

INTRODUCTION



“Antes”

PROCESSIONS PAST

The fiesta [today] is not as popular. Now it is more religious. Before, it was in the streets, now it surrounds the church. Before, people liked to party, more in the town. Now, people come to see the Virgin.

—*María de la Caridad LaGuna*

After offering me sweetened *café cubano* inside her home, an older woman (affectionately termed *viejita*) residing in El Cobre, Cuba, in the early years of the twenty-first century described to me the September 8 feast day processions in honor of the Virgin of Charity, Cuba's patron saint, and festivities that used to take place in the streets *antes*, before 1959. The word *antes*—its prerevolutionary temporal referent considered so obvious as to render unnecessary any explanation—was ubiquitous in my conversations with Cubans, particularly those who came of age prior to 1959 (cf. Frederik 2012, 6). Whatever their ideological orientation, whether praising the revolution for challenging the United States' economic dominance and for addressing the inequities in access to health care and education that were so prevalent before the revolution, or lamenting the disappearance of quotidian things that were taken for granted in prerevolutionary times, such as religious processions in the streets, Cubans repeatedly spoke to me about their nation's twentieth-century history in terms that emphasized the 1959 victory of the Cuban revolution as a definitive temporal dividing line.

With some wistful nostalgia, the *viejitas* to whom I spoke described the street processions dedicated to the Virgin of Charity of *antes* as



FIGURE 1.1 “Antes”: Local women processing with La Melliza (“twin”) image of the Virgin of Charity returning from the streets of El Cobre to the National Sanctuary of Our Lady of Charity, “before” the revolution, in the early 1950s. Note the uniformed officials in the background, saluting the Virgin. Archbishop Enrique Pérez Serantes is facing the camera, middle right, wearing a black cassock and glasses. (Photographer unknown, ca. 1950.)

solemn acts of devotion, “a beautiful thing,” which preceded further festivity, the more profane entertainment that also took place in the streets. But “afterward, this was dropped [*se cayó*] with the change in customs of the country,” they reported, in the passive voice in subdued tones.¹ For these individuals speaking to me in the early years of the twenty-first century, the memory of past processions and festivities haunted present-day street activities. “From the church the procession would come to the town, on September 7. But the nuns were there above [in the church]. Down here [in the streets] was the party [*parranda*]” (Hernandez 1993, 97, 105). *Antes*, the *viejitas* recalled, the townspeople (with the occasional participation of visiting pilgrims) would carry an image of the Virgin of Charity from her national sanctuary and into the streets, a location that Cubans identify as the site of *lo popular*, or popular sensibilities.

La Cubanía and La Cuba Profunda

Cuba’s patron saint (*patrona*), the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, has long served as a symbol whereby Cubans interpret themselves and their condi-

tions. As twentieth-century Cuban intellectual Jorge Mañach (1948, 24) once asserted, “There is no nation without the Virgin of Charity.”

When I first ventured to Cuba in 1997, I assumed that the Virgin of Charity had always and everywhere been as I then understood her to be: inextricably linked to notions of Cuban national identity, iconographically represented as a *mulata* (a woman of Spanish and African descent), and “syncretically” identified with the Regla de Ocha *oricha* Ochún, a flirtatious goddess of fresh waters, fecundity, and wealth. The longer I stayed in Cuba, the more my fascination grew with the island’s cultural, religious, and political history—as well as how this history collided (*chocado*) in often painful ways with the geopolitical ambitions and economic aims of my own nation, the United States. In electing to conduct a research project on the Virgin of Charity, Cuba’s patron saint and the island’s premier religious symbol, I was touching the *candela* (fire) of Cuban debates over nationalism. In time, Cuba’s regional rivalries, racial hierarchies, political history, and religious variations emerged into focus, and I saw how these factors influenced the Virgin’s cult, which I began to understand as an evolving historical phenomenon effected by many different agents throughout history who possessed various motivations.

