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**Publication Date**

2012

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Between Orientalism and Affective Identification:  
A Paradigm and Four Case Studies Towards the Inclusion of the Moor  
in Cuban Literary and Cultural Studies

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Comparative Literature

by

Susannah Rodríguez Drissi

2012



## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Between Orientalism and Affective Identification:  
A Paradigm and Four Case Studies Towards the Inclusion of the Moor  
in Cuban Literary and Cultural Studies

by

Susannah Rodríguez Drissi

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Efrain Kristal, Chair

This dissertation proposes an interpretive paradigm to explore the Moorish, Arab, Islamic and Algerian presence in Cuban literature and cultural studies, and it offers four case studies in which to do so. The interpretive paradigm involves a dynamic between two coexisting approaches in Cuban cultural history. The first is akin to Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, an exoticization of the other that invites a critical stance. The second, here called "affective identification," signals the recognition of and connection with the other as an element of national identity. The four case studies, which correspond to the chapters of the dissertation, are organized with a chronological movement from the nineteenth century until the present, and each is intended to underscore the links between the specific historical moment in question and

significant aspects of Cuban literature and cultural studies. Chapter 1 argues that the intersection between the dominant white sector's view of an exclusively white Cuban national identity and specific historical and geopolitical circumstances of the early nineteenth century informs the representation of Muslim pirates in Cirilo Villaverde's *Excursión a Vueltabajo*. Chapter 2 proposes that changing attitudes towards slavery in the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as the rising importance of the eastern region of the country, among other factors, contributed to the representation of Moors and Arabs in Martí's poetic and political discourse (specifically, *Ismaelillo* and "Los Moros en España"), in keeping with the notion of affective identification. Chapter 3 argues that the general interest in North Africa before the twentieth century, and the presence of the Moor in Cuban literature and nationalist discourse, contributed to the ways in which Algeria and Algerians were represented in Cuban print and television in the 50s and 60s. It gives pride of place to two works: Jorge "Papito" Serguera's *Che Guevara, la clave Africana: Memorias de un embajador de Cuba en Argelia* and Delia Fiallo's *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*, a soap opera about the Algerian struggle for liberation, broadcast in Cuba in 1962. Chapter 4 relies on theories of loss to address the affective identification with the Moor in Abilio Estévez's *Los palacios distantes*, and with the Arab figure in Jesús Díaz's short story "El pianista árabe" that involves the experience of exile and loss at the turn of the twenty-first century. The dissertation concludes suggesting several ways in which the inclusion of Arab and Islamic elements can enrich the study of both Cuban and Latin American literary and cultural studies.

The dissertation of Susannah Rodríguez Drissi is approved.

Lia Brozgal

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Michael Heim

Jorge Marturano

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University of California, Los Angeles

2012

## DEDICATION

To my family,  
in particular, to my two young daughters Kamila and Leila

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of completing this project, I have drawn heavily on the scholarship, wisdom, talents of mentors, colleagues, friends, and family. Over the six-year period of research on the relationship between Cuba and Algeria—at times less clearly defined than others—I have benefited from the general support of the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA, as well as the financial support, hospitality, and community of a number of libraries and archives, including the Biblioteca Nacional “José Martí,” the archives at the Cuban Heritage Collection, at the University of Miami, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and The Police Archives of the Algerian War (1954-1962) in Paris. I am grateful to the UC-Cuba Program Initiative, to its founder, Raul Fernandez, who provided indispensable assistance through the course of the research and writing of this dissertation, to its faculty and graduate students for the years of emotional support, careful readings, suggestions, and good humor. I am grateful to the staff and personnel of the Cuban Heritage Collection for their assistance, in particular Maria Estorino, Annie Sanson, Lesbia Varona, and Esperanza Varona, who assisted and guided me through my residency as Cuban Heritage Collection Fellow in the summer of 2010.

Raul Fernandez read several early versions of the first chapter and guided me in my efforts to understand the context of Cuba in the nineteenth century. He made many helpful suggestions, about both the text and my assumptions, and as a result the former was modified to include a great deal more than I had previously anticipated, changing my project permanently. Virginia Benitez, Tom Mackaneny, and Gabriela Venegas provided thoughtful comments on the project in general. My committee, Lia Brozgal, Nouri Gana, and Michael Heim afforded me the possibility of thinking in much broader terms than I had foreseen.

Most of all, I would like to acknowledge the enormity of debt to my Dissertation Chair, Professor Efrain Kristal. From the first draft of the first chapter, and for weeks and months thereafter, Professor Kristal presided over the preparation of the manuscript. I would rather not think at what stage this study would be were it not for his insight and the constancy of his support.

This study is dedicated to my family who, over many years, and through many ups and downs, has been at the center of what has made it possible. I am especially mindful of my largest debt of all, that which accrues from receiving the unconditional support of my husband, an Algerian whom I met in Paris in 1996 and talked to me about Castro and Boummediene.

And a final word to my little daughters, Kamila and Leila: they should know that this story is most of all for them.

