

Notes on Mary's Second Trip to Cuba (Part 2):

1. In Chapter 297, on the ship to Cuba, Mary talks to an apologist for Heberto Padilla's arrest. The apologist presents the case that: (a.) the arrest was just a house arrest, not a Stalinist type arrest with torture; (b.) Padilla could have just been talked to and as a result have actually changed his position (rather than being forced into his public apology); (c) it might well have been that there were rumors (provable or not) that Padilla had C.I.A. contacts (how could Cuba not take such rumors seriously after the Bay of Pigs?); (d.) Padilla has been released and shows no physical signs of mistreatment.
2. After listening to this presentation, Mary is somewhat persuaded, but then (a.) she encounters and reads an English translation of Padilla's poems (*Out of the Game*) and (b.) she also locates and reads a copy of Padilla's public apology.
3. Mary's reaction to Padilla's poems is that they are so oblique in their criticism of the new Cuban state that in a vibrant cultural dialogue such as exists in America they would hardly be noticed as political provocation. The main criticism in the poems seems to be that poets (and intellectuals and artists) are not taken seriously in Cuba, they are regarded as irrelevant to the Revolution (out of the game). The poems express a wounded feeling of being ignored, not a criticism of the government.
4. Mary's reaction to Padilla's public apology is that it cannot be genuine because it is overwritten. No poet of Padilla's caliber would write with such a lack of restraint. Padilla was supplied the words, she decides, and just read them.
5. Mary's conclusion regarding all of the above is that: (a.) there is a high level of suspicion on the part of the government and a high level of sensitivity on the part of the poet (both are anticipating that something may go wrong in their interaction); (b.) the government has obviously, by some means, pressured Padilla to make the public apology and has obviously provided the words; (c) here again, she notes, the words of the apology in their effusiveness and references to a personal wrong to "Fidel" (using the first name) display a heightened sensitivity (wounded feelings on the part of the revolutionaries); (d.) the theory of C.I.A. agents having tried to influence Padilla is not expressed as one of the reasons for the arrest and investigation, and, therefore, as might be expected, no statement is made either in support or rejection of this theory; Mary thinks, though, that this theory is plausible since she has heard of F.B.I. agents conducting investigations, in America, of students who have gone on the *Venceremos* trips.
6. At the end of Chapter 297, Mary decides that she will go forward on the trip (the accusations against Cuba are serious enough that she considered not going forward). She decides that while in Cuba she will look more closely into the whole question of free speech in Cuba and will do what she can as an individual to convince Cubans she meets of the importance of free speech. She also decides that while in Cuba she will consider whether the people of Cuba support the new government and whether the new government is improving the life of the Cuban people. Mary already has some sense of this, of course, from her previous stay in Cuba, but she decides to take a second look.
7. The ending of Chapter 297 on this grim assessment and resolution on Mary's past contrasts with the beginning of Chapter 298 in which Mary, now actually in Cuba again, sees no indication of lack of freedom or lack of popular support in Cuba as the

physical beauty and sunshine of Cuba also affect her mood. Enroute to the mountains where she and her fellow volunteers will plant trees, she stops with the others and tours an "escuela en el campo" in which she notes the happiness, healthiness, and patriotism of the teenage students from the city who are spending their required two months per year in the country as part of the Cuban program of integrating the urban and rural populations. She notes also that the school (like many of the new schools in Cuba) is housed in a mansion expropriated from a patron (who has fled to America).

8. Further in Chapter 298, Mary has further evidence of the good effect of the Revolution when she listens to the introduction to tree planting by the Cuban cadre Xavier Cortez (this is the good-looking soldier she met the previous year). Cortez describes how the forests in Cuba were stripped thin for the private construction needs and lumber sale profits of a small group of people. (See article on Cuban Forests.)
9. In Chapter 298, Mary also sees further evidence of the positive aspects of the new Cuban society when she travels by bus (freely, with no permission needed) to see her Cuban woman friend from her previous trip, Dr. Juanita Tancredo. Mary notes the improvements in Tancredo's clinic, and she hears of other improvements that have been made in clinics throughout the island.
10. In Chapter 298, toward the end of the chapter, Mary begins to see the other side of the picture, also, in how unsympathetic Tancredo is to Mary's concern with free speech (when Mary asks the doctor for her opinion of the Padilla affair). Tancredo says, in effect, that Padilla's concerns are selfish and elitist.
11. Mary then also has an interaction with Xavier Cortez, at the end of Chapter 298, when she bluntly tells him her concern about free speech and he answers that he supports the arrest and the attitude behind it, and invites her to have a fuller discussion on the subject at some later time.
12. In this initiative, Mary is aware of a romantic interest being present, also, enough so that she considers her relationship with Matthew Brandt and whether she is still obligated to be faithful to Matthew or still wants to be faithful even without such an obligation.
13. The thematic thread of Mary's relationship with Matthew (and her general attitudes toward men, as influenced by her changing self-definition) is present in Chapter 298, also, through a letter Mary receives from back home (not sure whether from Matthew himself or from some other member of the Cranston farm).
14. The letter from home also carries forward the thematic thread of the growing complications and conflicts at the Cranston farm that will lead to the farm's demise. This thread is present in the news that Matthew is extremely concerned with the efficiency of the farm and is annoyed with the lack of industry on the part of the others, especially the four last people that have just arrived. (Perhaps this letter is from Dennis Kelly, not Matthew. Kelly can jokingly refer to Matt's being a taskmaster, and Mary knows enough about the ramifications of that development to take it as an ominous sign. Mary also sees ominous signs in the late night noise that Kelly says the four new members are making and in an isolated comment about Matt helping Gail fix her VW bus.)
15. In Chapter 302 (about a month after Chapter 298), Xavier Cortez reappears to have the discussion with Mary about free speech in Cuba that he had earlier suggested.