Our Lady of Charity is usually described by devotees as a benevolent maternal saint who patiently listens to the petitions of her devotees.² Most devotees recount that they first learned of this Marian advocacy from their mothers, grandmothers, or other female relatives, inside the domestic, tacitly female-gendered private sphere of the home, which often had a space reserved for an image of the Virgin of Charity. Learning Marian devotions within domestic spheres, with its attendant kinship relationships and the use of familial titles and roles—“Mary our mother”—as well as the often personal nature of a devotee’s petitions to the Virgin all point to the intimate quality of the relationship that is forged between the devout and the saint (Orsi 2006). In Cuba, as in other locations of Latin America, such tenderness or warm familiarity is often marked by the use of the diminutive “-ito” or “-ita” form of an individual’s name when calling them. Thus Cubans’ affectionate appellation for their patron saint, also referred to as simply La Caridad or Cacha (a common nickname for Caridad), is Cachita.³ I concur with Cuban ethnographer José Millet Batista, who disputes his colleague Miguel Barnet’s contention that the Virgin of Charity is, for most Cubans, intertwined with the sensuality of the Regla de Ocha (aka Santería) *oricha* Ochún. Rather, argues Millet Batista, for most Cubans, “she’s Cachita, la virgen de la Caridad” (Millet Batista 1993a, 84, 85).

Streets as Stages: Piety, Political Pedagogy, and Pachanga

Certainly, these devotions learned in the home and subsequent petitions to Cachita for help with individual matters are important elements in the spread of the cult. Devotion to the Virgin of Charity in Cuba takes a wide range of local forms, whether a devotee practices popular versions of Roman Catholicism, spiritism, Regla de Ocha (or some combination thereof), or simply maintains a devotion to the saint that they do not categorize within any of these religious traditions. Cuba's twentieth- and twenty-first-century Roman Catholic leaders attempted to standardize these practices by encouraging Cubans, of whom only a small percentage were considered practicing Catholics, to participate in large-scale ceremonies of the sort described in this book, where orthodox Marian piety was placed on public display in the streets.

In planning large-scale ceremonies in which the Virgin's original seventeenth-century image was brought out of her El Cobre shrine and into the tacitly masculine-gendered arena of the streets (cf. Chevannes 2003), the male hierarchy of Cuba's Catholic Church pressed claims, in this competitive public space, about the collective identity of the nation. Cubans' twentieth- and twenty-first-century "genealogies of performance" (Roach 1992), or cumulative repositories of public events, are intended, by their organizers, to remind participants of a "master narrative" (Connerton 1989, 70) in an effort to produce successive definitions of "Cubanness" in the streets (see M. A. Torre 2003).

These ritual events must be interpreted alongside other, contemporaneous street spectacles, whether planned by carnival organizers or civil authorities, which advance other, at times competing claims about national identity—such as that Cubans are naturally *pachangueros* (aficionados of *pachangas*, or raucous street parties) or are united in their support for the revolution. Although competition *within* street festivals, particularly carnival, has often been studied (Carlsen 1997; Guss 2000; McAlister 2002), I look at competition *between* contemporaneous street events as agonistic cultural performances. In so doing, I investigate how planners and performers at street spectacles vie to claim interpretive supremacy for the nation, and how participants navigate the tension between these at times competing claims.

In her authoritative treatment of the colonial-era origins of Cubans' signature religious devotion, Cuban historian Olga Portuondo Zúñiga deemed Cuba's Virgin of Charity a "symbol of *cubanía*," twentieth-century Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortíz's term for a "feeling of deep and pervasive iden-

tification with things Cuban.”⁴ This discussion of *cubanía* became more salient after Cuba’s 1959 revolution, as the vernacular cultural habits of the nation’s economic and social margins—what Cuban cultural interpreter Joel James Figarola (1998), borrowing Cuban Minister of Culture Armando Hart’s term for Oriente, called “Cuba profunda” (deep Cuba; Hulme 2011, 9)—were accorded privileged status in national reflection. Contemporary Cuban cultural historian and ethnographer Abelardo Larduet Luaces has recently refined James Figarola’s formulation by contrasting *conocimiento*, which in this usage connotes official, elite knowledge, with *sabiduría*, by which Larduet signals the popular wisdom found in Cuba profunda.⁵