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## Introduction

José Martí is a seminal figure of both Cuban and Latin American letters. He has been rightly admired for his essays on Latin American identity and for his poetry. Among his writings, *Ismaelillo* (1882) stands out as a major contribution to Latin American poetry, situating him, as Manuel Pedro González and Iván A. Schulman have argued, as “un iniciador más que a un precursor, una figura dominante, no un factor marginal”<sup>1</sup> of Hispanic-American modernism. While the vast majority of scholarship surrounding *Ismaelillo* agrees on the significance and contribution of the work to Latin American poetry, only a few have taken notice of the Arab elements in the work, beginning with the Arab roots of the work’s title. In the chapters that follow, I propose to unearth and explore some important representation of the Arab figure and Arab elements in Cuban literary and cultural history from the nineteenth century, and including the representation of Algeria and Algerians in Cuba in the 1950s and 1960s, but also at the turn of the twenty-first century. As such, one of the main concerns of this dissertation is to highlight the ways in which the figure of the Moor enters Cuban national discourse in literature (poetry and prose) and political discourse in the nineteenth century and persists in various guises in the literature, print media, and television of the twenty and twenty-first centuries.

My approach in this dissertation is grounded on an interpretive paradigm I am proposing, which I call the “orientalist-identification paradigm,” and which will be outlined in detail further on in this introduction. It involves a dynamic between two approaches that coexist in Cuban cultural history with regards to the representation of Arab themes. The first is akin to Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism, an exotization of the other that invites a critical stance. I call the

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<sup>1</sup> See Schulman, Iván A. and Manuel Pedro González. *Martí, Dario y el modernismo*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos 1969.



second “affective identification,” to signal the recognition of and connection with the other as an element of national identity. To make my point, I will explore the orientalist- identification paradigm in four major areas (in more or less chronological order), beginning with the representation of the Moor and Arab figures in nineteenth century Cuba (Chapters 1 and 2), continuing with the representation of Algeria and Algerians in the 1950s and 1960s (Chapter 3), and concluding with the representation of the Moor and Arab figures at the turn of the millennium. Before moving to the chapters themselves, however, I propose pausing to discuss the various historical and theoretical components that surround the representations of Moors, Arabs, and Algerians in Cuba from the nineteenth century to the present. Because unexamined usages of the term “Moor” may hinder one’s appreciation of the Arabic elements in Caribbean culture, I will now discuss the use and implications of the term in Cuba.

### **What Is A Moor?**

Allá en la Siria  
hay una mora  
Que tiene los ojos tan lindo'  
Un lucero encantador  
¡Ay Mora!

*Eliseo Grenet*  
*¡Metiendo Mano! 1977*

The term Moor has a history that goes back to pre-Islamic times. It derives from the small Numidian Kingdom of Maure of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. in what constitutes today northern central and western parts of Algeria and part of Northern Morocco. The name, applied to people of the entire region, came to be known to the Greeks as the Maurisi and Mauri to the Romans. While the name Moor pre-dates Islam, in the Middle Ages, the appellation was used rather broadly to

designate Muslim people of Berber, Arabo-Berbers, and West African descent who in the eighth century came to conquer the region known as Al-Andalus in the Iberian Peninsula. As Michael A. Gómez<sup>2</sup> reminds us, for the Spanish and the Portuguese who were already well acquainted with the Muslims of Al-Andalus,

[...] they comprised the unwieldy and heterogeneous category referred to as "Moors" by Europeans. Spanish use of the term Moor in the sixteenth century, therefore, was not necessarily a reference to race as it is currently understood. Indeed, Berbers and Arabs had had such extensive "contact with Negroes" that they had "absorbed a considerable amount of color." Rather, Moor referred to a *casta* (as opposed to *nación*<sup>3</sup>), a designation that "did not intend to imply a racial factor but rather a cultural characteristic—Islam."<sup>4</sup>

As opposed to the term *turco*<sup>5</sup> [Turk] used indiscriminately in Cuba and parts of Latin America to describe immigrants from the former Ottoman Empire (in particular those coming from Bilad al-Sham (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine), the term Moor is not a pejorative term, but one which in Cuba connotes a certain amount of exoticism and is associated with specific genotypes such as

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<sup>2</sup> See Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge University Press: 5.

<sup>3</sup> Slaves were categorized according to their place of origin: *Negros bozales* or *negros de nación*, were those slaves who arrived in Cuba directly from Africa and who did not speak Spanish.

<sup>4</sup> See Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 31 (July 1946): 276–77.

<sup>5</sup> Although the use of the term *turco* is reflected in the literature of such writers as Jorge Amado and Gabriel García Márquez, as well as other canonical writers from Latin America, the writers are, in fact, referring to Arabs and not Turks. The misunderstanding stems from the fact that a great number of Arabs arrived with a passport from the Ottoman Empire, whose capital was Istanbul and to which belonged the sociopolitical grouping known as *wislayas* or Arab provinces, extending from Middle East and from the north of Africa all the way to Algeria. At this time (last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century) the term *polaco* [Polacks] was also popular and used erroneously and interchangeably with the term *turco*. In addition, both terms were used to describe the Jews in Cubas: those coming from Eastern Europe were *polacos* and those coming from the Mediterranean were called *turcos*—this is consistent with practices in other parts of Latin America.

dark, almond-shaped eyes, tawny skin, and curly hair. In nineteenth-century Cuba, the term both refers to Moors from North Africa and their descendants in Spain and the New World, as well as to a category of Black. It is precisely in this way that the term is used throughout the chapters.

