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**Maria Cristina Garcia**. *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. xiii + 290 pp. $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-21117-9; $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-20131-6.

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This comprehensive book chronicles the immigration and adaptation of the first three waves of Cuban immigrants to the United States following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, and examines the cultural, political and intellectual dimensions of the Cuban community in south Florida. The book is extensively researched, based on an impressive array of Cuban exile newspapers, journals, literary magazines, government reports and hearings records, national security files and delightfully candid oral history interviews.

*Havana USA* has two major divisions: "the emigration" and "the emigres." The first part, "the emigration," focuses on the three major waves of Cuban emigration, and details the struggles of the over one million Cubans who left their homeland over this thirty-five year period by any means available–many left by plane (sometimes through third countries), thousands were rescued by their fellow exiles and some by American sympathizers on yachts and cruisers, and many risked their lives in tiny boats and homemade rafts–to finally reach U.S. shores, and more specifically for the majority, Miami. Garcia abstains from passing judgment on the revolution and the justifications espoused by emigres for leaving Cuba. Rather, she focuses on the exile experience. She simultaneously illuminates the uniqueness of the Cuban exile experience, while also masterfully weaving it through issues and experiences common to many immigrant groups in the United States.

The first wave immediately following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, which continued until 1965, was disproportionately representative of the mostly white upper and middle classes of Cuban society. Many of the factors frequently used to explain the economic success of Cuban exiles are attributed to the human capital of this group of emigres. They generally had high levels of education and professional work experience, had visited the United States for both recreation and business reasons, and were instrumental in the development of the Miami enclave economy. However, despite these positive attributes and the Cold War politics that resulted in federal, social and economic support, many of these entrants never regained the socioeconomic status they had enjoyed in Cuba, and had to wrestle with many of the same difficult issues facing all immigrant groups regardless of background. Within her description of these larger historical events, Garcia edifies the human drama of these struggles with the poignant words of those who lived them. From one of her many interviews, Garcia reveals both the remarkable role in adjustment fulfilled by dedicated Cuban professionals and the frustrations they faced. "Dr. Mirta R. Vega…found her first job in the U.S. working as one of the 'Cuban aides': '…I couldn't find work in my profession, of course–I was a pharmacist. I was desperately trying to find some type of job. My sister-in-law told me they were hiring Cuban aides. I applied and was immediately accepted…We were poor and had no telephone, so the principal had to send someone to my house to offer me the job. My students were all Cuban refugees and they were very frightened. Each day two or three or four new refugee children arrived at the school….New classes had to be created all the time…One day, two American teachers came up to me and said, "don't take it personally, but we've decided to take early retirement. The changes are just too much for us." ' (pp. 26-7). During these early years of Cuban immigrant adjustment, xenophobia was just one of many trials these newcomers faced.

The second wave, "the freedom flights" from 1965 to 1973, was distinct from the first wave. Arrivals from the professional and managerial classes diminished and the percentage of blue-collar workers continued to increase. The age and gender composition of this group compared to the previous one also underwent profound changes. Women and the elderly were overrepresented, while males of working/military age were refused exit by the Castro government. More and more Chinese and Jewish groups arrived during this wave, while blacks and mulattos continued to remain the most underrepresented of all the emigres. It was not until the third wave, the Mariel boatlift of 1980, that a significant portion of the black and mulatto population left the island. By the end of the boatlift the Cuban community in the United States was fairly representative of the island population as a whole; the exile community now claimed members from every ethnic group on the island, every class and educational background, and a broad geographic distribution as well.

The chapter on Mariel shifts attention away from the over-emphasized demographic characteristics of this wave of immigrants, and the distorted information on the percentage of criminals in the bunch. Instead, Garcia emphasizes the most distinctive feature of the Mariel exodus–"the Cubans of Mariel were not considered legitimate refugees" by the federal government and the larger society (pp.68-9). Garcia details the effects of the political maneuverings that contributed to the "Marielitos" becoming one of most stigmatized groups of arrivals to land on U.S. soil in recent history. Unjustified imprisonment, little or no federal assistance, vicious rumors about their backgrounds and motivations for leaving the island, and a social and political history different from many of the earlier arrivals resulted in poverty, homelessness, and the very word to describe them–marielitos–"quickly became pejorative in the [Cuban] community" as well as in the larger society (p. 73). In her discussion of the Mariel crisis, Garcia astutely separates fact from fiction to give the reader one of the most comprehensive renditions of this historical event to date. The detailed history of Cuban immigration ends with a brief discussion of the "fourth wave," the balsero crisis of 1994, and the sudden reversal of three decades of U.S. policy toward Cuban emigration with the announcement that Cubans trying to cross the Florida straits would no longer be allowed to enter the United States as their compatriots did. The history and adaptation of this fourth wave of Cuban migration was still unfolding as this book went to press.