This book contends that if the *sabiduría* of Cuba profunda were distilled in one locale, it would be the streets, where versions of *la cubanía* are performed, consolidated, and mobilized. Streets are often likened to a stage (Schechner 1993). Thus political and ecclesial leaders attempt to strengthen their respective claims by staging their spectacles in the streets, from which they attempt to demonstrate affinity for—often by borrowing performative cues from or claiming alignment with—still other popular expressions found in the street.

Over the course of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, public performances that were at times deemed definitive of Cuban identity were at other times prohibited, while previously banished practices gained new visibility in the streets and were vested with increased prestige to symbolize the nation. Cubans’ planning of and participation in these events produced, in effect, a revolution in their streets.

A Note on Method

Taking cues from historical anthropology (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Price 2002), I seek to “redeem the fragments” by situating contemporary field work data within a broader historical and cultural context, being attentive to the relationship between phenomena and multiple axes of power. This ethnohistorical commitment has translated into much more investigation of archival documents than I originally intended when I began this project, including unanticipated research of seventeenth-century colonial history and of the history of Cuban urban planning. The book interprets archival accounts, including commemorative albums published by Cuba’s Catholic Church, contemporaneous newspaper and magazine accounts, and government-issued texts that recount these large-scale events from planning phase to performance and aftermath (Chamah Fetué and Grullón 1937; *Semanario Católico* 1952; *Congreso Católico Nacional* 1960; COCC

1998; Instituto Cubano del Libro 1998). I then weave in data collected from structured oral history interviews as well as observations and everyday conversations, so that the book becomes more ethnographic as the chapters approach the present day. The result is, I hope, a fuller narrative of the changes in conceptions of the Virgin of Charity and Cuban street performances over the course of Cuba's colonial (1492–1898), U.S. First Occupation (1899–1902), republican (1902–58), and revolutionary (1959–present) periods.

Since 1997, I have made more than a dozen trips to Cuba, and conducted participant-observation field research as well as archival research. I spent the majority of my cumulative three years of residency in Oriente, the island's eastern region. I was initially disoriented there, because the authoritative studies of “Cuba,” such as the writings of the pioneering Cuban ethnographers Lydia Cabrera (1992), and her better-known brother-in-law Fernando Ortíz ([1906] 1973), which I had read to prepare myself, usually described phenomena that predominated in urban enclaves of Cuba's two western provinces of Havana and Matanzas (cf. Frederik 2012). Orientales (Easterners) were more likely to eat *caldosa*, a modest, albeit spicier version of Cuba's vaunted *ajiaco*—a rich stew of meats and root vegetables that Ortíz proposed was an apt metaphor for the ethnic “mixture” of “transcultured” Cuban society itself (Ortíz [1940] 1995). But reorienting myself to Oriente was more than simply learning regional vocabulary such as *pluma* in place of *pila* for faucets or *papaya* instead of *fruta bomba*. Living in Cuba's “heroic city” of Santiago de Cuba—so called for its rebellious history of vigorous participation in Cuba's armed struggles—pulled my frame of reference to encompass neighboring islands that have exerted such cultural influence on Cuba's “most Caribbean” city.