In this dissertation, then, I argue that the medieval “figure of the Moor” in all of its guises continues to haunt the Cuban imaginary at very specific times in Cuban history (for reasons discussed in each of the chapters), ultimately serving as a model for the ways in which Algeria is represented in Cuban letters and television in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

### **Contribution to Existing Scholarship**

While numerous publications, such as M. González’s *The Culture of the Heroic Guerrilla: The Impact of Cuba in the Sixties* (1984) and, more recently, Kepa Artaraz’s *Cuba and Western Intellectuals Since 1959* (2009) focus on the impact of the Cuban Revolution on nascent revolutionary movements and Western intellectual history, others, such as Tom Wengraf’s M.A. Thesis, *An Essay on the Early New Left Review* (1979) underscore the importance of the Cuban Revolution together with the Algerian war of independence, as elements that unified the New Left. However, there is yet to be a study that explores the impact of the Algerian War on Cuban literary and cultural imagination, and the historical connections, such as Spanish colonial rule, and narrative practices Cuba relied on and strengthened in the process. The consideration of Spanish colonial impact on the island and the narrative practices surrounding the representation of the Arab figure and Arab elements in Cuba during the first and second half of the nineteenth century may help us comprehend how years later these factors, among others, led to an identification paradigm that posits Algeria and Algerians as part of the national picture. Furthermore, this will also explain the ways in which the figure of the Moor

persists and exists—across linguistic, temporal, and geographical landscapes—in Cuban literature at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This dissertation, then, takes into account historical links and narrative practices that may have been predetermined by events that took place centuries earlier, such as the expulsion of the *moriscos* from Spain and the (soon after) conquest of the Americas. In my discussion on the representation of Algeria in Cuba (Chapters 3 and 4), it is assumed that, although common elements existed between the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the Algerian struggle for independence (1954-1962), individual national expressions differed and were always mediated by the particularities and demands of the geographical setting, such as Cuba’s strategic position between Latin and North America, and Algeria’s role in the context of the Maghreb, as well as its cultural and political relationship to France and the Arab world.

In *Cuba and Western Intellectuals Since 1959*, Kepa Artaraz reminds us that “[t]he Cuban Revolution constituted a momentous event in the 1960s. The sheer amount of interest it generated was matched by the enormous number of publications that followed [...]” (3). Ironically, the great majority of those publications fail to mention and consequently explore the historical connections between the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the Algerian War of Independence (another momentous event in the 1960s) and the impact that the Algerian War had on Cuban literary and cultural imagination.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> It may be instructive to consider that emerging from a period of mutual admiration and exchange, Algerian and Cuban literature at the turn of the century share what has, on each end, been termed a *literature of disenchantment*, also defined by José Quiroga, in *Cuban Palimpsests* (2005), as a literature of bitterness and melancholia (20). Whether a combination of civil violence and overall disillusionment or economic deterioration and hopelessness, the “special” periods<sup>6</sup> of the 1990s saw the mass exodus of Algerian and Cuban nationals. While in Algeria the civil unrest of the 1990s quickly turns into a civil war that ends up claiming the lives of 200,000 people, in Cuba the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Bloc bring about a national economic depression, for once revealing (and finally “naming”) the failures of an until then seemingly viable revolutionary project.

## **Algeria and Representations of the Moor in Cuba**

People have the same desires, identical dreams, the same hopes, the same sort of needs that they do in Bombay [...] Their hunger, their grief, their loneliness, their disappointments, their struggles are all the same, don't forget it [...] The important thing [...] is that you find your palace (9).

These are the words of El Moro, the presumed to be Algerian pilot in Abilio Estévez's *Distant Palaces* and one of the texts discussed in the final chapter. Certainly, Estevez's Algerian Moor is only one example of the ways in which Algeria and the rest of Maghreb entered the Cuban imagination—a story that traces the meanderings and bifurcations of that relationship has yet to be written. This dissertation which, among other things, explores the intersection between politics and culture in the representation of Algeria and Algerians in Cuban literary and cultural imagination from the 1950s to the present, contributes to fill this gap. By examining the political and cultural links between Cuba and North Africa from the nineteenth century to the present—readings that involve a consideration of (post) oriental trends—I attempt to not only bring those links to the fore, but contribute to a discussion that has until now only included the study of Orientalism in Latin America. Silvia Nagy-Zekmi's *Moros en la costa: Orientalismo en Latinoamérica* comes to mind, for example. Published in 2008, Nagy-Zekmi's edition constitutes a collection of essays that discuss orientalist narrative practices in Latin America, from the role of the exotic in the colonial project, the image of the Orient in American independence, Domingo Sarmiento's orientalism in *Facundo*, to the orientalization of Hispanics in the United States, among other topics. For the purposes of this project, however, I would like to focus briefly on one of the essays in the book, namely, Marilyn Miller's "Tengo de árabe

noble decendencia”: orientalismo y el retorno al país natal en *Zafira* de Juan Francisco Manzano” [I am a descendant of the noble Arabs: Orientalism and the return to the native country in Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Zafira*].

Juan Francisco Manzano (1797-1853) was born a slave. He was the first man of color in Cuba to publish his work while still in bondage. His sonnet, “Mis treinta años” [My thirty years] was read in 1836 amongst those who attended the literary reunions or *tertulias* at Domingo del Monte’s house while Manzano was still a slave. It was precisely during this event—and after the reading—that the men there gathered, moved by the poet’s words, agreed to collect the 850 pesos needed to purchase Manzano’s freedom. Manzano, then, was a free man when *Zafira, tragedia en cinco actos* was published in 1842<sup>7</sup>—José Martí would not publish his dramatic poem “Abdala,” about a Muslim warrior (discussed in Chapter 2) until 1869. *Zafira* was dedicated to Ignacio Valdés Machuca, one of the men at Del Monte’s *tertulia* who changed Manzano’s life forever.

