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***Sunshine in the Dark: Florida in the Movies* by Susan J. Fernandez  
and Robert P. Ingalls**

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steady economic decline and physical destruction under the federal “urban renewal” programs that bulldozed decaying structures in the 1960s but failed to fulfill promises to redevelop the community. Lastra traces in great detail the litany of broken government promises and the unrealized dreams of local Latins who championed a variety of proposals to revitalize the former Latin enclave after the collapse of the handmade cigar business and the relocation of local Latins to other areas.

Amidst this saga of political and economic failures since the 1950s, Lastra also documents the vitality of Ybor City institutions and the people behind them. Despite various obstacles, surviving institutions include most of the social clubs, the Columbia Restaurant, the Ybor City Chamber of Commerce, the Spanish Lyric Theater and *La Gaceta*, the trilingual newspaper run by the Manteiga family since 1922. New organizations, such as the Barrio Latino Commission and the Ybor City Museum Society, also have emerged as part of the drive to preserve what remains of historic Ybor City.

*Ybor City: The Making of a Landmark Town* should appeal to both longtime residents familiar with local history and newcomers who want to find out what made Ybor City so special. The book’s features include not only its many illustrations, but also a very useful index and numerous appendices containing data on the cigar industry, lists of businesses, and the names of leaders of social clubs and other community organizations since their founding. The volume is a tribute to Frank T. Lastra’s commitment to relating the history of Ybor City as he knew it.

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*Sunshine in the Dark: Florida in the Movies*. By Susan J. Fernandez and Robert P. Ingalls. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. xv, 283 pp. Acknowledgments, introduction, illustrations and color plates, epilogue, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth).

With *Sunshine in the Dark: Florida in the Movies*, Sarah J. Fernandez and Robert P. Ingalls have written a guide for watching any film about Florida. Pretty much every movie about Florida is here, regardless of genre or quality. The authors cover critically acclaimed Florida films like *Scarface*, *Cocoon*, and *Key Largo*, but they also devote plenty of time to *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, *Nightmare Beach*, and *Clambake*. And they write about movies long consigned to the back racks at the video store—how many of us have actually seen *Juke Girl?* *Sixteen Fathoms Deep?* *Big Trouble?* *Curdled?* Fernandez and Ingalls have watched them all.

Divided into three parts—settings, plots, and characters—*Sunshine in the Dark* groups films by theme in eleven chapters with titles such as “Re-Creation:

Starting Over in Paradise” and “Workers and Retirees.” Some movies crop up in more than one place—*Sunshine State*, for example, is discussed in terms of its images of African American women and its portrayal of the built environment in Florida. Black-and-white photographs illustrate each chapter, and a color section with more pictures appears in the middle of the book. A helpful appendix lists films with Florida scenes in alphabetical order, including the year and genre of each.

*Sunshine in the Dark* is unapologetically nonargumentative. “Our modest goal is to analyze what we see as dominant messages of films about Florida and to examine how these messages have changed over time,” write the authors in the introduction. “This book is not specifically directed at academics or specialists in film studies, but rather at general readers with an interest in images of Florida and Floridians” (11).

The discussions, accordingly, are unfettered by academic jargon, with only the occasional foray into film theory. But this straightforwardness does mean that much of the book relies upon plot summary. Demonstrating which films are alike and into what categories they fall often includes fairly comprehensive retellings of the movies’ stories.

The authors meticulously parse the various Florida images and themes within big-name Florida movies such as *Scarface*, which is notable for its portrayal of Cuban Americans as well as that of the drug underworld and Miami. They also discuss the recent film *Adaptation*, with its forays into the murky world of orchid collecting and southern eccentrics. The picture-within-a-picture situation of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who came to Florida from New York and wrote *The Yearling*, the north Florida novel that became a movie, recurs in many chapters, especially when layered with the more recent film *Cross Creek*, which tells the story of Rawlings and the writing inspired by her move to Florida.

Fernandez and Ingalls pull no punches. “While continuing his life of crime in south Florida, Junior meets Susie Waggoner (Jennifer Jason Leigh),” they write of the Alec Baldwin film *Miami Blues*, “a dumber-than-dumb hooker from Lake Okeechobee” (81). Although they claim not to review the films, the authors can’t help but stand up for Florida and its people, such as in the discussion of *Cross Creek*, with its depiction of north Florida’s agricultural communities. “Rawlings’ associations with rural Floridians provided her with rich sources for characters, but this particular film fails to portray either the author or her subjects with the depth that her writing and her biographers have revealed” (217).

The book delivers on its promise of broad range. The authors cover settings from Miami to north Florida and approach characters with a similarly broad reach. “Within these plots,” they write, “a wide array of peculiarly Florida characters appeal—Seminoles, crackers, retirees, Cuban immigrants, astronauts, Spring Breakers—along with various heroes, criminals, warriors, and athletes” (10).

The most outstanding accomplishment of *Sunshine in the Dark* is that for all of its claims to be nonargumentative, the writers do have a point to make about filmic representations of Florida, which is that Florida occupies the farthest reaches

of any spectrum. Onscreen, Florida is a place with no gray areas, representing instead a space of sun-drenched happiness and a prime location for failed hopes; in short, Florida is anything from “dreamland to nightmare” (251).

For anyone who loves both the movies and Florida in all its many forms, *Sunshine in the Dark* will prove a rich read. With this book, readers will learn ways to categorize and consider the next Florida film they see, whether it portrays a holiday in paradise or a journey to hell.

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