Over the centuries, many Caribbean migrants have settled in this “most hospitable” city of *la tierra caliente*, which, with a population of half a million, is the nation's second-largest city. There I lived variously near Plaza de Marte, on Carnecería at the center of the city, and passed time near and in barrio Los Hoyos. I also resided in El Cobre, a small, predominantly black and mulatto town of five thousand, located seventeen miles outside the provincial capital of Santiago de Cuba in an otherwise rural area of the low-elevation Sierra Maestra mountains of eastern Cuba. When I lodged in El Cobre's church-operated guesthouse for pilgrims for a period of several months in 2001—the year that the town's centuries-old copper mine shut down—I interviewed clerics, nuns, and lay church workers, as well as pilgrims who stayed there, and consulted records at the national shrine. In returning to El Cobre for the Virgin's annual September 8 festival on four

occasions (1998, 2000, 2001, and 2005), I was able to interview some of the same pilgrims from various locations in Cuba, and the family members who accompanied them, over successive years. I also spent some weeks in Camagüey and Bayamo conducting archival research and interviews, and visited both Holguín and Guantánamo on two occasions. Additionally, I made several brief research trips to Matanzas in the western region, and resided for over eight months in the capital city of Havana, living in Old Havana, Central Havana, and circulating in barrio Colón as well. I spent ample time in Barrio Chino at the Church of Our Lady of Charity at the corner of Manrique and Salud streets, attending Masses, observing devotees who came to visit La Caridad, and interviewing pilgrims, Catholic laypeople, and clergy. In the nearby barrios of Jesús María and Los Sitios, bisected by Calzada del Monte (“Avenida Máximo Gómez,” officially), I was invited to and attended the rituals hosted by the many practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions who reside there.

Describing and interpreting the past activities and motivations of historical subjects is a challenging task, particularly when examining these data in conversation with present-day experience (Tweed 2002). Some firsthand witnesses have died, or, in the case of revolutionary Cuba, may not wish to speak or have gone into exile. When I tracked down exiles now living in the United States or abroad, I found them eager to talk about their experiences in Cuba with respect to the Virgin—as were, for the most part, Cubans still residing on the island. On a handful of occasions, some Cuban residents did not feel comfortable talking to a North American researcher, which is understandable given the deplorable history of the United States’ treatment of Cuba: repeated military interventions, propping up authoritarian governments and dominating the island’s economy during the republican era, and, in the revolutionary era, sponsoring an invasion and other aggressive, covert operations, pressuring the Organization of American States to isolate Cuba diplomatically from its Latin American neighbors, and imposing a trade embargo of more than a half century’s duration. Cubans justifiably characterize these U.S. actions as “imperialism,” and the resulting mistrust that still defines relations between our respective countries sometimes colors interpersonal relationships between Cuban and U.S. nationals. But in most cases, my many repeated long-term visits over the course of seventeen years allowed me the opportunity to listen and learn, to deepen friendships, and, I believe, to interact more candidly.

I engaged in many conversations, drank many *cafecitos*, quaffed *aguardiente* (cheap unrefined rum), smoked *cigarros suaves*, ate *comida criolla* (or at

times went hungry), attended and documented numerous religious rituals (Roman Catholic, Spiritist, Regla de Ocha, Vodou, and Palo Monte), interviewed practitioners of these respective religions, as well as Protestants and Jews and those who described themselves as unaffiliated with any religion, and participated in numerous street spectacles, such as mass pilgrimages, carnivals, *fiestas populares*, and rallies where anti-U.S. protests were prominent. I also examined Cuban media accounts, and consulted government and church archives and interviewed government and church officials and laypeople, regarding the memory and representation of street festivals dedicated to the Virgin of Charity as well as carnivals, protests, and civic rallies. This required that I maintain good relationships with two sectors of Cuban society that, since 1961, have often been in tension with one another: government officials, who controlled my visa status as a student and temporary resident (and thus my ability to be in the country to conduct research, and to have access to public archives), and officials of the Roman Catholic Church (who, particularly in Oriente, at times cautiously guarded access to their ecclesial archives). During successive visits, I feared that the uncomfortable questions I at times posed to government officials and church leaders about the tension between religion and the state might jeopardize my future access to them, their respective archives, and even the country itself.⁶

When I interacted with certain government-affiliated contacts, I sometimes endured withering lectures about U.S. imperialism and why the Catholic Church in Cuba should still be regarded as an enemy of the revolution. When I was in the presence of church authorities, some of my questions resulted in awkward pauses and pained glances, and I had to gingerly probe more deeply for answers, sometimes on repeated visits over a period of years. Rank-and-file Cubans of every sector of society—elderly retirees (*viejitos*), schoolchildren, self-employed small business owners (*propiacuentistas*), intellectuals, artists, religious practitioners, hustlers (*jineteros*), bureaucrats, the politically disaffected, as well as Marxist stalwarts (*militantes* and *cederistas*)—were, almost without exception, hospitable to me, the visiting Yuma (North American). I learned something from every conversation that I had, and I am grateful for the welcome that was shown to me. The opinions that I formed over the years are, of course, my own.