As Miller contends, although praised at the time of its original publication, *Zafira* has since been largely ignored or simply forgotten by contemporary Cuba and Latin America scholars. The reason is the enigma that its plot and setting represent: “la escena,” as the author himself reveals, “pasa en Mauritania, hoy Argel: y pertenece al siglo XVI” [the scene takes place in Mauritania, now Algiers: and belongs to the sixteenth century]. I agree with Miller when she states that the critics have overlooked something that even a superficial study of the text will reveal: Manzano’s *Zafira* participates in an Orientalist tradition in Latin America that extends from Columbus to the present time. *Zafira*, however, is not an orientalist text and in this I strongly disagree with Miller. Instead, I argue that Manzano’s *Zafira* marks the beginning of a

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<sup>7</sup> While the exact date of publication is unknown, critics agree on 1842 as the year of publication.

narrative practice that coexists and complements orientalist narrative practices. While *Autobiography of a Slave* (published first in abridged form in England in 1840) gives us precious insight into the conditions of domestic slave life in late colonial Latin America, *Zafira* in turn reveals the conditions that contributed to the representation of North Africa in Cuban letters during the nineteenth century. Manzano's *Zafira*, then, is a fundamental tool for helping us grasp the multidimensional role of the Moor and Arab elements in Cuban letters, as well as its impact on the population of color in colonial Cuba. In particular, *Zafira* constitutes important evidence on the ways in which the Moor, in its various guises, signifies for the individual and collective psyche of those who existed on the margins in Cuba under colonial rule.

Based on historical events,<sup>8</sup> *Zafira* relates the conflict between the Greek-born Arruch Barbarroja (identified as a Turk in the play) with Selim, King of Mauritania. In the play, five years after Selim is murdered, his widow Zafira agrees to marry Barbarroja, ignoring that he is responsible for her husband's murder. Zafira is not only inconsolable due to her husband's death but also because of the loss of her son. Selim, Zafira's only son and heir to Mauritania's throne, disappears the night his father is murdered. As a result, Mauritania falls into the hands of Barbarroja, a cruel and murderous usurper to the throne. Salim, however, returns to Mauritania to claim his rightful place. Tragically, Zafira assumes that her son has been killed during a duel with Barbarroja and takes her own life.

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<sup>8</sup> In the sixteenth century, the city of Algiers was home to the infamous Turkish "Barbarossa" brothers, Aruj (Arruch, in Manzano's version) and Khayr ad-Din. They and their successor invested corsair profits in Algiers and the surrounding countryside. The region fell under the Ottoman Empire and became a center for Mediterranean piracy and privateering. In terms of a literary inspiration, it may be also interesting to consider that Juan Francisco Manzano learned to read and write by reading the books of and copying the writing of his masters. It is possible, then, that as Irving A. Leonard has suggested, he could have been inspired by the books that crossed the Atlantic to be distributed in the Caribbean. Among the most popular was Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha*.

The main characters of the play, as the reader may suspect, are Zafira, an Arab princess; Selim, her son; Barbarroja, the impostor king of Mauritania; his brother Isaac; and Dalí, a prince and “descendant of Mohammed.” There are also other characters who contribute to the story, including Danme, Barbarroja’s general, the great Mufti, and Noemí, a Black eunuch. In spite of his secondary role, Noemí is of significant importance, as it is he who, upon the return of Selim, warns him of the dangers ahead. Much like Selim, Noemí is an Arab. However, as he confesses, he is a slave, “[...] un árabe / A quien negó la suerte vuestro rango [speaking to Selim]. / Pero no una alma ardiente y compasiva” [an Arab / to whom destiny denied your status / but granted him a burning and compassionate soul] (45). A criticism of slavery and the condemnation of a system that denies individual and collective freedoms are evident in both Noemí’s words and in the rest of the text. As such, disapproval extends beyond the relationship between master and slave to the relationship between men and women (if we consider Zafira’s relationship to Barbarroja, a man she does not love, but is forced to marry), as well as men and their desire for vengeance, as is Selim’s case in the play.

The historical background of the play inevitably reminds us to Cuba under colonial rule: Zafira, her dead husband, and her son represent the Arabs, which in turn represent the Cuban people; and Barbarroja and Isaac are symbolic of Turkish/Spanish power and abuses. As with other Cuban pro-independence and abolitionist literature of the nineteenth century, like Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s *Sab in Cuba*<sup>9</sup> and its Brazilian counterpart, Bernardo Guimarães’s *A escrava Isaura*, the tragedy in *Zafira* is the exposure of an unjust system that separates loved ones from each other and the individual from the pursuit of self-determination—one could argue,

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<sup>9</sup> Félix Varela’s *Jicoténcal* also comes to mind. Originally published anonymously in 1826, the novel relates Hernán Cortés’s conquest of Mexico, as well as his relationship with the people of Tlaxcala, whom he ultimately used to defeat Moctezuma and the Aztecs.



however, that Zafira's suicide constitutes an autonomous choice, not unlike those undertaken by women living under extreme patriarchal restrictions. Most importantly, at the mercy of Barbarroja, a white Christian man, Zafira's condition and ultimate suicide resonate with the situation of people of color in Cuba under Spanish colonial rule. The confession of an Arab past suggests Manzano's desire to connect with his own past. During an encounter with his mother, Salim declares,

Tengo de árabe noble descendencia

Y a mis padres conozco desgraciados!

