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Coming to Miami: A Social History (review)

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radical politics within a hemispheric history of the modern Americas, which might require a more speculative kind of writing. Furthermore, while Smith does an excellent job of reconstructing the milieu of young intellectuals and radical newspapers, he offers only a tiny glimpse of the surrounding culture of literature, the arts, everyday life, and popular culture. Although the narrative mentions women's involvement in events ranging from street demonstrations to labor unions to political parties, it never directly addresses women as political actors or the rise of feminist ideologies and movements. Despite these limitations, this joins a very short list of the best studies we have of twentieth-century Haiti.

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MIMI SELLER

LATINO & BORDER STUDIES

Coming to Miami: A Social History. By Melanie Shell-Weiss. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009. Pp. xvii, 338. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95 cloth.

Miami has long been a fascinating and much-written about place. At various times, the city's public image has been shaped by its role as a tourist destination, a retirement haven, an economically vibrant sunbelt city, a gateway to Latin America, a racially troubled metropolis, and a haven for refugees, political exiles, and economically motivated immigrants. Melanie Shell-Weiss's book bypasses the traditional chronology and narrative of Miami's twentieth-century history, offering instead an analytical social history that focuses on three major themes: black and Hispanic immigration from the Caribbean, race relations and civil rights, and the emergence of an inclusive labor movement. Within this organizational structure, the author pays close attention to the links between migration, race, class, and gender. In all of these areas, this book opens new ways of thinking about Miami's encounter with historical change.

We think of Miami as a new immigrant city, but this book makes a singular contribution by emphasizing the powerful impact of early twentieth-century immigration. Black immigrants from the Bahamas flooded into Miami in the early decades of the twentieth century, attracted by construction, service and agricultural jobs. Their cultural distinctiveness set them off from Miami's native-born black migrants from Georgia and other southern states. They resisted Jim Crow segregation and enthusiastically joined the black nationalist Universal Negro Improvement Association. Shell-Weiss also explores an early Puerto Rican migration from New York City to Miami in the mid-century decades, especially attracted to work in the city's expanding garment industry. Thus, Miami already had a sizeable Hispanic presence, even before the post-1960 migrations of Cubans, Dominicans, Nicaraguans, and many other groups. By the 1970s, new exile migrations from Haiti complicated Miami's racial, ethnic, and linguistic mix. Rejecting the traditional assimilationist model derived from the Chicago school of sociology, Shell-Weiss prefers the theoretical approach of an emerging "Miami school" that values human agency and documents "ways that immigrants reshaped social structures to exert their own power in receiving societies" (p. 9).

Shell-Weiss also provides important insights about race relations and civil rights issues. In most ways, Miami was a deep South city until the 1950s, when a heavy migration of Jews and others from northern cities began to alter the city's political culture. Thus, race relations remained difficult through the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, black professionals founded civil rights organizations that challenged segregation, organized voter registration drives, filed law suits, fought for housing reform, and eventually engaged in nonviolent direct action protests, such as lunchcounter sit-ins. Fair employment was always an issue, especially after the early Cuban migrants provided new competition in the low-wage job market. Miami blacks also protested the disparity in American immigration policy that offered favored treatment to Cuban exiles but refused admission to Haitian "boat people" who began arriving on south Florida beaches in the 1970s. Once again, the author demonstrates how African Americans and black immigrants built community and neighborhood, demanded civil rights, and shaped their own experience.

This book breaks important new ground in its treatment of labor and unionism. Except for some skilled worker AFL unions, such as in the building trades, Miami in its early decades was a tourist town with a large, unorganized workforce concentrated in service industries. By mid-century, however, Miami had developed a more diverse economy, ranging from shipbuilding to food processing and garment manufacture. Shell-Weiss's treatment of union activity in the garment industry demonstrates the difficulties of forging alliances in an ethnically diverse work force composed mostly of women. This problem persisted into late twentieth-century organizing drives among service workers in hotels and health care, where multiethnic cooperation was not always successful.

Shell-Weiss has written a deeply researched book of great substance. It is not a traditional history of twentieth-century Miami, but a focused study of new peoples adjusting to life and creating new lives in a strange and different place. Its strength lies in its concentration on migration, race, ethnicity, gender, and work, subjects that will appeal to readers and scholars in many different fields.

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CULTURAL & LITERARY STUDIES

Errant Modernism: The Ethos of Photography in Mexico and Brazil. By Esther Gabara. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. Pp. xii, 260. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$26.95 paper.

In this work, Esther Gabara provides an innovative interpretation of modernist literary and artistic movements of the 1920s and 1930s in Brazil and Mexico, successfully arguing that their radical aesthetic experimentation and ethical commitment retain their relevance in the vastly changed circumstances of today. The work establishes an elaborate interdisciplinary dialogue between word, image, and context that will be of interest to those working in literary studies, art history, and visual culture for many years to come.