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Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away: Memories of Early Cuban Exiles

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cans, education “represented mental decolonization and a pathway to becoming a better person” which certainly is plausible but “as whites downplayed or ignored education, their status as a people remained stagnant or declined” (p. 85). The latter assertion may be debatable; on the other hand, Ashford does supply two tables that indicate African American school enrollment increased while white school enrollment decreased and with African American monthly school attendance rates as higher than white attendance rates for the years 1882-1885 for the state of Mississippi (p. 85).

Ashford even manages to identify elements of African American liberation as some whites attempted to maintain white supremacy through violence which includes lynching. Citing the 1902 lynching of Jim Gaston and Monroe Hallum, the six alleged perpetrators were brought to trial in 1903. Although the jury was all white and two African American witnesses moved to Arkansas and proved unavailable for the trial, this was a victory of sorts because it was the first time in Mississippi’s history that white men were brought to trial for the lynching of an African American (pp. 128-131). Due to delays and missing witnesses, however, the trial ended with no verdict and no real justice.

By the 1910’s, says Ashford, Attala County had settled into a social pattern with African Americans focusing on liberation and whites concentrating on “redemption” (p. 145). Ashford notes that during this time, as well as in succeeding decades, there was some interracial cooperation and “not all African American men feared white men or their retaliations” (p. 162). In conclusion, the author states, “foundations of freedom lay in forcing the greater society to accept peoples’ identity that society sought to oppress” (p. 165).

The book provides scholarly support including numerous endnotes, a bibliography, statistical tables, and two appendices. A real treat are the numerous photographs of people, buildings, and documents referred to in the text. The bibliography contains a respectable list of secondary sources (books and journal articles); although, it would have been helpful if the author had provided a list of the primary sources consulted. The detailed endnotes and source attributions for statistical table data indicate that Ashford consulted primary sources such as newspapers, periodicals,

Attala County and state of Mississippi school records, and the U.S. Census among other resources.

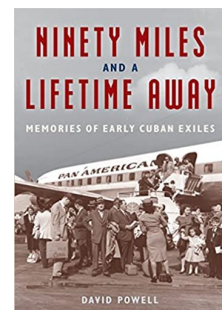
While some of the conclusions or interpretations of African American agency (liberation) in the face of white oppression (redemption) may be unconventional, the scholarship and extensive research presented by Ashford is solid. The audience for this book is primarily academic, but many non-academic readers will find *Mississippi Zion* to be a good read, too. Certainly, the conclusions and the abundant examples of African American liberation efforts give the reader much to ponder.

Recommended for academic and large public libraries collecting in the areas of African American, Southern, and Civil Rights history. It would also be a great addition to collections in most Mississippi libraries, large or small, academic or public.

Tim Dodge, Auburn University

Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away: Memories of Early Cuban Exiles

David Powell
Gainesville: University Press of
Florida, 2022
ISBN: 9781683402572
326 p. \$30.00 (Hbk)



In *Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away: Memories of Early Cuban Exiles*, Florida attorney David Powell weaves dozens of oral history interviews he conducted with First and Second Wave refugees (1959-1973) into this arresting volume that describes life on the island before the revolution, Cuba’s transformation under the Castro regime, and the varied experiences of those who left their homeland and adapted to new environments. Though most interviewees initially believed their exile was only temporary, this book traces their evolution from reluctant refugees into American citizens who embraced their new home and enriched it through their agency.

Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away is not a scholarly monograph about the Cuban Revolution or a comprehensive study regarding Cuban Americans. Rather, the purpose of this book is to

“present the story of the earliest refugees who came to the US from Castro’s Cuba and to do so through *their* voices” (xiii). At the heart of this story is the complex role that memory played in forging their collective identity. For much of their lives, these refugees struggled with their ambiguous status as a people estranged from their homeland living as exiles in another. With time, they made peace with their past and embraced their dual identities as proud Cubans *and* dedicated Americans.

Powell’s work is organized chronologically and thematically into ten chapters that focuses primarily on the experiences of the First and Second Wave refugees. Readers are introduced to these exiles as relevant excerpts of their accounts appear throughout the book. Every chapter is interspersed with Powell’s brief, well-researched commentaries that provide historical context for these firsthand accounts and transitions from one theme to the next.

As a compilation that draws from 54 oral history interviews, *Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away* is primary source gold for the early Cuban refugee experience. Fifty of these interviewees are Cuban exiles, while the remainder (two historians, a politician, and a foreign correspondent) are non-Cuban Americans who offer insights about events and developments that unfolded during this period. Between these diverse firsthand accounts and Powell’s extensive bibliography of secondary sources and government publications, this monograph is an exceptional starting point for researching this topic. Furthermore, anyone interested in undertaking a substantial oral history project should consider perusing Powell’s preface where he describes his methodology for collecting oral histories and preparing them for publication.

While some of these Cuban interviewees migrated to various parts of the United States, most settled in Florida or other parts of the South, which makes this book a particularly attractive acquisition for diversifying a library’s southern history collection. Though not a major theme of the book, multiple exiles’ recollections include examples of racism they personally experienced or witnessed directed against African Americans during the Jim Crow era. Far too often, civil rights scholarship focuses on whites and blacks without considering other ethnic groups. *Ninety Miles and*

a Lifetime Away joins forces with Lila Quintero Weaver’s *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* (2012) in raising awareness about the Hispanic presence in America’s history and highlighting their marginalized perspectives from that turbulent era.

