted in making invisible the actions and lives of the masses of women who must inevitably be involved in a societal upheaval as profound as a revolution. While this work of unearthing was certainly valuable, its unintended side effect has been to further the job of reducing these other women to oblivion. In more recent books, Bayard de Volo and Chase have approached the study of women in the Cuban insurrection by drawing on feminist literature to contextualize their studies in a more analytical, incisive, and critical fashion.[44] In doing so, they reveal how much more there is to be done in the case of Cuba.

Several years ago I asked my bright and studious Cuban goddaughter, then eleven, to tell me what she knew about various Cuban revolutionaries: Martí, Maceo, Fidel, Che, and so on. When I got to Haydée Santamaría, this was her response: "Haydée Santamaría was a very brave woman. She fought for our liberty when all the other women stayed in their houses doing nothing." At first I was flabbergasted: Where had she learned this? Certainly not from her family. Quickly, I realized that she had simply extrapolated this from what she had learned in school and from the television: the narrative of a revolution that was made by young bearded men fighting Batista's forces in the Sierra Maestra and then across the island, finally arriving triumphantly in Havana. Haydée's role in Moncada and her successes in gathering and delivering arms and munitions to the sierra during the period of the insurrection positioned her as playing a role in this version of the making of the revolution. This book is an attempt to speak, among others, to my goddaughter.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 The terms *sierra* and *Sierra* mean two different things throughout the text: *sierra* refers to the *guerrilla* fighters led by Fidel Castro, who established a base and fought the Batista regime in the eastern mountains of Cuba; *Sierra* always means the Sierra Maestra mountains themselves. *Llano*, which literally means "valley," or "plain," was used to describe the urban insurgency.

Although this is far from clear, *sierra* and *llano* were probably terms that came into general use following the triumph of the revolution (interview with Juan Valdés Paz, May 2014). Magali Jacobo, who fought in the clandestine movement in Guantánamo and later in the sierra, gives perhaps the most logical explanation of the origin of the term. She recalls from her time in the sierra that *llano* was a general term used by campesinos in the region to describe the cities (personal correspondence, April 2018).

2 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*.

3 Provided by the Club Martiano de Herencia Rebelde. This chart of faces of the heroes is reproduced in this book's visual essay.

4 Interview with Juan Valdés Paz, Havana, May 2012.

5 Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 160, 157.

6 Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, who served from 1869 to 1873 as the first president of the Cuban Republic in Arms, issued the call that initiated the 1868–78 War of Independence (the Ten Years' War). He was killed by the Spanish in 1874. Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez fought in each of the wars of independence. Gómez was commander-in-chief of the Cuban rebel army in the 1895–98 war and Maceo was major general, or second in command. Maceo died in battle in 1896. José Martí, the brilliant poet and writer, organized the Cuban Party of Independence that initiated the 1895–98 war. He died in battle in 1895.

7 Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 2. Ferrer notes the dramatic differences in the geography of slavery across the island, largely a direct result of the concentration of sugar production. Thus, in 1862 in the eastern city of Bayamo, slaves and free people of color accounted for 12.6 percent of the population. In Cárdenas, in Matanzas Province, a hub of sugar production in 1862, slaves made up 48.7 percent of the population.

8 Africanos de nación were slaves who had been born in Africa. Peninsulares were Spaniards living on the island.

9 Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*.

10 Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 122.

11 Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 126 (brackets in Ferrer's text).

12 Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 126.

13 See Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets*, 163–98. The feminist literary scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in her foundational study, *Between Men*, gives perhaps the clearest account of the idea and congruent implications of male homosocial construction. Discussing her book's subtitle and its theme, *English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Sedgwick writes that homosocial desire "is a kind of oxymoron. 'Homosocial' is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonding between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual' and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual.' . . . I do not mean to discuss genital homosexual desire as 'at the root of' other forms of male homosociality—but rather a strategy for making generalizations about and marking historical differences in the structure of men's relations with other men" (1–2).

14 Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 127.

15 See Pérez, *To Die in Cuba*; Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars*, 25–63.

16 *Granma* was a broken-down former yacht in which Fidel and eighty-two rebels returned to Cuba from Mexico. Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars*, 33.

