to those seeking to understand why Haiti is the way it is, the book is an indispensable introduction.

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Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), pp. 488, $55.00, hb.

Lillian Guerra has written an impressive, albeit provocative, book about the radicalisation of the Cuban Revolution. *Visions of Power* substantially adds to our understanding of the island's political, cultural and social history after 1959 and will be an invaluable, must-read work for all those seeking to understand Cuba's revolutionary experience. I have already assigned it for a course next year and urge students and scholars interested in revolutionary Cuba to read it.

The book charts what Guerra calls 'the radicalization of discourse and political options' in Cuba after 1959 through an examination of the press, schools, churches, public culture and artistic spheres (p. 12). As she notes, this is not merely a book about how the revolution 'went communist', and she is not interested in using international Cold War narratives to explain what happened on the island. Instead, she wants to look at this story from within Cuba. In order to do so, she draws on documentary films, radio transcripts, unseen film footage, magazines, journals, extensive interviews, private letters, diplomatic documents and the press. As she is right to assert, the lack of declassified Cuban government papers does not mean researchers should be put off from research on Cuba. To the contrary, she shows expertly just how much can be done already. She also provides fascinating insight into what the revolution meant to different sectors of Cuba's population after 1959, and how it changed tastes, fashion, art, literature, religion, gender relations, attitudes to sexuality, and everyday life at the neighbourhood level. In sum, this is the story of how a new revolutionary morality was constructed in Cuba in the decade after the revolution and why it was the case – as one of the vivid snapshots Guerra offers us illustrates – that 'a blister on the hand' became 'more beautiful than a sapphire' (p. 240).

In charting the radicalisation of the Cuban Revolution, Guerra reminds us that it started off as very heterogeneous and that there were many different visions of where it might lead when it triumphed. She does a good job, for example, of underscoring the explicit anti-communist character of many supporters of the revolution and much of the 26th of July Movement. She is also persuasive in explaining that the process by which one vision came to overpower and exclude all others was far from linear or straightforward. Central to the book is the idea that what being within the revolution meant and how those outside were progressively excluded was somewhat haphazard and evolving. Indeed, Guerra depicts the revolution as a palimpsest: a work in progress that involved continued rewriting of the rules of the game over the course of a decade. Ultimately, she argues that the construction of a grand narrative of redemption was central to the consolidation of Fidel Castro's regime. As she puts it, Cuba's leaders 'did not so much lead the Revolution as constrain, stifle, and suppress the many visions of change voiced by their followers in order to avoid negotiation, accountability, competition from other parties, and power sharing of any kind' (p. 362).

Guerra's discussions of religion, race and gender are central features of this book. She carefully documents the ways in which Fidel Castro initially used religious language and imagery to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' and to justify the path that he was taking (p. 99). Guerra also depicts the practice of hiking Pico Turquino, a mountain in Cuba, as one which 'functioned much like classic rites of Catholic pilgrimage to holy sites' after Fidel and Celia Sánchez had climbed it on 1 January 1960 (p. 139). Of course, she then shows how religion was excluded from Cuba's revolutionary narrative and vision as well. With regards to race and gender after 1959, Guerra also challenges the idea of the Cuban Revolution's progressive stance, arguing that black Cubans and women became mere recipients of one particular narrative of emancipation rather than protagonists or participants in their own emancipatory process. *Visions of Power* is also very useful in articulating the differences between different groups of opponents to the revolution depending on when they left the island or found themselves excluded from revolutionary discourse. Guerra therefore complicates the way in which we view Cuban exiles, challenging the idea of a monolithic group of Batista-loving pre-revolutionary elites.

