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As the title suggests, *La Florida: Five Hundred Years of Hispanic Presence* is an insightful study of transatlantic connections and exchanges between Spain, Africa and the Americas from the 16th until the 21st century. The book, the offshoot a 2012 conference, “Florida at the Crossroads: Five Hundred Years of Encounters, Conflicts, and Exchanges,” focuses on different aspects of Spanish influences in Florida in the past as well as on “Spain’s presence . . . felt into the modern, or ‘American,’ period” (xii), as the editors explain. The complex history of the region, including the processes of its globalization induced by the aforementioned transatlantic exchanges, is examined in 13 essays that provide a broad and comprehensive panorama of the past and the present of the peninsula, with some references to the possible trajectories of the state’s development in the future.

La Florida is divided into two parts, each containing six essays, an introduction by Gary R. Mormino and a preface by the editors, Viviana Díaz Balsera and Rachel A. May. In addition, each part is preceded by a brief introduction by the editors and the final pages of the book include a list of contributors and an index. Even though the editors admit that “the volume does not pretend to offer a neat chronological narrative” (xii), the essays are presented in the chronological order, which ensures cohesion of this interdisciplinary portrayal of Florida’s history and culture.

Consequently, the volume opens with Gary R. Mormino’s introductory essay, “Ponce’s Ghosts: Spain and Florida, 1513-2013,” that aims at synthesizing the titular

Hispanic presence in Florida throughout the five centuries. Mormino begins the story of the New World in the Old World, in Seville, Spain in order to explain the origins of the transatlantic exchange and consequences of the first European expeditions to the New World, including Florida's distinctive geographical location, complex relationships with native peoples, nomenclature prevailing to this day, or myths and legends that began to appear at the time of the conquest, to name just a few topics treated. Interestingly, even referring to Ponce de León's landing in La Florida, Mormino identifies the connections and interactions between Europe, Africa and Spanish Florida that have triggered the appearance of the force that is defined today by the term "globalization." He also discusses subsequent developments of new institutions and the appearance of new cities in the 16th century as well as the representation of those transformations in literature and culture. Then he drafts an outline of the events that took place in the region during the tumultuous 18th century and in the beginning of the 19th century followed by an account of Florida's history after the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819. This part of the essay illustrates the battle of American and Spanish influences in Florida in the 19th century and acknowledges the growing Cuban presence in the aftermath of the Ten Years' War and after the Cuban War of Independence, with varying reactions to Hispanic influences that were the result of the two historical events. Moving to the 20th century, Mormino chronicles the Neo-Spanish revival in Florida's architecture that coincides with the peninsula's increasing popularity among Americans in the 1920s. The final parts of his essay refer to the Great Depression and its aftermath, and he concludes the Introduction with an account of the influx of Cuban exiles after 1959 and an outline of the most recent transformations that took place in Florida at the end of the 20th century. Here he not only analyzes changes related to new demographics, focusing on the Hispanic presence in Florida, but also evokes other "reverberations of the Columbian Exchange" (32) in the peninsula, including, once again, foodways that testify to the transatlantic influences still prevailing there. Mormino's essay is an appropriate and wide-ranging introduction to the volume that has the ambitious goal of examining five centuries of the history of a region that escapes easy classifications and categorizations. His introduction, combining an historical account with references to myths, legends and popular culture, outlines the most important aspects of transformations to Florida since the 16th century that are further discussed in detail in the subsequent two parts of the volume.

Part 1, "La Florida: First and Second Spanish Periods," thus focuses on the peninsula's story under the Spanish influence and the six essays included in this part chronicle the first three hundred years of Florida until its cession to the U.S., giving a panoramic view of La Florida that oscillates between the place of "beauty and salvation" (43) and "a hostile paradise" (43) that resists attempts to be conquered.

The first four essays in this part tell the stories of conquest and survival in adverse circumstances and identify transatlantic influences that have determined Florida's unique characteristics. The section opens with Jerald T. Milanich's reconstruction of Ponce de León's voyage to La Florida and his landfall there. Milanich also describes Ponce's (and other Spaniards') encounters with the Calusa Indians and the gradual demise of this indigenous group in the aftermath of colonization, attempted Christianization and the final disappearance of the Calusa after raids by other tribes. In the essay to follow, Paul E. Hoffman examines the first analyses of Florida's economic potential conducted by colonists and reported by chroniclers. In his

essay Hoffman describes difficulties in conquering the territory that colonists faced in the 16th century as well as their inability to capitalize on the land's resources (77).