17 Sarabia, *Ana Betancourt Agramonte*, 59.

18 Cited in Hernández Alonso, "Ana Betancourt."

19 Cento, *Nadie puede ser indiferente*.

20 Cento, *Nadie puede ser indiferente*, 114, 131. The treatment of the women who were combatants in the 1895–98 war illustrated what happens when the borders of the male construct are threatened. Lynn Stoner, in the prelude to her study of the women's movement in twentieth-century Cuba, *From the House to the Streets*, writes that in this second war of independence, "mambisas moved into the masculine sphere of military affairs and won men's respect for their efforts." While this assertion is in itself problematic more problematic still was the treatment of these women in the aftermath of the war. The Camagueyan historian Elda Cento relates the story of Adela Ascuy Labrador, who during the war and by its end had fought on the front lines in some forty-nine combats. But at its conclusion she was denied the pay given to the troops during their demobilization on the grounds that her "condition as a woman"

rendered improbable any military actions by her. The Settlement Commission ruled: "Because of her sex the plaintiff could not have been able to render services in the army; therefore, her request is hereby rejected."

21 The stories about women in the narrative of the Ten Years' War are concerned virtually exclusively on the wives of the white mambí leadership. Thus for instance the story of Amalia Simoni and by contrast the brief mentions of her sister Matilde. Amalia Simoni is portrayed in the literature as eternally selfless, eternally pure, faithful even in the face of the death of her husband Ignacio Agramonte, and through this to the nation. She serves as a stereotype, forever frozen in time. As the eternally faithful wife, she is positioned as secondary in the insurrection; her life is entirely focused on unending support for him and later to his memory. Her sexual abstinence, that is, her desexualization, thus serves to naturalize and reinforce the male construction of the nation. Biographers write of her that "she was characterized fundamentally by her stoic resistance, her discretion, her fidelity to her husband and her determined commitment to the patria, and her unbreakable belief in its independence. She did not seek the role of a protagonist: hers was to support, to give strength and to hope" (Méndez and Pérez Pino, *Amalia Simoni*, 85). By definition, then, the abnegada viuda must never remarry. Remarriage would mean in effect a betrayal of her dead mambí husband and thereby of the national project. The implication of sexual activity represented a potential incursion into the male construct, with consequences not only for the women but even for her dead husband. Yet this is exactly what Matilde Simoni, Amalia's sister and the wife of Eduardo Agramonte (Ignacio Agramonte's cousin) did. She remarried six months after she learned of Eduardo's death in battle. In doing this, Matilde had abandoned her dead husband, and, in remarrying and presumably renewing sexual relations, she had violated the demands of purity that were a measure of her loyalty to the war effort and thereby her position in the project of the nation. In the scant mentions of her in accounts of the Ten Years' War she is portrayed almost always in comparison to her sister as having "a more shallow and ordinary personality" and in exile unable to fend for herself (141).

A century later in the 1950s insurrection there was, of course, no question about the nationality of women in the underground insurrection. Nor was their relation to the battle to overthrow the dictatorship mediated through men. Nonetheless, a violation of sexual abstinence was understood as a betrayal of the project of the

nation-to-be-reborn, as a deviation from the commitment to the struggle to realize that nation. The narrative of desexualized relationships in the clandestinidad as requisite proof of devotion to the nation purified would surface once again, particularly in the stories of the men and women who lived together. Pilar Sa lived with a captain in the Havana underground as his fictive wife. In due course a romantic attachment developed between them but was never acted upon. As Pilar said, that would have been an irremediable violation of the insurrection's very purpose, a deviation from the sole aim of bringing down the dictatorship. The two slept every night on the floor of the apartment in which they lived, separated by a barrier of newspapers that served as a pillow and was never crossed (interview with Pilar Sa, Havana, May 2014). Chase notes that male rebels were free to engage in sexual activity with women who were not in the underground (Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 103). But in fact sex with a woman in the movement had no consequences for these men either. The abiding male construct of the insurrection and its purpose dictated that virtually by definition men were subject to no form of policing of their sexual engagements, nor did they suffer any diminution of position or power.

22 See Pilar Sa's story in chapter 4.

23 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 6, 19–44. Bayard de Volo calls these actions by women to deny Batista legitimacy "winning hearts and minds," a phrase that circulated widely in the United States during the war in Vietnam (*Women and the Cuban Insurrection*, 65–73).

24 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 92–97; Chase, "Women's Organizations and the Politics of Gender in Cuba's Urban Insurrection 1952–1958."

25 See Kruijt, *Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America*, 31.

26 The Partido Socialista Popular and its youth branch, given their opposition to the strategy of armed struggle, explicitly threatened ejection from the Party any members who also worked with the 26th of July Movement or the Directorio. The girl I mention here was thirteen when she joined the Juventud and appears to have been only loosely connected to it. (See the account given by Consuelo Elba in chapter 4.)

