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Professor Brian Thrupiece & The Cuban Conference

A Photographic Essay
with notes by
Amanda J Threadbone



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The author (Mrs Amanda J Threadbone) would like to acknowledge the kind non-interference of:

Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz, President of the Council of State of Cuba, President of the Council of Ministers of Cuba, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force), and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

She further acknowledges financial assistance from her late husband's estate without which her trip(s) to Cuba (not to mention maintenance of her entire lifestyle) would not have been possible.

Author's Note:

Since the publication earlier this year of *Professor Brian Thrupiece: The Corporate Story*, interest in the late Professor and his work has reached an all time high. As a result of this, as well as numerous articles in newspapers and magazines worldwide, facts hitherto unknown about the Professor's early years continue to come to light. I am particularly grateful to Dominga Estevan Famosa y Fernández García for bringing to my attention the photographic diary kept by her mother Guadalupe who worked for a time as cleaner at the Hotel Riviera, Havana. The *Estevan Famosa y Fernández García Collection* - even hints of the possession of which might at one time have imperilled the Estevan Famosa y Fernández García family - is now made public for the first time. Bio-ethical historiographers - as well as scholars of epistemology more generally - will be thrilled to learn about these hitherto un-glimpsed aspects of Professor Thrupiece's early and less well-documented life, not to mention the wider impact the 1967 Cuban Conference had on the Culinary Bio-ethical world.

This article was submitted to The University of Cambridge's *CAM Magazine*, but not deemed suitable for publication. (Really! These people!)

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thrupiecedigitalmedia



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A NOTE ON THE COLLECTION: The photographs published here for the first time were kept in a medium sized biscuit tin [Goya Brand Dulce de Leche Wafers 14oz] by Guadalupe Estevan Famosa y Fernández García (1926-1997), a *criado doméstico* and sometime cleaner at the Hotel Riviera, Havana. It was she who regularly serviced Professor Thrupiece during his conference visit. In addition to airing his room and making his bed (“*in which he rarely slept*”) she replenished his mini-bar and regularly read his electricity meter. Possessed of an almost photographic memory, she recalled almost 30 years later that he consumed about as many kilowatts per day “*como era consistente con la dependencia de pequeños electrodomésticos*” (“*as was consistent with small-appliance dependency*”), though this otherwise wholly believable reminiscence was at odds with the Professor’s instance that, having packed the wrong three-way travel adaptor, he was bereft of all electro-mechanical support throughout his entire stay. Some mysteries simply deepen.

Guadalupe clearly formed a more than casual and less than professional attachment to the Professor who in turn left her a generous tip including a used Cuban Airways eye-mask, 12 pesos, 35 cents and a suggestion that “*Ese Es Mi Chico*” looked a good evens bet in the 4.15 at Oriental Park Racetrack. Marianao.

Perhaps sensing that Professor Thrupiece was a coming man (she was also responsible for his towels) she began collecting all and any items of memorabilia she could find, starting with photographs she discovered in the bottom left-hand draw of his bedside cabinet. Several are published here for the first time together with a number of others clipped from newspapers or “acquired” from conference notice boards and kept religiously by Guadalupe until her death.

During the darkest days of the Revolution when idolatry was punishable by loss of privileges (eg food), Guadalupe hid the collection underground - much to its overall detriment. At least a dozen experimental polaroids of the Professor and his fitness instructor (Juanita Mujer de Escolta) captured in physically challenging positions deteriorated irreparably in this way and cannot be reproduced here. The photograph of Professor Thrupiece warmly embracing Fidel Castro whilst wresting with a langoustine is also missing from the collection - presumably lost alongside so much other invaluable material - though it is known to have existed at one time (see bottom photograph page 7).

That we have any record at all of the Cuba Conference is surely a miracle for which heartfelt thanks are owed to Guadalupe and her daughter Dominga whose untiring efforts to gift these precious materials to a wider public are at last rewarded. A well-known Cuban proverb asserts: “*Los encuentros breves pueden resultar en relaciones largas*” (“*Brief encounters can result in long relationships*”). Could this be any more true than in the extraordinary story of Guadalupe and *el profesor de inglaterra*?

