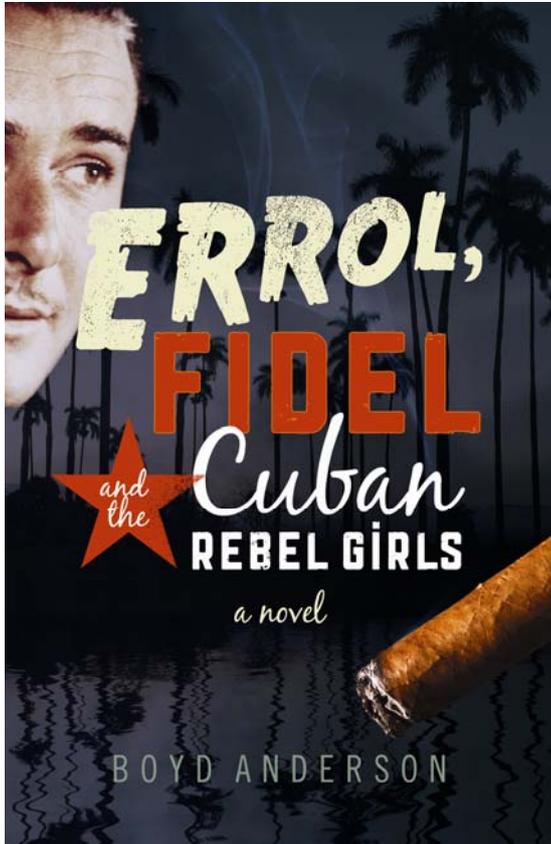


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BOOK CLUB NOTES
 ERROL, FIDEL AND THE CUBAN
 REBEL GIRLS
 BOYD ANDERSON

Published: 2 August 2010 | ISBN: 978 0 7022 3865 7 | Fiction |
 320pp | AU\$32.95

When Errol Flynn is at the end of his career and his life is at the mercy of the IRS, he dreams up an idea to pay his back taxes and even indulge in one more adventure – he goes to Cuba to make a movie about the Castro revolution. He takes Woodsie, his latest teenage girlfriend, to star in the film, but soon discovers he is more interested in pursuing a ‘scrap’ with Fidel. While revolution rages around them, the two ‘heroes’ find time to engage in a personal duel, like an ageing stag and a young buck. But in the end Errol finds the revolution he is really seeking – the one in himself – comes from finally understanding the women who surround him.

1. Errol’s relationship with teenaged Woodsie is the latest in a long line of such affairs, an inclination that has landed him in court and badly affected his career.

What reasons does he give in the narrative for such behaviour? What are the reasons he is perhaps unwilling to acknowledge?

2. Errol says Hollywood fame gave him an easy option and distracted him from his youthful dreams. Now he is paying for it. Could this, as he claims, be the reason for his drinking and drugs, or are these merely symptoms of a greater character flaw?

3. Errol’s impotence is a metaphor for the pointlessness he feels his life has descended into.

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How successful is it in this story?

4. Throughout the book there are references to his film *They Died With Their Boots On*.

What is the significance of that phrase to the story?

5. Page.62 Hemingway says, 'You have to be hurt to write anything worth a damn.' This is a genuine Hemingway quote.

Are all truly significant books proof of that assertion? Can an author make a contribution to life's drama only when starving in a garret?

6. Page.86 Errol quotes Tyrone Power: 'The secret of charm is bullshit.'

Are all 'charming' people necessarily shallow?

7. Page.87 Errol says he is happy to die, that 'raging against the dying of the light' is just one more exercise in pointlessness.

How does he later retreat from this position? In what does he find encouragement?

8. Page.126 Fidel points to the absence of a red star on his cap and says he could never be communist.

Was the Cuban revolution communist? If he is being truthful, when did he and the revolution embrace communism?

9. P.132 Fidel has just made a speech about the end justifying the means.

If truth is the first casualty of war, is morality always the second?

10. Page.150 Errol observes of Fidel: 'Unless you're actually standing in front of him, you can't tell what he's going to do next.'

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How has this mercurial characteristic brought about the problems Cuba still endures today?

11. Page.200 Errol gives Fidel a lesson in political spin, citing Macarthur as an early example of the art.

How much more prevalent is such practice today? Is the political future one of merely being seen to do, rather than actually doing?

12. Dwight Dodd and Alden Pyle (from Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*) are both young American idealists who blunder into delicate situations with the audacity of youth.

What other similarities do they share? What differences define them?

13. By the end of his life, Errol finds he is 'happy in his own skin'.

How convincing is he, to the reader, to himself?

14. Page.261 Dwight Dodd describes Renate Spinoza as a 'professional'.

A professional what? What is your impression of her role and her actions?

15. Page.291 Errol says, 'But what did I ever know about love? You learn about love in the cradle, don't you, so what would I know about it?' Not for the first time Errol is suggesting his tempestuous relationship with his mother and her inability to show affection is the root of most of his problems.

Do you accept that, or is it merely convenient on his part?

FURTHER READING:

My Wicked, Wicked Ways – Errol Flynn

FURTHER VIEWING:

Cuban Rebel Girls, starring Errol Flynn and Beverly Aadland. Many scenes from this film (a disastrous flop) are recreated in the book.

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FURTHER GOOGLING:

The Canadian Broadcasting Company program detailed in Chapter 27 is available on line through the company's archives.

Marita Lorenz, a shadowy figure of the time, is the inspiration for Renate Spinoza.

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