All this being said, *Visions of Power* leaves the reader with a number of unanswered questions. For one, it seems to focus almost exclusively on those who were excluded or censored and therefore it offers a rather partial account of the Cuban Revolution's trajectory after 1959. We learn very little about the motivations of censurers themselves other than what can be inferred from the effects of their actions. Intentionality, therefore, is explained through an examination of results. Consequently, the reader is left wondering whether Cuba's revolutionary leaders knew what they were doing. Was their exclusion of opponents a conscious, cynical strategy of manipulation as is implied, or did the result merely make it seem as such? Is Guerra reading backwards to infer cause? Who precisely were the members of the Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, CDR) who cleaned streets on weekends, built schools, hosted block parties and film screenings, inspected homes, eavesdropped and snooped on their neighbours (pp. 208–9)? Guerra argues that the CDRs were fundamental to the establishment of a 'grassroots dictatorship' and auto-censorship in Cuba in the early 1960s, yet despite knowing *what* they did, I was left wondering *why* they did it and *who* their members were. Were their leaders acting cynically in the interests of their own power and prestige? Were they blinded by a 'besotted' type of love for Fidel as Guerra suggests (p. 180), or did they fundamentally believe in the evolving revolutionary context? To put it another way, were they and revolutionary Cuba's leadership conscious of doing what they were doing? Overall, then, *Visions of Power* ably tells us about the process by which radicalisation occurred, but the reasons why remain ambiguous.

At the very end of the book Guerra delivers her coup de grâce: photographed evidence of censorship orders from the Ministry of Culture in the light of the Padilla case that not only offer a list of what books were to be removed from circulation but also underscore that this was to be done secretly, without any explanation. Discovered by accident by Guerra, this is the kind of evidence of the cynical manipulation of culture by the ministry that is implied throughout the book but unsupported. To be fair to Guerra, finding similar evidence in contemporary Cuban archives is an impossible task. However, in places she makes assertions that are at least asking for some elaboration or qualification. While it may well be true, for example, that those due to be filmed for a documentary were 'almost always interviewed and, at times, mildly interrogated by local government officials, FMC activists, agents of G2 or, most

commonly, UJC and Communist militants' (p. 323), where is the footnote to accompany this claim?

In a curious way, by questioning, challenging and pulling the grand narrative of Cuba's revolution apart, Guerra is putting forward her own grand narrative. Those who do not fit this interpretation are dismissed or ignored and as a result the persuasiveness of the book is undermined somewhat. Similarly, by excluding the international and external influences on Cuba, I think Guerra misses an important ingredient in a complex story of radicalisation that had as much to do with other Latin American visitors to the island and Cuban interactions with third world nationalists and revolutionaries as it did with the geopolitics of US–Soviet confrontation over the island. Thankfully, however, this is a book that will be debated, questioned and discussed, unlike so many of the works of her protagonists. One sincerely hopes that this book will also one day be available and openly debated in Cuba. As Guerra powerfully laments at the end of her book, 'decades of silencing conflict and repressing debate has [*sic*] left a highly atomized society and a legacy of fractured knowledge of the Revolution's own past in its wake' (p. 362). What she has done with *Visions of Power* is to address this legacy and contribute significantly to piecing that knowledge together. To be sure, there are other pieces that will need to be added, but this is at the very least a serious, scholarly and compelling start.

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Tomás Guzaro and Terri Jacob McComb, *Escaping the Fire: How an Ixil Mayan Pastor Led His People Out of the Holocaust during the Guatemalan Civil War* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), pp. xviii + 224, $55.00, $24.95 pb.

Depending upon your familiarity with Guatemalan history, there are two possible ways to read this book. I would suggest a linear path to those who already have a sense of Guatemala's conflict and an awareness of debates regarding *testimonio*. To those without this grounding I would recommend swerving to David Stoll's excellent afterword before commencing with the rest of the book. The book itself is an intriguing story, but one recounted in a way that will inherently polarise an audience with any kind of political opinion regarding the context. But this should not put off readers – the book contains a fascinating voice that throws light on a group who are often silenced within the literature on the civil war.

To an unaware audience, the story of Tomás Guzaro, a Mayan protestant evangelical pastor from the Ixil region, might seem like that of a rural Schindler leading 200 Mayas to freedom during the worst period of violence in the region. Guzaro's story is one that Terri Jacob McComb, an English teacher and missionary, had heard 'a dozen times' before she took it upon herself to turn it into a book. It is clear that in the telling and retelling the story has developed a rhetorical weight that serves Guzaro well in his pastoral role, with faith, divine intervention and triumph against adversity playing key roles in the narrative. The story of the escape is gripping, with Guzaro leading his flock to escape his guerrilla-occupied village past guerrilla patrols. It is recounted in a manner which emphasises the genuine risks they were exposed to, the fears they were feeling and the Stoll-like way in which they were caught between state and non-state armed actors acting with extreme hostility and unpredictability. Interlaced with this is Guzaro's life story, an emotional tale of a life shaped