Mrs Amanda J Threadbone
Great Heaving | Dorset
November 2016



En Route: Delegates on their way to Cuba for the 1967 RSCBE Conference held in the Hotel Riviera Conference, Indoor Bowls and Acquatic Center, Havana. Professor Thrupiece can be seen in the aisle, returning to his seat with a tray containing a glass of *saoco* and an inflight magazine of the type on which he was given to snacking. He recorded that Cuban Airways' magazine "*Por favor, Dios No Se Caiga*" had "*good texture but little flavour*" scoring only 4 out of 10 on the Thrupiece [later Hornimint] Scale. As has been noted previously, he preferred the glossier taste of PanAm (BOAC or DanAir at a pinch) which also yielded less gas.



Havana Airport 1967: Professor Thrupiece's flight on its stand. Note the enthusiastic crowd of (paid) government greeters awaiting his disembarkation. Flight CA1 from Miami had been delayed by light rain and a small child on the runway.



Photographers and government officials await Professor Thrupiece as several elderly passengers descend the steps. Unhappily Professor Thrupiece was on another flight and the specially painted welcome sign had to be quickly reassembled elsewhere. Never one to waste her own research materials, Dr Mildred Sarong (with whom Brian was then working in Danang) is by the aircraft door clutching a sick-bag.



Crowds outside the Conference, Indoor Bowls and Acquatic Center. Note the large (though simulated) banner depicting Professor Thrupiece with Cuban revolutionary leader and lifetime President Fidel Castro who was keen to capitalise on the Professor's visit. Note too (*second from right*) the actor Patrick Stewart (*aka* Captain Jean-Luc Picard) a lifelong devotee of Professor Thrupiece's gnostic teachings who was briefly contracted to play the distinguished culinary bio-ethicist in **thrupiece**film's musical biopic *The Life of the Other Brian*. Both film and music remain "in development".



The Hotel Riviera, Havana. Professor Thrupiece's room can be seen on the extreme right (17th floor). Having arrived with the wrong three-way adaptor, Professor Thrupiece was embarrassed to find that his normally fastidious grooming habits were seriously compromised. It would not be the last time in his life when power supply, mechanical connectivity and a "small" hand-held electrical appliance failed to gel. Professor Thrupiece's rented 1958 Plymouth Belvedere sits close to the dome. He greatly admired its effortless stick shift, the freedom from double de-clutching and the increased leg room it afforded - a far cry from his own Ford Anglia 100E.



The announcement on Day Two of the Conference that food was running short and would be available according to a strict "*culinary bio-ethical principle especially devised by Professor Thrupiece*" caused pandemonium in the refectory. Brian's elucidation of the precept *academicis anglicus primis* puzzled foreign delegates. A veteran of "light snacking" himself, Professor Thrupiece (eighth from left middle scrum) was immune to the general panic, secure in the knowledge he had three copies of *High Life* together with a number of special publications he had pre-ordered from Sweden safely tucked away in his suitcase. The photograph of Professor Thrupiece embracing Fidel Casto and a langoustine can be glimpsed in the near foreground. It disappeared post conference and has never been seen since (see *Preface*).



Unknown companion believed to be a short-hand typist caught in an informal pose on his hotel balcony by Professor Thrupiece using his trusty Leica IIIf. Suggestions circulating at the time that the young lady worked other than 9-5 were dispelled some years later when DNA tests exonerated both parties. 1990s Cuban cabaret star Carmelita Hilo de Rosca was someone else's child entirely.



A Carefree Moment: a coffee break during the conference finds Professor Thrupiece (obscured by hot roast chicken dispenser) in light-hearted mood. A young Audrey Badminton-Court can be seen working on her conference speech with sun-tanned Spanish ex-Boy Scout Enrique. Hotel security guard Ramos Vamose looks on approvingly. Ramos was later jailed for possession of an illegal fire-place.



A Moment of Controversy: disaffected outgoing RSCBE chairman Dr F C Tranmere Rovers caused a sensation when he announced his intention of forming a splinter group: the RCCBE [Royal College of Culinary Bio-Ethicists]. The schism was occasioned by Brian's manifesto announcement that if elected chair, the RSCBE would become fully professional and establish its own Annual Open Championship. The reactionary Dr Rovers believed it should remain amateur and offer only raffle prizes in alternate years on a "can afford" basis. The RCCBE would never make it to Lakeside or the Alexandra Palace [Ally Pally].