Raquel Chang-Rodríguez's essay also refers to the 16th century, and she analyzes this period through the prism of two important chronicles in Florida's historiography, Garcilaso de la Vega's *La Florida del Inca* and Jerónimo Oré's *Relación de los Mártires*. The selection of source texts is interesting, as the two chronicles focus on different aspects of colonization of La Florida, which is reflected in their portrayals and commentary on the first Spanish colonial settlements as well as on native peoples. Chang-Rodríguez identifies the differences between the two texts, referring to the dissimilar experience of their authors – Garcilaso had never been to La Florida; the scope of the texts – *La Florida del Inca* depicts Hernando de Soto's expedition, whereas Oré's text presents a more versatile portrayal of life in La Florida; the time period covered by Oré's *Relación* is longer. At the same time, she emphasizes what the two authors and texts have in common, i.e. both authors are of Peruvian origin, their texts emphasize the importance of Florida for Spain and, as Chang-Rodríguez concludes, "both lead us to the shared history of North and South America" (99).

The fourth essay in this part, by Amy Turner Bushnell, tackles the issue that Oré's *Relación* deals with as well, namely the difficulties faced by the first settlers. Bushnell conducts this analysis using the example of St. Augustine, first explaining its changeable fortune due to the city's dependence on the Crown and a set of misfortunes that plagued the city for years. She then attributes the specific character of St. Augustine to that historical experience and the roles that were imposed on its inhabitants from the outside.

In the fifth chapter Jane Landers undertakes another important topic signaled in Mormino's introduction, namely the African experience in La Florida. She examines the Spanish slave code and explains how this particular approach to slavery that allowed an enslaved person to keep certain legal rights shaped the situation of the slaves in Florida, including runaway slaves, escaping from the British colonies. Landers compares the situation of African slaves in Florida and in British America, explaining why La Florida could be an attractive destination for the Africans enslaved in other territories, yet she also presents other (and not completely noble) motivations behind this treatment of slaves in Florida, which gives a fuller picture of their situation there. She concludes her essay with the description of development of the Mose community in Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose – the first free African town in what we call nowadays the U.S.

The final chapter in this part recounts the events that led to Spain's loss of Florida. Carmen de la Guardia Herrero locates the causes of the Spanish failure to retain the peninsula both in Europe and in the Americas. She recounts Spain's diplomatic miscalculations that included in the first place Spanish disregard of Florida's imprecise borders as spell out in the Treaty of Paris in 1783 and subsequently, the change of the position of Spain in the international political arena. De la Guardia explains how, combined with the growing power and expansionism of the U.S. as well as with independence movements in Latin America, those transformations led to the inevitable loss of Florida. Her essay concludes the first part of the volume that describes the Spanish period in the history of la Florida and provides a frame to La Florida's story commenced in chapter 1, as it also examines transatlantic influences that have shaped the peninsula's history and contributed to its multicultural heritage.

Florida's modern history is described in part 2, "Postcolonial and Contemporary Florida," that examines complex historical, political and cultural circumstances that have affected Florida since the 19th century. The story of "Florida in the Modern World" (167) includes the turning points in its history, some lesser-known incidents as well as sociological analyses and prognoses related to demographics, presented with reference to transatlantic implications of particular events and developments.

- 11 The first essay in this part refers to de la Guardia's chapter concluding part 1, as it examines the events behind Florida's cession to the U.S. Karen Racine analyzes the dynamics of relations on the then international political arena through the prism of the Amelia Island affair that is not well-known and yet, according to Racine, it involved the interests of both the Atlantic world and European powers. In addition, as Racine shows, this episode offered a taste of things to come as far as the trajectories of James Monroe's international policies and expansionism were concerned.