The second part of the book, "the Emigres," is divided into three chapters that prove crucial to understanding the Cuban exile experience. Garcia unfortunately abandons the chronological order of the first section of the book, and separates the interconnected conceptual issues of identity, politics and culture. "The Emigres" centers on what it means to be a Cuban exile in Miami, how the exiles preserves their "cubanidad"–the implicit and explicit markers of their culture–while they acquire the skills, and eventually the expertise, to excel within the American social, economic and political system. Although she usually situates these issues within their historical contexts, incorporating them within the chronological ordering of the first part of the book would have made these matters more salient for this reader.

Especially prevalent in the early waves, but nevertheless a unifying ideology for the vast majority of emigres, is the insistence on their identity as exiles as opposed to immigrants. The first arrivals hoped, and many felt certain, that their stay in Miami would be brief; the Castro government would soon fall, and they would return to resume their lives in their homeland. However, as weeks turned into months and months into years, many soon came to the realization that their stay in the United States might last longer than first anticipated, and social and economic security in their exile home would be a necessity as long as the Castro government remained in power. From this standpoint the Cuban exiles attempted to reproduce their culture in their new home. Of course, culture is not a fixed entity and is always changing, with or without revolutions and/or migrations. Cuban culture, both in Miami and on the island, continued to be redefined and shaped by the different realities of each social and political location. In their efforts to maintain their "cubanidad," exiles fiercely tried to hold on to the traditions they had brought with them. However, the realities of life in the United States, especially the Americanization of their children, meant the hybridization or the complete abandonment of some traditions. Later arrivals from Cuba and even those Cubans who have lived most of their lives in other parts of the country laughingly refer to Cuban Miami as a city in a time-warp, inundated with symbols of 1950's Cuba.

As a result of this process of cultural retention and redefinition, Garcia explains, "Many emigres developed a dual identity as both Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans" (p. 5). The tension between these identities is articulated through the voices of Cuban and Cuban American writers, poets, dramatists and scholars introduced in chapter five. It is here that Garcia allows the reader to explore how issues of race, gender and sexuality mediate

the exile experience. In her discussion of Dolores Prida's one-act play, *Beautiful Senoritas*, one discovers that latina stereotypes ingrained in both Latin American and North American culture do violence to the reality of latina gender identity and "affect the perception and treatment of women" (p. 188). These artists and intellectuals go beyond the economic adaptation of Cuban families and how that redefined women's roles, to express the struggles, conflicts and joys these new roles brought.

Despite the overall comprehensiveness of the book, the reader must be cognizant of the fact that the stated goal of this study was to detail the Cuban exile experience in south Florida, not the Cuban exile experience in the United States. Although over half of all Cubans in the United States live in Florida (mostly south Florida), there are large concentrations of Cubans in other U.S. cities, and many of their adaptations and adjustments differ from those Cubans who are part of the Miami Cuban enclave. Although bi-cultural issues are an integral part of the book, especially the second half, Garcia does not devote much attention to the inter-ethnic relations of Cubans with other groups in Miami. She does briefly address Cuban exile relations with some south Florida groups here and there, but her account is marred by some confusing contradictions. For example, in her discussion of the perception of many Miamians that Cuban exiles were taking jobs away from U.S. citizens, she mentions studies conducted by Florida State Employment Service and the U.S. Department of Labor revealing "that refugees were not taking jobs away from local citizens but rather creating new businesses and job opportunities" (p. 37). However, only a few pages later she reveals that many in the black community who were "disproportionately poor, uneducated, and semi skilled, had suffered the most from the Cuban migration, since the two groups competed for the menial service jobs that required a minimum of education or training" (pp. 40). Although the book abounds with over forty pages of detailed end notes and an impressive "Select Bibliography," unfortunately the two quotes above were not adequately cited to give additional information that may have cleared-up this contradiction. It should be noted that problems such as this were few and the overall importance of the book is in no way diminished by them.

*Havana USA* is an excellent addition to the considerable amount of scholarly works on the changing ethnic landscape of South Florida and the Cuban exile experience. *The Cuban American Experience* (1984) by Thomas D. Boswell and James R. Curtis, *Latin Journey* (1985) by Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Miami Now!* (1992) by Guillermo J. Grenier and Alex Stepick III, and *City on the Edge* (1993) by Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick III are excellent social science resources on these topics. However, because of the dual purpose of her book–the combining of historical analysis with identity politics–it also complements the recent works on Cuban identity formation, such as *Life on the Hyphen: the Cuban-American Way* (1994) by Gustavo Perez Firmat, *Bridges to Cuba* (1994) a special issue of *Michigan Quarterly Review*, edited by Ruth Behar and Juan Leon, and the numerous fiction and non-fiction works discussed in chapter five and listed in the select bibliography. Garcia's insightful historical analysis and judicious use of interviews that animate the text enable her to entertain while she educates. *Havana USA* is an invaluable resource for scholars from a variety of disciplines, and anyone interested in contemporary immigration and ethnic history, south Florida and Cuban identity formation and cultural negotiation.

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