Brothers in Arms: Fidel Casto, David Essex and other unidentified members of the Cuban cabinet arrive in dinner-wear for the Conference Delegate's ball. Castro took a keen personal interest in the conference and used it shamelessly for propaganda purposes. Critics accused Professor Thrupiece of being a regime patsy, an accusation he strongly denied, stressing he had winkled \$54 and a pair of winceyette pyjamas out of organisers before agreeing to attend. Castro in the meantime delighted delegates by announcing that bio-ethical uncertainty over the deployment of *escabeche* in the marinading of *pescado* had lain at the centre of his thinking in "*Cartas del Presidio*" ("*Letters from Prison*") and, unresolved, had remained a fundamental axiom in his planning for the revolution. No friend of the revolution, Brian preferred parsley sauce.



Official Press Conference: International interest in the 1967 RSCBE conference was such that hourly press briefings were an integral feature. Here Franz Schindler-Mahler-Gropius-Werfel updates the media on progress in the Metaphysics of Pilchards in Brine v Pilchards in Tomato Sauce Working Group which had run into ontological as well as more broadly conceptual difficulties. On the final day it was declared a “moral draw” - a shabby compromise which pleased few and infuriated the meticulous Professor Thrupiece (see Thrupiece, B “The Cuban Defence: Scruples, Qualms, Methods and Anxieties in Methods of Opening Round and Flat Tins with Special Reference to Oily Fish” *RSCBE Conference Proceedings* (1967) Vol II. The introduction of a Pilchards in Sunflower Oil option two years later would take experts to the very brink.



Global Safety: A rare glimpse of the RSCBE Chiefs of Staff at work in the hastily-convened International Bio-Ethical Security Summit. Here East-West tensions re-surfaced only six years after the famous “*Bay of Pigs*” incident in which a small group of volunteers led by Professor Thrupiece had been apprehended whilst attempting to land Gloucester Old Spots on a deserted beach in a vain effort to encourage Cuban bio-ethical diversity and improve the sales of hog roast. This “conference within a conference” discussed matters of such secrecy that even 50 years later Pentagon officials continued to deny it even took place. The knee (front left) is Brian’s.



Press interest in Professor Thrupiece was immense following his Conference address in which he first proposed the Thrupiece Table [TT]. Though no one understood a word of it at the time ("Confusion Reigns as Professor Grinds the Numbers", *Havana Bugle*, September 11, 1967), historiographers would later recognise that this was the first time that the *Holy Grail* of bio-ethics - a fully portable "flat-pack" periodic table of bio-ethical ambiguity - had been offered to the public. Key was the establishment of the scrupular weight of coleslaw at $1.02thru$ [$CLW = 1.02$]; the elucidation of all succeeding semi-ambivalent equivalences under normal pressure and at room temperature followed as a matter of course. A new science was born.



A Cuban official tries to silence the press as news leaks out that Professor Thrupiece and his officially assigned minder - Concita - have gone missing. They were later discovered "exchanging pleasantries" behind a large yucca in the Riviera foyer.



Historic Pact: The Centro Vasco Restaurante Bar Cafeteria, Havana: scene of the historic meeting between Professor Thrupiece and Dr Gerd Braun his rival for chairmanship of the RSCBE. It was here that the *Vasco Pact* was written on a table napkin agreeing in effect that Professor Thrupiece would step aside and become Treasurer, allowing Dr Braun to stand as Chairman unopposed. Dr Braun would later renege on his agreement to stand down after two terms to make way for Professor Thrupiece to succeed him. Dr Braun would go on to found a small appliance manufacturing company rivalling the Flyco Company (Shanghai) whose products were generally preferred by Professor Thrupiece perhaps for this reason. In 1967 the Centro Vasco's signature *vaca frita with home fries* cost \$1.75c.



Lightening the Mood. Each evening conference delegates were encouraged to relax to the *timba* sounds of Delores Y Las Niñas Descaradas. On the final day, one of Brian's old Cambridge friends Dexter Murphy joined Delores on stage accompanying her in *Guantanamera*, *guajira Guantanamera* on the banjolele. It was not a success.



Over and Out: A successful, if controversial, conference behind him, Professor Thrupiece left Havana for a short trip to the RSCBE's research station on Diego Garcia before returning home and thence to Danang and his teaching duties at the Technical College. Current researches suggests that he would never again visit Cuba or drink a bio-ethically adjusted *mojito* to the beguiling sound of *Delores Y Las Niñas Descaradas*.