Scope and Outline

The Virgin of Charity—in her various local religious permutations—is arguably the most widespread object of Cuban religious devotion, both on the island and abroad. Although there are pious histories (Bravo 1766, Veyrunes

Dubois 1935 [Fonseca 1703; Ramírez 1782]), micro histories of colonial-era *Cobrerros* and their devotion to the Virgin (Marrero 1980, M. E. Díaz 2000a), histories of the colonial era of the cult (I. A. Wright 1928; Arrom [1959] 1980; Portuondo Zúñiga 1995; Ortiz 2008), and an ethnography of Cuban exiles' devotion to La Caridad in Miami from 1961 to the 1990s (Tweed 2002), there has not been a comprehensive treatment of twentieth-century Cubans' devotion to their patron saint. This book offers an ethnohistory of the cult of Cuba's Virgin of Charity, and, in the process, a history of twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Cuban religions, particularly Roman Catholicism, as these relate to the republican, and later, revolutionary Cuban state.

Cachita's Streets is also an "object history" (Sheper Hughes 2010, 16) of the adventures and travails of the Virgin's original effigy. Devotees consider Cachita's seventeenth-century image to hold such sacred potency that it draws them to her—whether she is residing in her usual home in her El Cobre sanctuary, or she is temporarily visiting Cuba's city streets. In this sense devotion to Cachita may be said to create a "network of relationships" (Orsi 2006, 2) between the saint, her devotees, state and church officials, and their nation. These relationships "make homes and cross boundaries" in physical spaces in a manner that binds (the Latin etymological root of *religāre*) devotees, to "intensify joy and confront suffering" (Tweed 2006, 54), to make use of Robert Orsi's and Thomas Tweed's definitions of religion.

This book traces the local permutations of devotion to the Virgin and the varying fates of religions in Cuba, particularly as these are expressed in relationships to changing racial, cultural, and political conceptions of Cuban nationality. Part I ("Cuba Profunda"), beginning with chapter 1, "From Foundling to Intercessor," reviews the historiography of the Three Juans' legendary finding (*hallazgo*) of the Virgin's effigy in 1612, and the growth of her cult among slaves in El Cobre, while chapter 2, "Mambísa Virgin," traces the subsequent spread of what became Cuba's signature Marian advocacy during Cuba's nineteenth-century wars for independence and its early republican history.

The remainder of the book, found in Parts II, III, and IV, concentrates on twentieth-century events that postdate the 1902 founding of the Republic of Cuba and the Vatican's 1916 official recognition of the Virgin of Charity as Cuba's patron saint, in order to explore the variation, contestation, and interaction between these key terms, *patria* and *patrona*, or "nation" and "patroness." The symbol of the Virgin has been mobilized by various Cuban constituencies to promote their historically specific claims regarding religious practice, ascriptions of race, and political ideologies of Cuban nationhood.

Thus this study will investigate what anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (1997, 72) terms the “rhetorical uses of iconicity”: How have various sectors imagined Cuba’s pre-eminent religious symbol, the Virgin of Charity? How have these groups brandished their local definition of the Virgin in their attempts to univocally represent the nation? How have street performances, with their amplified public displays, been an important modality of these Cuban parties’ mobilization of the symbol of the Virgin?

