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Anthony Maingot. *Miami: A Cultural History.* Northampton: Interlink Books, 2015. 246 pp. $15.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-56656-983-5.

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Anthony P. Maingotâs *Miami: A Cultural History* is a concise travel book that surveys the history and modern society of one of Americaâs most unique and controversial cities. Relying mostly upon secondary source material and local government reports, Maingot explores Miamiâs enduring tension between âthe grand and the grandioseâ (p. xiv). This tension is the unifying motif of *Miami*, straddling what Maingot describes as the cityâs four periods of history: frontier village, boom-and-bust town, exile community, and global city (p. xxi). To the extent that *Miami* actually has a thesis, it only becomes articulated in the final chapter. Maingot claims that Miami is undoubtedly a global cityâevidenced by a history of ethnic enclaves, multinational corporations, transnational shipping and trading, and foreign tourism and investment. However, Miami is *not* yet a cosmopolitan city because it lacks the essential characteristics of interracial toleration and intra-ethnic reconciliation. Moreover, Miamiâs cosmopolitan status cannot be achieved by development and investment alone. It requires greater shifts capable of âbringing into the mainstream all parts of the societyâ (p. 213).

Maingotâs *Miami* is an impressionistic introduction to the city for those who are unfamiliar with either its history or culture. The book is written primarily for tourists, and not scholars. There are no citations, only a slim âfurther readingâ section at the end. Maingot is best in his chapters on modern Miami, where he comments upon the cityâs recent changes with the in-depth knowledge and reflective attitude that only a local sociologist can provide. Yet his coverage of Miamiâs origins and early years is lacking; his narrative indulges too much in Miamiâs sensational reputation at the expense of other stories; and a few of his chapters lose perspective. For example, chapter 6 spends an inordinate amount of space surveying a contemporary genre of crime novels called Miami *noir*. Most of these novels are written by white fiction writers from the *Miami Herald*, who are capitalizing on a shallow stereotype of the city. One wishes that Maingot had spent an equal amount of time exploring literary expressions by Caribbean exiles and immigrants.

Miami is part of a publisherâs series of travel books on major cities in the world. As a result, it sometimes reads like a promotional brochure. This is especially true of the seventh chapter. Here Maingot takes the reader on a tour of modern Miami, highlighting what major neighborhoods have to offer in terms of food, music, and festivals. Overall, *Miami* makes it clear that the Magic City has not lost the optimistic boosterism of its early days (the forward is even written by an ex-mayor of the

city). There also seems to be a self-conscious attempt to reassure readers that Miami is still part of the United States, yet *not* the US South. Miami, readers are told, is âa quintessentially American cityâ (p. x), âan American city,â (p. xx) and âa much more settled American cityâ (p. xv) than travelogues have given it credit for. Maingot periodically refutes Melanie Shell-Weissâs claim from *Coming to Miami: A Social History* (2009) that Miami was a âsouthernâ city under the false assumption that it could not be an American city at the same time. Oddly, Maingot agrees that Miami exhibited most of the âsouthern patternsâ upon which Shell-Weiss based her argument (p. xx). Perhaps he thinks that an association with the US South would hurt Miamiâs tourist industry.

Maingotâs weakest chapter is by far the first one, titled âConquering the Northern Frontier.â This chapter contains many errorsâfrom factual to interpretiveâand it would be best to skip this section completely. It will suffice to point out only a few mistakes here. Maingot says, âThe myths and legends which already existed in North Florida were absentâ in the South, but settlers picked up a number of stories from Bahamians whose families had visited the area for about two centuries (p. 27). Among them was the legend of the pirate Black Caesar. Maingot states Fort Dallas âwas built in 1845 â¦ during the Indian Wars,â but the fort was actually built in 1836 and there was no war in 1845 (p. 10). He writes that the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1835 but it was passed in 1830 (p. 8). He states, âBy the time of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Spain had to cede Florida to England,â but this did not happen for another fifty years (p. 3).

But Maingotâs factual errors in this first chapter pale in comparison to his interpretive ones. He cites Jerry Wilkinson to refute a belief that Seminoles are ânot native Floridiansâ (pp. 8-9). But this goes against the consensus of historians, who say that Seminoles migrated to the area relatively late. Wilkinson is not the inventor of this point. Maingot also states Seminoles ârejected all forms of slavery,â but this generalization is qualified by historians (p. 5). He then calls an archaeological site known as the Miami Circle a âmythâ (p. 29). He implies that Miami is inventing an âIndian pastâ that never existed. He then writes, âThere is no known history of contacts between the early white settlers and the Tequestas,â but these sources would exist in the colonial archives. None exist for the American period because the Tequesta were gone by 1763. Perhaps the biggest problem is that Maingot sees the northern frontier as the only relative frontier to pre-Miami (p. 8). This is odd. Maingot dedicates so much space to discussing transnational aspects of Miamiâs early history, and yet he completely ignores the transnational connections of its prehistory.

Maingotâs main contribution in *Miami* lies in using his distinction between grand and grandiose to articulate the cityâs defining paradox. The grand narrative is a semi-self-fulfilling prophecy of blind optimism. It is epitomized by a history of civic leaders and the press, who label South Florida âthe center of the universeâ (p. xix). In bookending chapters, Maingot shows that the grand narrative remains alive in modern investment, development, and tourism. In the past two decades, Miami has seen the growth of â94 new condominiums worth $13 billionâ (p. 226). These construction projects have been undertaken by a growing entourage of international firms, from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Argentina, Brazil, and several other countries. Meanwhile, the city has expanded its airport and its cruise port, and it has planned or built new tunnels, universities, museums, stadiums, shopping complexes, civic centers, and mega-casinos. Finally, elites continue to exhibit a tradition of disinterest in the cityâs past. A preservation board recently denied a request to protect one of the few historic buildings left in the downtown area and no one seemed to care.

Conversely, the grandiose narrative is a constant critique of Miamiâs cultural shortcomings. It is epitomized by a history of outsiders who label it as âAmericaâs most miserable cityâ (p. 211). Maingot states that Miami consistently ranks as one of the most unemployed, corrupt, segregated, and poor cities in the country. In particular, the status of the black community has not only stagnated but actually declined since the cityâs incorporation; Miamiâs premier cultural events like Art Basel Miami Beach are often viewed as superficial parties; the in-group parochialism of Miami Cubans threatens the prospect of transnationalism on the eve of loosening restrictions between the United States and Cuba; and, lastly, expensive real estate draws an ever sharper contrast between the have and the have nots. To this list, Maingot might have added a discussion of environmental degradation, like encroachment into the Everglades and the destruction of coral reefs.

Miami is a selective and impressionistic portrait. Maingot feeds readers much of what they presumably want to know about a city already shrouded in a sensational reputation. He foregrounds Miamiâs historic ties to civic corruption and organized crime, and he paints the exile communities in broad strokes by using concepts like *cubanidad* and *AlegrÃa* (p. 91). Meaningful discussions of cultural identity are mostly lost among an em-

phasis on architectural development. While he should be commended for not shying away from Miamiâs faults, he does not offer the reader many solutions. There is no history of grassroots activism against development, and there is no discussion of social services. He convinces this reviewer that âthere is no stopping the propelling of present-day Miami from city to future metropolis,â but not that it will achieve cosmopolitan status any time soon (p. xix).

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