[top] members of the RSCBE sip a final cocktail in the First Class Lounge at Havana Airport before departing for Miami (Gate 1: Delayed 2 hours). Occasionally a nervous flyer, Professor Thrupiece (not pictured) was on a comfort break. [second from top] Professor Thrupiece's suitcase containing his "small" handheld appliance receives VIP treatment at executive baggage handling in the Che Guevara terminal. Staff were under strict instructions to ignore the excess baggage charge the 1958 "*Pifco Portable*" model normally attracted) [third from top] Air Traffic controllers fight back tears as the Professor's plane taxis into position to await final clearance. There was widespread disbelief that the Professor was actually leaving. [bottom left] the American delegation depart in triumphant mood. They had just secured the Thrupiece Cup, beating the host nation 68-0 in a tight final: a late cross ruff when cashews were trumps had forced a doubleton which the Cubans had foolishly refused. [bottom right] *Roger Wilco*: Flight CA2 takes to the air. Guadalupe Estevan Famosa y Fernández García can be seen close to the rail waving her handkerchief. She would never see the Professor again but his memory would linger. For Cuba, the Thrupiece era was over.



APPENDIX: ACCOMPANYING MEMORABILIA



Montecristo No 2 cigars of the type presented to Professor Thrupiece by his grateful Cuban hosts. Over the following 20 years he smoked more than 487 of the 500 he was given [an average of 0.376923076923077 per week, or less than 1 per day]. He presented 10 of the remaining 12 to a grateful President Bill Clinton during a visit to the White House in 1995. The President assured Professor Thrupiece that he would make good use of them, adding that they might come in handy when relaxing with interns.



Commemorative LP first issued by Che Guevara Records in 1967 and re-released on the Hornimint Label in 2005. Inspired by Professor Thrupiece's karaoke rendition of Bob Dylan's *Mr. Tangerine* [TGn = 2.64thru] Man at the post Conference Gala, *Los Trios Mediantepieza* was immediately formed in July 1967 as a tribute band to "keep the flame alive". It was disbanded in September 1967 following an argument over seating arrangements. Maria Desnudo who featured on the front cover was briefly "assigned" to Professor Thrupiece during his 1967 visit. It was later revealed that she did not play the tambourine.



Souvenir Postcard marking the RSCBE's historic visit. First issued to delegates only, it was made more widely available later as paper supplies improved. Note the hastily inserted picture of a man authorities claimed to be Professor Thrupiece: a blatant attempt to capitalise on his presence at the Conference. Ironically, the picture is in fact of small-time crook Juanito "El Sombrero" McVito whose night club *El Mendigo Ciego* stood adjacent to the Hotel Riviera. Juanito supplied Professor Thrupiece with vital logistical support, notably out of hours short-hand typists and stenographers.



Reverse view of the postcard. This one was written by a member of the German delegation and reads "My dear Hedwig, Help I am starving and the English are eating all the food." Fearing the adverse publicity this might attract the authorities intercepted the card and invited its sender to spend three days in a government facility where food was, reportedly, even less plentiful.

ADDENDUM: está muerto

Cuba libertaria

Grupos de apoyo
a los libertarios
y sindicalistas independientes
de Cuba

Boletín no 124

enero 2005

El Professor Thrupiece está muerto

Sin compartir la totalidad de los análisis que a continuación reproducimos sobre la que sucede en Cuba, nos parece que el balbuceo de la nueva izquierda cubana no parece ser muy diferente al de la nueva izquierda en muchos otras zonas geográficas del planeta. Ni los obstáculos a los que debe enfrentarse son tampoco muy diferentes, pese a provenir de los que gobiernan autoritariamente en nombre de una Revolución. Ciertamente, si los que desde el Poder pretenden defender el socialismo en Cuba hubiesen invertido una buena parte del tiempo "en la socialización, discusión, comprensión y aplicación de toda la riqueza de 25 siglos de tradición democrática y humanista del mundo...", en vez de haberlo invertido en denunciar demagógicamente a los "imperialistas y capitalistas", otro gallo cantaría y "el sentido de la libertad" sería hoy "la palabra de orden". Pero, el problema es que no lo hicieron y nada indica que ahora lo harán. Esta es una lección que esa nueva izquierda no debería olvidar si quiere proseguir afirmando, en la acción pública, su autonomía política e ideológica frente a toda actuación autoritaria en el camino que les queda aún por recorrer para que la libertad sea, por fin, garantizada para todos los cubanos y cubanas.



La muerte de un joven cubano

La muerte en Santiago de Cuba del joven Wilman Villar Mendoza, tras casi dos meses en huelga de hambre, pone a cualquiera ante la disyuntiva de mirar a otra parte...