The core of this book examines a series of extraordinary large-scale public ceremonies dedicated to the Virgin. Beginning in 1936, and again in 1952, 1959, 1998, and 2012, the Virgin’s original seventeenth-century effigy was removed from her sanctuary in the mountain village of El Cobre and transferred to the streets of urban areas in order to preside over religious ceremonies of successively greater size and scope. Thus streets serve as the infrastructure for this book, since the streets are the literal and figurative thoroughfares between the events in question, and the streets were considered—by supporters and detractors alike—to be important venues for the Virgin to visit.

Almost by definition, large-scale planned street performances—those that receive the necessary official permits to use the public thoroughfares—carry the tacit approval of (or at least tolerance by) political authorities. But the attempts by planners of these events to capture the center of attention have the effect of defining a periphery to which I must also attend. Some street events were variously encouraged or prohibited in different epochs by Cuban authorities in an effort to showcase (or discourage) certain raced versions of popular culture, to bolster (or diminish) the ranks of practicing Roman Catholics, or to reinforce (or challenge) support for various political positions. At times one sort of street activity was suppressed and replaced by newly ascendant sanctioned practices.

In these public religious ceremonies, the claims linking the Virgin with her nation were broadcast from ever-larger public stages, employing emerging media technology and new public architecture to do so. Prior to the 1959 Cuban Revolution, these Marian spectacles took place in ad hoc public spaces that could hold tens of thousands of participants. Advances in mid-twentieth-century Cuban urban planning would later provide the sufficiently large-scale plazas—able to hold public gatherings of hundreds of thousands of attendees, deliberately constructed to showcase the “nation”—where the Virgin’s postrevolutionary ceremonies took place. These events, and other contemporaneous large-scale street spectacles, “made possible the emergence of a common national language of ritual activity,” as Simon P. New-

man (2000, 3; c.f. Anderson 1991) has noted with respect to the symbiotic relationship between civic festivals and print culture in the early U.S. republic. A similar dynamic holds sway in Cuba, particularly in the revolutionary era in which attendance at *manifestaciones* is often pressured by government-controlled workplaces and schools, and rallies are rebroadcast by and subject to extensive commentary in state-administered mass media.

In different eras, various Cuban leaders have characterized street performances as debauched or superstitious spectacles that retard modern progress, as pious gatherings that “no heart can resist,” as the self-evident political “will of the people,” or as pastoral events where “the Virgin must visit her children.” It is these large cultural performances in Cuba’s streets that this book interprets.

In successive twentieth- and twenty-first-century spectacles, the Virgin was fêted as a monarch, hailed as a conquering general, promoted as a maternal custodian who could calm a roiling civic realm, and invoked as an advocate of national reconciliation. Each of these public performances coincided with or closely followed important events in Cuban history that framed the Marian spectacle and contemporaneous trends in devotion. For her part, the Virgin was often the mediating symbol through which the devout made sense of these historical events, and thus, of their lives.

Part II (“Regal Streets”) examines devotions to the Virgin that drew upon royal imagery during the 1930s, an era when *afrocubanistas* and *origenistas* offered competing African- and Spanish-inflected accounts of Cuban culture, respectively. The Machado dictatorship (1925–33) sought to order Cuba’s streets via massive public works projects to improve the nation’s infrastructure as well as by prohibiting performances associated with black Cubans, such as *bembes*, drumming ceremonies dedicated to regal deities, and *comparsas*, street displays of carnival monarchy. Chapter 3, “Royalty in Exile,” interprets the account of a surviving witness as well as Cuban press reports of the Santiago police force’s 1931 raid on a *bembé* celebrated by black Cubans in honor of the Virgin. Chapter 4 treats the “orderly streets” of the 1936 Roman Catholic coronation of the Virgin’s original effigy in Santiago, in the wake of the chaotic Revolution of 1933 that featured violence in the streets and the overthrow of the Machado dictatorship.