Cuantos desastres la fortuna adversa

(Aparte)

Deparó contra ellos...! (52-53)

[I descend from the Arabs

I know the misfortune of my parents

How many a disaster has destiny

(Aside)

Brought to them!] (My translation)

Manzano's identification in *Zafira* with an Islamic past (all of the "good" characters in the play are Muslim or "descendants of Mohammed"), prefigures the black ideological and cultural movement in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in the 1930s and 1940s known as *negrismo*<sup>10</sup>, as

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<sup>10</sup> In *Beyond Slavery: The Multilayered Legacy of Africans in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Darién J. Davis defines *negrismo* in the following terms: "Influenced by Negritude, *Negrismo* was a term commonly used in Spanish American intellectual circles of the 1930s and 1940s. *Negristas*, as members of this intellectual movement were called, emphasized the contribution of the African to Western culture. The *Negristas* in Cuba did not claim, as did the followers of Negritude, however, that the African element was the center and redemption of Caribbean culture. [...] In the Cuban populist tradition [...] [the] aim was to combat the ethnocentrism that persisted in Cuban society and allowed important elements of Afro-Cuban history to be ignored" ( 152-153). *Negristas* included intellectuals of color such as Nicolás Guillén and also white scholars and ethnographers such as Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera.

well as more recent twentieth-century movements that posit Islam as a doctrine of liberation. By writing about an Arab-Islamic past, Manzano chooses to connect with his own African history and, possibly, as Miller contends, with his Arab and/or Muslim past (96). To be sure, although Catholicism was the only official religion in Latin America since the conquest, religious practices of African origin persisted through a process known as transculturation.<sup>11</sup> According to Cuban ethnologist Fernando Ortiz (1880-1969) who coined the term, the presence of Muslims in Cuba is connected to the Lucumí presence on the island. Ortiz argues that one of the most prominent of the *orishas* (deities in the Afro-Cuban pantheon) is Obatalá, also called Orish-nlá (“the great orisha”), Alamorere (“the one from the good clay”), and Alabalasé (the one who predicts the future). All of these names share the prefix “Ala.” According to Ortiz: “The Islamic religion left indelible marks upon the theology of the blacks from the African regions...Plenty of Muslim slaves (*mandingas, yolofes, fulas, macuás*, etc.) entered Cuba, and those who probably referred to the god Olorun as Alá were from the Yorubas.”<sup>12</sup> Ortiz added that the use of amulets in early-twentieth-century Cuba was also conditioned by Muslim influence on the island:

[S]ome amulets consisted of written prayers that were worn hanging from the neck, and placed on walls, behind doors, etc. This type is on the highest level on the amulet scale, so to speak. [These amulets] are based on the same concept that leads certain Mohammedans in Africa to consider as *gris-gris* anything written on

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<sup>11</sup> In *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y del Azúcar* (1940), Ortiz states: “I am of the opinion that the Word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English Word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation.”

<sup>12</sup> See Fernando Ortiz’s *Hampa afro-cubana*, 27-53, 156. For further discussion on the topic, see also Sylviane A. Diouf’s *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York U. Press, 1998).

paper, especially if it contains verses from the Koran drawn by a *marabout*, so that it was not difficult, especially by means of the *mandingas*, for the superstition to have arrived in Cuba. (37)<sup>13</sup>

Through narrative practices that include the implicit consideration of the Cuban slave's African and Arab-Islamic inheritance, *Zafira* engages the situation in Cuba under colonial rule and condemns the institution of slavery on the island. Manzano, then, seizes upon an opportunity to connect with his past, beyond the specific agendas of those who commissioned his work, including people like Domingo del Monte.<sup>14</sup> In *Zafira*, Manzano initiates a tradition in Cuban letters that (while contradictory) coexists and complements orientalist narrative practices (in respect to the Moor and Arab-Islamic elements) in the first half of the nineteenth century. In order to understand the ways which Manzano's (and other writers encountered throughout the chapters) identification with the Arab world differs from orientalist narrative practices, I rely primarily on the theoretical claims of Edward Said in *Orientalism*, as well as on other theoretical perspectives (in particular in Chapters 3 and 4), including Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community and Melanie Klein's reworking of Sigmund Freud's elaboration on loss, as well as (to a lesser extent) Gilles Deleuze's notion of the aphorism. Given the contribution of Edward Said's work to the topic at hand, I begin our study with a close look at his claims in *Orientalism*, a founding text of postcolonial studies.

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Michael Angelo Gómez's *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. See Ortíz, *Hampa afro-cubana*, 27-53, 156.

<sup>14</sup> Domingo Del Monte (1804-1853) was a lawyer and literary critic in Cuba and was known for his literary circle in Matanzas and Havana. Del Monte's position begs a brief clarification at this early stage, although I will take up the issue again in detail in Chapter 1. Although Domingo del Monte and his group were against the slave trade (for reasons that had to do with what they considered the "dangerous" increase of the people of color on the island), they were supportive of the slave system. Del Monte, as were many of those who frequented his circle, was a white landowner ultimately concerned with the protection of the interests of his class.

## **Orientalism and Affective Identification**

While recent publications, such as Abdel Malek's<sup>15</sup> "Orientalism in Crisis" question the value of orientalism, and others, such as Lidan Lin, in "The Legacy and the Future of Orientalism," speak of post-oriental trends, Edward Said's original contribution to the orientalist discourse continues to be a rewarding approach to the ways in which an "Orient" imaginary enters and is processed by "the West." This is, in fact, true of the less studied orientalist trends in Latin America and, to a certain extent, also true of Cuba. However, given its long history as a colony of Spain and its proximity to the American "West," Cuba proves to be a particularly interesting (both complex and contradictory) case of representational practices: there are, expressed in Cuban cultural production, other perspectives that exist alongside the strictly hegemonic model of representation advanced by Said's theory.