PAGINAS 2

Participación "incondicional": contribución cubana a una falacia universal

La sostenida inversión que viene llevando a cabo el Estado cubano para reactivar...

PAGINAS 7

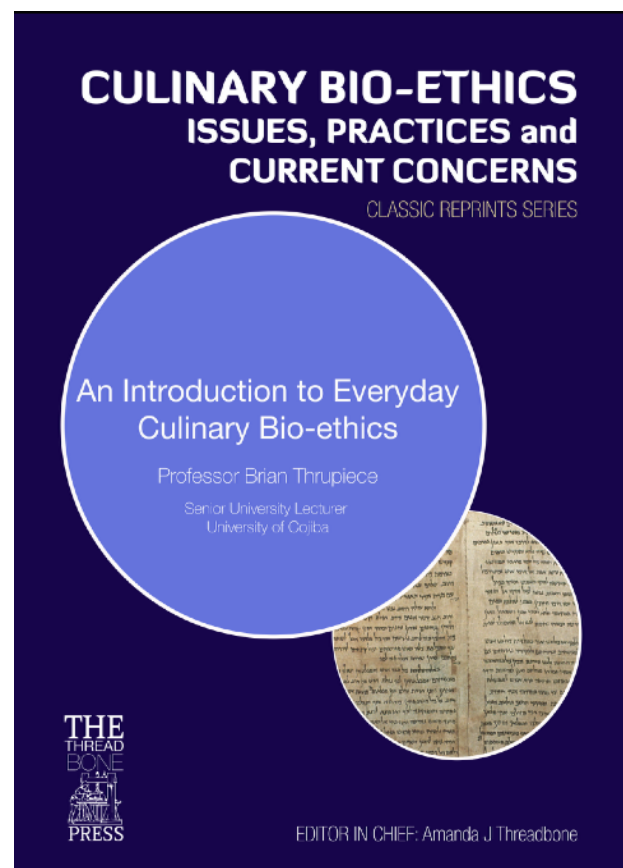
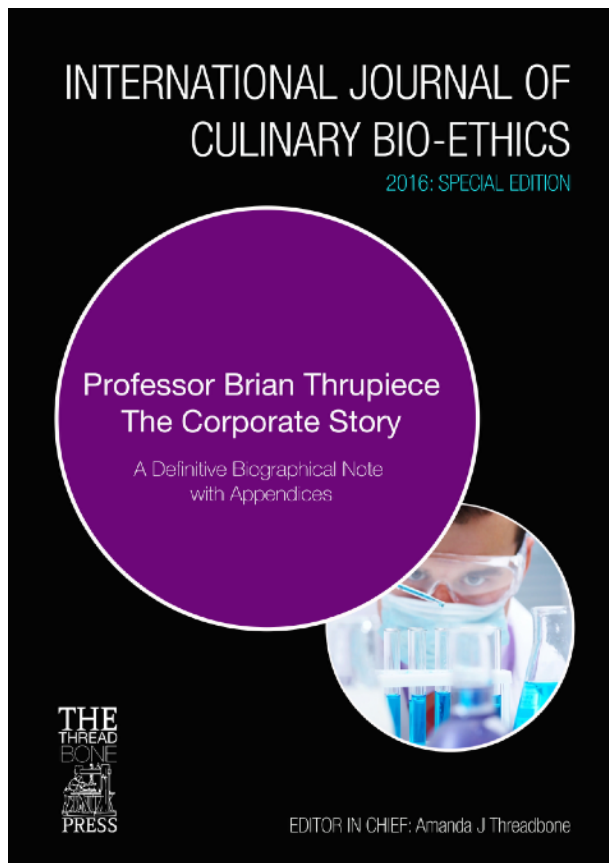
Una propuesta libertaria para Cuba

A nuestro parecer existen dos realidades de nuestro país que consideramos importante destacar, sin ir más allá...

PAGINAS 14

A Lasting Legacy: News of Professor Thrupiece's death reaches Cuba. Brian's near saint-like following amongst *Casto-istas* was such that even the officially suppressed *Cuba Libertaria* had to be reprinted many times. There were riots in several cities including Ciego de Ávila as kiosks ran short of copies and Thrupiece Brand Potted Meat was briefly rationed. The picture of Brian was - yet again - of someone else entirely: in this case *Cuba's Got Talent's* Pablo Malabarista a sartorially-challenged juggler from Cienfuegos who would come a poor fifth in the semi-finals.

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