

Christopher Columbus on one of his latest voyages. Lupe is accompanied, on both illegal trips, by Barbara Pérez, an eccentric Afro-Cuban boat captain. In Cuba, Lupe painfully describes an apocalyptic Havana. Castro's transformation of the pearl of the Caribbean into a ghost of its former self is indeed traumatic, like going back in time to the nineteenth century. Lupe has inside help with this job from a female art restorer, who also has her own agenda, which is revealed in the novel. Lupe succeeds in Cuba, but not without first running into the missing art dealer from Miami who has been trailing her. Lupe, although diminutive in size, has enough experience to get the upper hand when the art dealer is distracted by Lupe's companion.

Lupe Solano returns exhausted to Miami, but in a few days, with the help of lawyers, art experts, and the Cuban art restorer, she is able to settle all the mystery in a fair manner. Lupe Solano, like many other feminist detectives, does not always solve the enigmatic cases in a way that is satisfactory for her clients, Lupe's ethical concerns are above those of some of her clients because the most important thing for this detective is not necessarily to regain the status quo, but instead to find the best ethical solution for all.

In *Havana Heat*, as in her other novels, Carolina García-Aguilera has so many interesting issues going on at the same time that even after reading about the plot, the reader will find sufficient excitement to keep reading until the very last page, without being able to put the book down and, without realizing it, learn a great deal about Cuban master painters, and the current political situation of this communist island ninety miles away from Key West, Florida.

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***MI MOTO FIDEL: MOTORCYCLING THROUGH CASTRO'S CUBA***

by Christopher P. Baker

Washington: National Geographic Adventure Press, 2001 \$26.00

*Mi Moto Fidel: Motorcycling Through Castro's Cuba* combines two popular features of travel books within one tome, in this case the combination includes an exotic destination: Cuba, the forbidden island, and an unusual mode of transportation: a motorcycle. Motorcycle transportation in travel literature reached a high philosophical plateau with the publication of Robert M. Persig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, a life manual for the seventies, and more recently another good motorcycle journey was published, although less lofty: *Investment Biker: On the Road with Jim Rogers* (1994). This is another life manual, but this time for older and richer individuals trying to learn more about the international financial market by traveling around the world on a motorcycle. The Cuba travel book genre has had several worthy samples during the nineties, some of the most popular have been: Tom Miller's *Trading with the Enemy: A Yankee Travels Through Castro's Cuba* (1992), Christopher Hunt's *Waiting for Fidel* (1998), and most recently Andrei Codrescu's *Ay Cuba!: A Socio-Erotic Journey* (1999).

Christopher Baker's book, *Mi Moto Fidel* is more successful than the three travels books previously mentioned because of the motorcycle that he was able to bring to and use in Cuba. Baker's motorcycle allows him to travel by himself with much less restriction than prior visitors who had to make travel arrangements through the government. Christopher Baker is a British travel-guide-writer living in California, a confessed leftist, and a *bon-vivant*. His experience in

Cuba changes his mind about Fidel Castro's forty year experiment with communism in the Caribbean island.

When I started this journey, I was a Castrophile with a soft spot for the Revolution. . . . I made a halfhearted stab at defending Castro's achievements in culture, education, and health.

"You don't understand, Cristóbal," replied Pedro. "It is easy to be a socialist when you live in the United States. You can believe in the dreams without having to exist in this nightmare." (275)

Baker's book title is a play on words, since the name Fidel means faithful, the title alludes to the hero of the book, not Fidel Castro, but Baker's faithful motorcycle, his 1,000cc Paris-Dakar BMW that he smuggles into Cuba from the United States on a small boat bringing in humanitarian aid. Baker even forgets to check the oil in his motorcycle on a regular basis and finds his worthy steed bone dry not once, but twice, and yet the BMW gives him no trouble. Baker does run into difficulties, however, with the military who start following him at the half-way mark on his seven thousand mile trek through Cuba. From that point on Baker fears for the notes that he has compiled based on conversations with average, everyday Cubans. He fears not only for the possible loss of his manuscript, but also for the Cubans he has interviewed.

Christopher Baker's motorcycle journey through Cuba in 1996, along with other shorter stays on the island, has given him enough material to write not only this book, but also a guidebook on Cuba. This book will please not only armchair travelers, but many motorcycle enthusiasts as well. His observation and insight into Castro's Cuba is intriguing and thought provoking.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Henry Pérez, Professor of Spanish, is a native of Cuba. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he specialized in Contemporary Literature from Spain and Latin American. He graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Boston with a double major in Spanish and English. Dr. Pérez was the former Chair of the Department of Modern Languages at Manchester College in Indiana.

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