27 See, for example, Rodríguez Calderón, *Semillas de fuego*; Castro Porta et al., *La lección del Maestro*; Bell Lara et al., *Cuba: La generación revolucionaria: 1952–1961*; Bell Lara et al., *Cuba: Las mujeres en la insurrección 1952–1961*; Bell Lara et al., *Combatientes*; Meyer, *El futuro era nuestro*; Nieves, *Rogelio*; and Consuelo Elba's 2017 film *Mujeres de la clandestinidad*. Studies in English that draw on

interviews to varying degrees include Klouzal, *Women and Rebel Communities*; Shayne, *The Revolution Question*; Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*; Bayard de Volo, *Women and the Cuban Insurrection*; and Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*.

28 Jelin, "Citizenship and Identity," 8.

29 Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, 52.

30 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 1.

31 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 17.

32 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 72–73.

33 Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*.

34 The Caravan of Liberty comprised the trucks and jeeps and whatever was on four wheels that came across the island from Santiago de Cuba to Havana, and it was headed by Fidel and the columns of guerrilla fighters. It arrived in Havana on January 8, 1959.

35 For instance, a published testimony from one clandestina remembered her arrest along with a second clandestina and that clandestina's mother. Caught in a police trap, she relates word for word the dialogue between the mother and the policemen holding them that, she said, managed to get them released from prison. But in fact, when she read it, the other clandestina laughed: Her mother had carried on no such conversation. See Bell Lara et al., *Combatientes*; interview with Mirta Rodríguez Calderón, Havana, March 2015.

36 Frank País, "Carta a América," from the collection of Dianita Ramonín Domitro, unpublished.

37 For "heroic city," the Cuban Academy of Language repeatedly criticized the telling grammatical error in the phrase "la ciudad héroe." In Spanish, the noun *ciudad* is feminine; therefore by the rules of Spanish grammar the attached adjective must be feminine as well. That is, Santiago should be described as the ciudad heróica. We can suppose that implicit in this silence in the face of criticism is the notion that the heroic must always be male.

38 Rosabal García, "El movimiento revolucionario 26 de julio," 30–32.

39 The 1930 revolution, for Cubans writing about it, refers to the protests at the end of the 1920s and continuing into the 1930s, both against Machado, who was overthrown in 1933, and then the regime that took over in 1934, with Batista in de facto control. Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution*, 2–4.

40 See more recently the works of Fernando Martínez Heredia, Ana Cairo, and Julio César Guanche.

41 García Pérez, "Mujer y revolución."

42 Bayard de Volo, *Women and the Cuban Insurrection*, 145–64. Bayard de Volo's focus on these female veterans is intended to support

her argument that the portrayal of the 1950s revolution as the work of young people must be questioned.

43 Eqbal Ahmad provides a concise and sharp critique of this theory of revolution in his article "Radical but Wrong."

44 Bayard de Volo, *Women and the Cuban Insurrection*; Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*.

1. BATISTA'S QUEST FOR LEGITIMACY

1 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 22.

2 Bayard de Volo, *Women and the Cuban Insurrection*, 65–78.

3 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 20.

4 Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, chapter 3.

5 Eduardo Ardura, "Raíces de la crisis cubana," cited in Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 185.

6 Pre-universities were upper secondary schools consisting of grades 10–12. Interview with Elvira Díaz Vallina, Havana, January 2012.

7 Julio Antonio Mella was probably the most radical and most important person in the protests against Machado both in and out of the University of Havana. In 1922 he was one of the founders of the Federation of University Students, and in 1925, a founder of the Cuban Communist Party (from which he was in short order expelled for lack of discipline for staging a hunger strike while in prison against Party orders). He went to Mexico and was assassinated there on orders of the then Cuban dictator, Machado. He was twenty-five when he was killed.

8 Castro Porta et al., *La lección del maestro*, 69–74.

9 Eduardo Chibás was founder and head of the Ortodoxo Party. For his impact on the people who would form the insurgent movements, see chapter 4. See also Lillian Guerra's discussion of Chibás in *Heroes, Martyrs and Political Messiahs.*

10 Interview with Sonnia Moro, Havana, January 2012.

11 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 25–39.

12 See chapter 2 for a discussion of women and protest marches in Havana.

13 The assassination of Frank País, beloved in Santiago and on an equal plane with Fidel Castro in the 26th of July Movement hierarchy, brought virtually all of Santiago, six thousand people, to walk behind his coffin (Bayard de Volo, *Women and the Cuban Insurrection*, 153). This procession was led by Frank's mother and the mother of América Domitro. See the epilogue for elaboration of the relationship of América and Frank.

14 Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, 79–80.