Part III (“Martial Streets”) examines military models for the Virgin and armed campaigns during Cuba’s tumultuous 1950s. Chapter 5 interprets the 1951–52 nationwide pilgrimage of the “Virgin General” through Cuba’s streets, where she reviewed a full range of Cuban cultural and religious expressions. The Virgin’s march was temporarily stalled by General Fulgencio

Batista's March 1952 coup d'état. Two months later, when her effigy was imperiled during its advance through the streets of Havana, many Cubans retroactively blamed the *caudillo* (strong man) for a "disaster" that the Virgin suffered. The 1952 Batista coup d'état inspired Fidel Castro's July 26, 1953, rebel counterattack, discussed in chapter 6, which was deliberately planned to coincide with Cuba's rowdiest annual street festival, the carnival in Santiago de Cuba. "Rebel Sierras and Lowlands" interprets how residents of Santiago de Cuba narrated this revolutionary history with reference to their actions during successive carnival seasons of 1957 and 1958, when these street festivals were effectively canceled, and instead thousands of protesters marched. In the late 1950s, guerilla insurgents in Oriente's Sierra Maestra mountains, which surround the Virgin's shrine, coordinated with the urban underground to incite strikes and acts of sabotage in the streets, stirring many anguished appeals to, and endangerment of, the Virgin.

Part IV ("Revolutionary Streets") investigates the transition from republican to revolutionary Cuba through the performance of distinctive street events that were meant to mark, and to bring into being, a new era of Cuban political commitment. Spontaneous street celebrations greeted the victorious rebel army in January 1959, and ever-larger government-planned assemblies in Cuban streets and Havana's recently constructed Civic Plaza synchronized the performance of revolutionary resolve. Chapter 7, "¡Todos a la Plaza!" treats the massive November 1959 Eucharistic Congress in Havana's Civic Plaza, an event during which attendees thanked the Virgin for the victory of the revolution, and some showcased their dissent to emerging revolutionary policies by invoking the presumed blessing of the Virgin. In its scale, gestures, and utterances, Catholic planners of the 1959 Eucharistic Congress self-consciously competed with the previous months' mass revolutionary rallies and challenged the emerging Marxist leanings of the provisional government. As discussed in chapter 8, tensions between the Catholic Church and the state came to a head in 1961, when the revolutionary government cancelled the annual street procession for the Virgin's September feast day in Havana. "The streets are for revolutionaries!" the rallying cry of the new political order, supplanted, for forty years, the Catholic Church's formerly privileged status in planning and executing religious processions in the streets. Instead, new civic performances in the streets, such as revolutionary rallies and "street plans" for children, were implemented for the purpose of cultivating Cuba's revolutionary "New Man." Chapter 9, "Luchando in the Special Period," looks at the economic difficulties of the 1990s, when Cuba had to survive without the economic support of its former Eastern Bloc

allies. The deprivations of this era were epitomized by the physical and social deterioration of Cuban streets and the occasional public eruptions of frustration there. Pope John Paul II's groundbreaking 1998 visit to the island and the Pope's recoronation of the Virgin's original effigy in Santiago's Revolution Plaza awakened hope among some Cubans for a renewal of religious street processions. The book's concluding chapter, "Processions Present," describes how Afro-Cuban religious events in the streets gained an increased audience from Cubans and tourists alike, at times sparking debate, as these performances amplified religious notions and promoted conceptions of national identity that challenged the prior Catholic monopoly on religious rituals in the streets. The twenty-first century witnessed the re-establishment of processions in honor of La Caridad during a cautious détente between the Catholic Church and the revolutionary state, punctuated by a 2012 visit from Pope Benedict XVI that marked the four hundredth anniversary of the finding of the Virgin's effigy, and the amplification of the church's claims about the cult of the Virgin and its ties to Cuban national identity.

Before turning to the chapters that interpret these Marian spectacles in the streets of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Cuba, I must first more fully introduce the book's central figure, the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, and the geographic location of much of this book. Chapter 1 attends to the legend of the Three Juans' 1612 finding (hallazgo) of the Virgin's effigy in Oriente, Cuba's eastern region, and the genesis of her cult among enslaved devotees in El Cobre.