Mary interprets this as a genuine interest on his part though she is also aware that Xavier has a romantic interest and that she feels a reciprocal interest while not having decided yet whether she would allow it to develop to a point of being unfaithful to Matthew.

16. In a long romantic day together, Mary and Xavier drive around in Xavier's jeep, talking about free speech in Cuba as Xavier shows Mary examples of the good effects of the Cuban revolution. The new point that Xavier makes in his presentation at this time is that there are wealthy people who only care about maintaining or (in the case of Cuba) regaining their wealth. They will do anything to subvert the democratic process with wealth as their only goal. He says that this is case in America, also; he looked into it when he was living in the U.S. (he reveals that unlike those fleeing the country after the Revolution he moved in the other direction to take part in the Revolution). He cites the example of the U.S. Federal Reserve being unelected and controlled by a couple of hundred of the richest families in America. He says while people often talk about Communism wanting to control the world, these people want to control the wealth of the world. They are not sincerely interested in ideas; they pragmatically accept any ideas that further their wealth. They are not interested in being recognized in public life; they remain in the background, inserting money clandestinely to advance their position in terms of wealth only.
17. Cortez also, importantly, in this discussion, displays a paternalistic attitude (not yet realized as such by Mary) toward the common people of Cuba. His position is that the common people cannot be yet given full freedom of speech, they need to be brought up first to an intellectual and political level where they can make sound political decisions. If they are not, the revolution will be lost. He quotes the popular saying, "With the Revolution, everything. Without the Revolution, nothing."
18. Chapter 303 ends with a romantic thrust of some kind by Cortez that Mary parries. She then sees no more of him until she leaves the mountains for Havana and is waiting there with the others for the return trip to America. In recognition of their work, the volunteers are given a three-day holiday. Xavier Cortez happens on the scene at this time (stating that he has business in Havana), and he stops to see the entire group, though Mary soon discovers that he has really come to see her. She and Cortez go out for dinner and he then makes a play, which she refuses. In the course of this, Mary sees an unattractive quality of Xavier, in that he tries to seduce her through clever reasoning. He is jesuistic, she thinks, and also a womanizer. She sees this as an essential quality, a flaw she was unaware of before. She realizes that his womanizing is related to the paternalistic attitude he showed toward free speech.
19. After breaking off abruptly from her ill-ending evening with Cortez, Mary goes off into Havana, into the theater district, where she has the same experience at first as at the start of her trip in thinking Cuba is much better than she had started to again believe. She thinks to herself that she has been overly influenced by her encounter with Cortez. But then she stops in a bookstore and notes the singularity of perspectives represented by the books (they are party-line accounts of people who go from bourgeois selfishness to revolutionary selflessness). The book store is catechismal in its onesidedness, Mary thinks. She realizes that in Cuba she could not have the experience she treasures most in America, of going to a bookstore and browsing amidst a wide range of titles representing a wide range of social and

political views. Going out, she notices the same onesideness in the theaters along the street; many are closed, evidence of the absence of the previous vibrant theater life; others present the same politically correct viewpoint that Mary observed in the bookstore.

20. By the time Mary leaves Cuba, she is aware that she is undergoing a fundamental intellectual change. It is something that she has not sought, and does not like, but the preponderousness of the evidence against the Cuban revolution that she has experienced on her trip make the change unavoidable for her.
21. Mary asks herself, has she rejected the Cuban revolution? No, she answers, she still is aware of the many good things the revolution has accomplished, she still wants to support the Cuban people financially, to the extent she is able, she still wants to do all she can to promote the development of free speech in Cuba. How then has she changed, she asks herself. She answers in that previously she saw the three political aspects of her life (Cuba, women's coop, and Cranston farm) as all being united as being all manifestations of "the spirit of the Cuban revolution." She no longer feels that. She feels that she is an American and that the essential quality of Americanism, with its emphasis on liberty and free speech, must be the unifying component in her political endeavor. It is really "the spirit of the American revolution" that is the unifying factor, she notes to herself. And what is the "spirit of the American revolution?" It is the emphasis on individual liberty that is such a central theme in American political life.
22. Having decided this, at the start of Chapter 304, Mary goes on to her women's coop meeting where her colleagues from D.C. are present as well as some women from Appalachia, the Twin Cities, and the Canadian Maritime provinces. She does this feeling enthused about bringing her new political insights into the discussions.
23. Mary soon learns, however, that one person present at the conference, Hattie Beecher, is not faring well. This chapter must quickly move to this central development in the plot as Mary loses Hattie through Hattie's realization of the radicalness of Mary's views. Apart from this, Hattie feels out of place out of her Kentucky environment, and she looks out of place when Mary and she go out to dinner together. Mary feels very bad about this; she feels like she has done Hattie a disservice.
24. After Hattie arranges to leave ahead of schedule, Mary has a meeting with Fletcher Bourne in the parking lot in which conversation she learns about Hattie's misgiving with various radical statements made at the conference and in which she also learns that Bumper Bourne has taken up the newspaper business, typing with one hand.
25. Something at the end of this series (93) must foreshadow the coming problems at the Cranston farm, maybe a phone call from Matt in which he tells her, "things are not so good here, to tell you the truth."