Published in 1978, *Orientalism* examines the development of Western representations of the Orient from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. It offers perspectives on orientalist discourse in areas such as anthropology and literature, as well as the relationship between representation, knowledge and power. Although the abundance of issues raised and the wealth of insights offered make the task of identifying all of Said's claims a challenging one, it is possible to collapse his argument into four major claims. Firstly, it is Said's contention that the Orient is a European construction, the naturalization of which has led to a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. The representation of the Orient by Europeans from antiquity to the present, Said contends, has produced a tradition based on a reality and a body of knowledge

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<sup>15</sup> In "Orientalism in Crisis", Anouar Abdel-Malek considers orientalism to be in a state of crisis. According to him, "[...] the rebirth of the nations and peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, since the end of the nineteenth century, and the very rapid acceleration of this process due to the victory of the national liberation movements in the ex-colonial world but also to the appearance of the group of socialist states and the subsequent differentiation between the "two Europes," has shaken the edifice of traditional orientalism to its foundations" (111-112). Others speak of a "post orientalism" (O'Hanlon and Washbrook), and there are yet others who have altogether changed direction and began to speak about Occidentalism (Xiaomei Chen, James Carrier).

whose purpose is to describe the Orient and its accompanying “Orientals” (94). Secondly, and consequently, Said argues that it is this tradition of knowledge and this mode of representation that served and continues to serve as an instrument to hegemonic, imperialist ends. According to Said, from the final decades of the eighteenth century and beyond, “there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe” (7). As such, Orientalist discourse, Said argues, is a requisite for the power the West exerts over the Orient. Thirdly, *Orientalism* proposes that Orientalist discourse has been instrumental in defining European identity, so that Western appropriations of the East have less to do with the Orient than they do with the West. Said maintains that the distinction Occident/Orient operates on oppositional terms, constructing the Orient as a negative and inferior (in)version of the cultural West. European identity, he argues, is dependent on the establishment of difference, as well as opposites and Others:

Orientalism is never far away from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans against “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. (7)

While the Orient is constructed as uniform, culturally static and in need of definition, European identity is established as its opposite—that is, diverse, dynamic and intellectually and culturally capable of self-definition. According to Said’s interpretation, it is precisely this image of the European self and culture that created a justification for colonial rule, as well as a marked

sense of imperial arrogance. Finally, Said's last major claim has to do with the legacy of orientalist discourse. Orientalist discourse persists, in particular, in the West's relationship with Islam, and the former's representation in the media. According to Said, essentializing in its very nature, the Orientalist project is responsible for the misguided, mistaken, and tragically misinformed depictions of the Arab world. For the purpose of our discussion, it is important to note that while Said's *Orientalism* does not include perspectives existing outside a hegemonic model, his understanding of East/West relations allows for other possible dynamics.

In the prologue to *Orientalism*'s Spanish edition, Said, addressing his critics, acknowledges the special relationship that Spain, different from other European countries, had (and, in many ways, continues to have) with the Arab world (11-12). Indeed, this special relationship has had to do with the proximity of the "oriental" other: Spain's relationship to the Arab world had been one of coexistence, as Said asserts and, for the most part, non-confrontational. It follows, then, that former Spanish colonies also enjoy a relationship to the Arab world that is unique in its defiance of the East-West divisions that have been indispensable to American scholarship, dispassionate—since at least the publication of Said's seminal work in 1979—in engaging new trajectories and geographies of representation of the Arab world. This is particularly true of Cuba, whose relationship to Spain differs from that of the rest of former Spanish colonies on two important factors:<sup>16</sup> The first is that due to Spain's savage treatment and extermination of indigenous population during the early years of the colony, Cuba cannot claim a clear indigenous legacy, separating Cuba both culturally and racially from the rest of Latin America. The second and equally significant factor is that Cuba was one of Spain's last colonies,

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<sup>16</sup> There is a third factor and that is that Spanish immigration to the island continued well after the island achieved its independence and into the twentieth century (Roy, 1998; Hennessy, 1986: 366). After 1959, Cuba-to-Spain migration became a goal, as Cubans become more and more discontent with Castro's government. It is interesting to note that Cubans in Spain must share resources and compete for legal status with Maghrebian immigrants.

gaining independence in 1898, more than six decades after other Latin American republics. Spain's historical and cultural legacy in Latin America also included a more nuanced relationship with the Arab world. According to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran,

As opposed to Anglophone North America, where the meeting of Africans and the English was so novel and startling as to be a nearly cataclysmic event, the engagement between Africans and Europeans in what would become Latin America was in many ways an extension of an interaction begun hundreds of years earlier in Iberia, North Africa, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.<sup>17</sup>

I argue, then—and perhaps given more time, Said's prologued observations would admit—that the memory of over 800 years of Arab culture traveled to the New World, along with Columbus and his crew, later informing and even determining the ways in which former colonies, such as Cuba, relate to the Arab world. Approaching orientalism from the perspective of Cuban cultural production and in terms of Moors, Arabs and, of course, Algerians, allows me to examine narrative practices that both fall within Said's definition of orientalism and also—as is the case of Juan Francisco Manzano's *Zafira*—those that exist within an identification paradigm.