The next two chapters account for the Hispanic heritage of the peninsula, focusing on two different periods in Florida's history and two different ethnic groups. Richard L. Kagan's essay discusses the origins and course of the Spanish Craze in Florida, which is part of the revival of the Spanish culture that started in the 1880s and touched other parts of the U.S. as well. Kagan explains the reasons for the change in attitudes towards Spanish culture and describes how writers, artists, and architects worked to revive Spanish history and heritage and integrate them into American history, focusing on the Florida's case. He also presents the opposite point of view and recounts the debates over the revival of the Spanish style, including Howard Major's objections to the inclusion of Spanish culture in American history. The author concludes the essay with a reference to Whitman's essay, "The Spanish Element in Our Nationality," that emphasizes the need to recognize the significance of Hispanic heritage for American culture and interconnectedness of the two cultures, regardless of political circumstances.

Darién J. Davis in turn focuses on *cubanidad* and the impact of Afro-Cuban cultural traditions in Florida in pre-1959 Miami. He analyzes the processes of transculturation that took place due to the influx of Latin American and Cuban immigrants and examines the impact of the socio-political influences of the Jim Crow era on the trajectory of the aforementioned processes. Davis concludes his analysis with a brief overview of Miami right after 1959 to indicate how Cuban music, arts and culture reappeared in Florida afterwards and how Afro-Cuban cultural heritage was present in the peninsula, despite adverse political circumstances, which refers to the titular question of the presence of Hispanic legacy in the peninsula.

The last three essays in this part deal with demographic changes taking place in Florida in the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century as well as the socio-political consequences of those demographic shifts. Consequently, Jorge Duany in his essay analyzes the growth of Puerto Rican population in Florida, and on the basis of "immigrants' settlement patterns, socioeconomic characteristics, racial self-classification, political incorporation, and cultural practices" (225) he accounts for the particular situation of Puerto Rican communities in Florida, juxtaposing them with other Puerto Rican diasporic communities in the U.S. and emphasizing the great political, economic and cultural potential of Floriricans. The next chapter authored by Alex Stepick and Marcos Feldman analyzes contemporary racial, ethnic, and class

structures in Florida, and on the basis of this analysis, the authors propose a shift in the focus from race and ethnicity to class, as a variable influencing to a large extent the dynamics of social relations and distribution of power in Florida (without disregarding the former factors, though). Examining the emergence of class politics discussed in the second part of the chapter, the authors suggest that it is going to become a crucial issue in the future and as such cannot be ignored. The final chapter by Susan Eckstein in a way complements Stepick and Feldman's analysis through the examination of changes in political influence of diverse Hispanic groups in Florida. She juxtaposes the Cuban exile population's significance in the previous years, especially in presidential election years, with the gradual decrease in the political power of Cuban Americans, due to both political divisions within the group and the increasing importance of other non-Cuban Hispanic communities. Eckstein concludes her article (and thus the volume) with prognoses about the division of power in future relations among Hispanic populations in the U.S. as well as the need to defend "pan-Hispanic interests" (281). In this way, part 2 by telling the story of modern Florida both refers to the past Hispanic influences that have shaped the peninsula and forays into the future of Hispanic Florida.

- 15 Through this mixture of academic voices and topics included in *La Florida: Five Hundred Years of Hispanic Presence*, the reader is provided with a broad panorama of transatlantic relations and connections that influenced Florida's past and are still making an impact on its current situation. Such an interdisciplinary approach is definitely an asset of the volume, as is the new (and meticulous) research presented in the publication. The same can be said about inclusion of lesser-known facts and events that complete the story of Florida. A clear division into two parts provides a suitable frame for a presentation of the wide scope of material and the broad range historical range of articles included in the volume. It is also significant that both parts are bound together through a unifying theme of transatlantic relations and connections that have been shaping the peninsula that is underscored in all the articles. What may be unusual for some readers is the lack of "neat chronological narrative" (xii), addressed by the editors in the preface, though this lack does not hinder the process of reading and the articles are interconnected with each other, which helps the reader gain a broader context of the presented events. What is unavoidable in edited publications of this scope is that some articles are less detailed than others; however, it has to be said that the differences are often related to the specificity of the topic examined by a particular essay. All in all, the volume is an ambitious and challenging project that not only provides the readers with new research findings, but also reminds us once again how important it is to analyze and interpret historical events in broader contexts. Both the editors and the contributors have produced a significant publication that will be an important contribution Florida's historiography and to the scholarly discussions about its future.

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