Of particular interest to this readership is Margarita Fernández Cano’s inspiring account. In Cuba, Cano was employed at the National Library where she helplessly watched as the Castro regime censored many of the institution’s offerings and interfered with its daily operations. By contrast, Cano enjoyed a rewarding 29-year career with the Miami Public Library where she established a popular lending art collection worth millions of dollars in donated pieces. Now retired, Cano fondly reminisces that her second library tenure “did not feel like a job” (p. 219). At a time when libraries in the United States are facing widespread censorship efforts, library personnel and patrons alike would do well to reflect on Cano’s story and consider what is at stake if the right to read is lost.

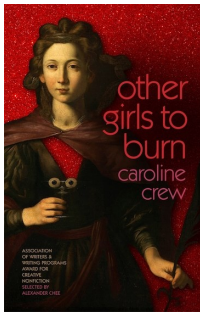
There is one minor criticism of *Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away*. Throughout the book, Powell incorporates explanatory footnotes to contextualize statements made by his interviewees. While these footnotes are indeed useful, Powell regrettably does not cite the sources that inform them. For instance, when Adolfo Henriques mentions that he arrived in the Dominican Republic a year after American troops had suppressed an uprising, Powell elaborates that President Johnson authorized the deployment and use of military force to avoid “a second Cuba’ in the Caribbean” (p. 190, 2nd footnote). Anyone interested in researching this conflict further must spend time scouring the bibliography for leads. These footnotes would better serve the reader if they included a brief citation of sources following the commentary.

This concern, however, does not discredit the value of this work. A perusal of the endnotes section and bibliography clearly demonstrates that Powell exhaustively researched this era in Cuban and American history. He is to be commended for assembling dozens of diverse refugee accounts and compiling them into this accessible volume. Likewise, his interviewees are to be applauded for their courage to dwell on a painful chapter of their lives and share their stories so future generations may

study them. Both scholars and general readers interested in researching or learning about early Cuban refugee experiences will find *Ninety Miles and a Lifetime Away* an essential source of firsthand accounts and a worthy edition to the literature.

A. Blake Denton, The University of Arkansas at Monticello

Other Girls to Burn



Caroline Crew
Athens: University of Georgia
Press, 2021

ISBN: 9780820360430
128 p. \$22.95 (Pbk)

A 17th-century painting of Saint Lucy attributed to Giovanni Ricca graces the cover of poet and author Caroline Crew's collection of essays, *Other Girls to Burn*. The patron saint of the blind, Saint Lucy, one of the virgin martyrs of the early Roman church, spurned a fiancé to pledge her life and dowry to serve Christ and the poor. Her jilted betrothed denounced her as a Christian to Governor Paschasius of Syracuse who sentenced her to be forced into a brothel and repeatedly raped. When soldiers could not move her to take her away, she was burned. When fire proved ineffective, she was stabbed in the throat. As she is portrayed in Ricca's work, Saint Lucy is traditionally depicted holding a pair of human eyes – her eyes, which, depending upon the version of the story, were either gouged out during her torture by the Governor's soldiers or removed by Lucy herself to thwart her pagan admirer's attention, and miraculously restored by God after her death.

Saint Lucy's eyes stare blankly at the reader approaching Crew's slim volume and serve as an eerie summons for us to witness the ways women's lives and bodies are scrutinized, pathologized, monetized, and weaponized, not only by men, the church, and society but also by women themselves. The sixteen pieces gathered in this collection challenge readers to see how we are blind to the "standard double standard" (p. 105) that allows women to be both subjected to and sheltered

from violence while being shamed for showing any interest in exploring it or candidly addressing how it affects them.

Other Girls to Burn is a difficult and beautiful read, both in form and content. Classifying *Other Girls to Burn* as a collection of essays vastly underplays its scope and form. The entries shift stylistically between autobiography, laundry list, legal exhibits, Joycean soliloquy, genealogical data, and exegetical footnotes. Several pages of endnotes present essay-by-essay insight into Crew's sources and creative processes, offering a compelling invitation to follow her explorations, if not marvel at the breadth of her reading and research interests.

Topically, Crew traverses the esoteric and the familiar, invoking religious relics, UFC and MMA fighting, rape narratives, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, transatlantic communication, female mystics, nail polish, Aristotle, aging parents, and broken friendships. In "The Discomfort Index," Crew considers strip club culture and the "economy of attention" (p. 10) from the standpoint of consumer, and how, even as an audience member, she is coopted into performing for the male gaze. In another essay, the Go Go's "Vacation" serves to frame Crew's graduate school experience and the "central lie of white feminism" (p. 34) which functions within the systems of masculine culture and ignores the privilege inherent in being able to step back and take a break to "get away" from the struggle. "A Case Against Pathology" employs case studies and crime scene descriptions to liken hagiographies of the female martyrs to true crime stories, gradually revealing the "uniformity of these narratives" (p. 92) wherein "the ending [is] always the same: a corpse" (p. 88).

Taken individually, Crew's essays are personal, intense, and, at times, unsettling. Collectively, they speak to the contradictions women must navigate and push the reader "to consider the horror and continue" (p. 106).

While her stories make little mention of the region except as autobiographical detail, Crew has adopted the southeast as her home. Born in England and educated at the University of St. Andrews and the University of Oxford, Crew holds a Ph.D. in English and Creative Writing from Georgia State University, in Atlanta. In addition to her