Associated with feelings about one's membership in a particular group, including a sense of affiliation or "belongingness" with others, affective identifications reflect the value of belonging to the group (Albert et al., 1998). In the case of the representation of Arab themes in Cuban literature, affective identification includes both positive and negative feelings of affiliation and may be related to conditions such as exile and melancholy. Approaching

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<sup>17</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 31 (July 1946): 276-77.

relationships, such as Cuba-Algeria, in terms of affective identification contributes to the creation and use of what Lin, in “The Legacy and the Future of Orientalism,” calls “alternative critical idioms [that] account for [...] relations that do not neatly fall within the scope of orientalism” (130-131). As a response to orientalism’s emphasis on power dynamics, Lin encourages a post-oriental discourse that does not express relationships through a hegemonic model. The “post” in post-orientalism, according to Lin, proposes a historical continuity between the years when the hegemonic model informed much scholarship on the subject and those that followed, when the model’s limited scope began to be questioned (131). The “post” also suggests a departure. In the case of Cuban cultural production, it allows for the possibility of discussing Cuba both as a postcolonial space and an imperial force—both as the inheritor of an “oriental” gaze (a passive role) and as the producer of that gaze (active role). It also allows for the valorization of moments that fall outside *Orientalism*’s hegemonic model, such as moments—Manzano’s *Zafira* is evidence of this—where the invocation of the Arab figure becomes the expression of the individual’s desire to connect with his own African history, which possibly includes an Arab/Islamic past. “This departure,” Lin contends, “involves innovative and ethically engaging ways of exploring Western representation and response on Western civilizations and cultures” (131).

When I speak of the orientalism-identification dynamic in Cuba in relation to Algeria (Discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) and its resulting cultural production then, I am both referring to the possibility (albeit contradictory) of Cuba as a postcolonial entity and Cuba as an imperial entity—the latter perspective is, in part, validated by the very resistance of scholars such as Jorge Klor de Alva (1994: 242), Santiago Colás (1995: 386), Bill Ashcroft (1999: 13), and Mark Thurner (2007: 3-4) to approach Latin America as a post-colonial space, recalling the fact that,



unlike other areas where postcolonial studies flourish and trace their origins (India and Africa, for example), the great majority of independence movements in Latin America were spearheaded by Spanish descendants from the privileged classes and, as a result, independence did not grant control to the original inhabitants or African immigrants, but to the privileged population, whose origin was European (Turner 1997, 3-5). In Cuba, this is particularly true since, as mentioned earlier, Cubans have no indigenous population to speak of. Abuse, overwork, massacres, common practices by the Spanish *encomenderos* in the colony, reduced the indigenous population to such small numbers that, by 1513, the first Africans were brought to the island as slaves<sup>18</sup>. While numerous studies, such as *Cuba: la isla posible* (1995) and Joan Lamore's "Acerca de algunas representaciones europeas de la mujer caribeña del siglo XIX," in Roland Forgue's *Mujer, creación y problemas de identidad en américa latina* (1999) reflect on and discuss the *orientalization* of the mulatta in Cuban art and literature, little has been said of the Arab figure and his/her "Orient" in Cuban cultural production.

In his article, "Of Creole Symptoms, Cuban Fantasies, and other Latin American Postcolonial Ideologies," Santiago Colás poses the following question: "What can the term *postcolonial* contribute to an understanding of the culture of Latin America?" (383). I, in turn, ask the following question: What can the term postcolonial contribute to our understanding of the relationship between Cuba and Algeria? Or, to take it even further, what can the relationship between Cuba and Algeria contribute to the understanding of Latin America? The first question alerts us to the possibility of orientalism as Cuba's colonial legacy, while also revealing the possible links between Castro's revolution and the building of empires. Here, of course, we must pause to make the distinction between what Castro has called (*ad infinitum*) Yankee imperialism,

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<sup>18</sup> See Suchlicki, Jaime. *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro and Beyond*.

as well as the former Soviet Union's imperial capacity and the communist international from Castro's internationalization of the Cuban revolution. The latter, and perhaps the most crucial, recognizes unalienable ties between Latin America and the Arab World.

While Said's *Orientalism* argues in favor of a hegemonic model, it is my argument that in looking at the representation of the Moor (in its various guises) in Cuban literary and cultural production, as manifested in the works studied in this dissertation, Said's model exists alongside other models of representation. For Said's hegemonic model to exist there must exist clearly distinctive categories, cultures, traditions, trajectories: Cuba must become (North) West or an extension of Western thought and practice, and Algeria must become (South) East or an extension of the Middle East. This is only possible through imperial practice and rhetoric. In Cuba, however, the Orient—of which the Maghreb and the figure of the Moor are representative—is characterized within both Orientalist and identification paradigms—that is, the Orient is both a construction based on power relations, as well as a relationship based on affective identification; in other words—and due to Cuba's special relationship with Spain—the Orient, and in particular the Maghreb, did not only become known in Cuba as Cuba's "great complimentary opposite," (*Orientalism* 58), as it did in the West, but as Cuba's great complimentary equal: the Orient is a parallel world to which one unconsciously drifts and consciously reaches for. Secondly, Cuba's tradition of knowledge about the Orient (largely a colonial legacy and restricted to the Maghreb), and this contradictory mode of representation reveals the general tension at the heart of not only Cuban, but Latin American identity. Thirdly, much like *Orientalism* claims that Orientalist discourse has been instrumental in defining European identity so that Western appropriations have more to do with the West than with the Orient itself, so does identification discourse have to do more with Cuban identity—in particular,

an identity in crises. As the case studies that follow will reveal, the figure of the Moor and the trope of the Orient are mobilized at moments of crisis in the history of Cuba. Cuban identity, I argue, is dependent on both the establishment of difference (hegemonic model) and the establishment of sameness (identification model).

Looking at the image of the Moor and the representation of Arab themes in Cuban literature, via representations of Algeria reveals antecedents in the quintessential question of nineteenth-century Cuba: What constitutes Cuban identity? I locate the medieval figure of the Moor at the heart of a *criollo*'s<sup>19</sup> quandary: whether to pull away from Spain or remain part of it. In order to provide a framework for understanding the ways in which the figure of the Moor persists (in various manifestations) and is later represented in twentieth and twenty-first century Cuban cultural production, then, I begin with a study of nineteenth-century Cuba's double gaze toward the Orient, resulting in two contradictory and yet coexistent representations of the Moor. While on the one hand, the figure of the Moor is constructed in oppositional terms (Said's orientalist model), and as a negative and inferior (in)version of "*lo cubano*," on the other, it is the result of what I call an affective identification, the recognition of and connection with the other as a complimentary equal. In his analysis of orientalism, Said identifies a vacillation "between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty" (*Orientalism* 59). I would propose a modification of Said's insight to be opposite to the case in Cuba, informed by a vacillation between feelings of contempt for the unfamiliar and delight in the recognition of a communality, or an element of the national picture. As such, I locate the Moor at the heart of the *criollo*'s quandary: whether (and how) to pull away from Spain and/or remain part of it.

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<sup>19</sup> Born in Cuba of Spanish descent.

It is precisely in his analysis of orientalism that Edward Said gives us a way of understanding how orientalist colonial discourse supports or subtends imperial politics by constructing its racial others in a negative light. Just as orientalism, in Said's theory, is a "willed imaginative and geographic distinction made between East and West" (140), so is affective identification in the Cuban context a willed imaginative and political identification between East and West. My contention is that without examining the orientalism-identification dynamic in Cuba in the nineteenth century, one cannot possibly understand the ways in which colonial ideology was both absorbed and rejected in conscious and unconscious ways, persisting well into the twentieth and twenty-first century. Such a dynamic, then, depends on a whole network of political and economic interests brought to bear on the construction of "*lo cubano*." Precisely how this happens is what the first two chapters attempt to demonstrate. It also aims to show how Cuban culture gained its strength and identity by either setting itself off against the Orient or setting itself as same with the Orient.

### **Arab Migration to Cuba**

Although there are antecedents to the migration of the Moor into the Caribbean, dating as far back as 1492, the most significant Arab migration takes place in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> This second migratory wave arrives in Cuba from the Near East, regions in

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<sup>20</sup> This first immigration, mediated by Spain and documented by official records and letters from the Spanish Crown, was predominantly made up of diverse ethnic groups from Spain and North Africa—namely *Moriscos*, Arab slaves and Berbers from the region known as the Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria), as well as other regions in North Africa. It may be also of interest to note that in the 19th, when Canary Islanders reached Cuba in large numbers, they brought with them a North African genealogy. A study conducted at Ohio State University comparing the dental morphology of a sample of Canary Islanders (n=397) to that of Northwest African samples of Algerian Shawia Berbers (n=26), Kabyle Berbers (n=32), Bedouin Arabs (n=49) and Punic Carthaginians (n=28), as well as to six samples from Northeast Africa (n=307) indicate that the Canary Island sample is most similar to the four samples from North west Africa: The Shawia Berbers, Kabyle Berbers, Bedouin Arabs and Carthaginians. While the contribution to the islands' population is now mainly European, research shows that North African and Sub-Saharan

the Ottoman Empire, such as Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and others. According to Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, in *Componentes Árabes en la cultura cubana* (1999), the arrival of José Yabor, “the Ottoman,” to Havana in 1870 marks the beginning of this second migratory wave. While, as Menéndez Paredes contends, the Arab immigrants were not necessarily favored by either Spanish or Cuban authorities, about two thousand Arabs, many of whom became primarily involved in mercantile activities on the island, immigrated to Cuba between 1870 and 1900, a number of whom participated in the War of Independence against Spain, such as Commandant Elias Tuma, from Bicharre, Lebanon.<sup>21</sup> The most important urban areas of settlement were Havana (today Centro Havana) and Santiago de Cuba, although there were also settlements in Oriente and Matanzas. At a time when Cubans strove to differentiate between what it meant to be Cuban and what it meant to be Spanish, the Arabs, as the new immigrants on the island, constitute both a threat to the construction of a white Cuban identity and a familiar historical presence, in terms of Spain’s Moorish past—both elements of a hegemonic relationship, and constructs of affective identification; while in the first case differences are emphasized, in the second—by the time attitudes toward slavery begin to change in the latter part of the century and the possibility of abolition is considered—they are erased.

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contribution was higher in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. See D. Guatelli-Steinberg’s “Canary Islands—North African Population Affinities: Measures of Divergence based on Dental Morphology.”

<sup>21</sup> I don’t focus on the Lebanese in Cuba because their identity did not factor as such in Cuban media and letters during the second half of the nineteenth century, nor during the first decade before and after the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

## **The Figure of the Moor and the Cuban Revolution of 1959**

This *criollo* quandary takes on different forms all the way into the twenty-first century. In the 1950s and 1960s, the models of representation with respect to the Moor are mobilized in service of the revolutionary project. The question then becomes, how to separate from the West while remaining part of it? During this period, the figure of the Moor is reassembled in service of the demands of the times, taking part both at once in the construction of hegemonic relationships between East and West, as manifested in Jorge “Papito” Serguera’s memoir, for instance, or in terms of relationships based on the identification model, as we find in the pages of *Bohemia* from 1956 on, as well as the pages of *Revolución* and *Verde Olivo* and Delia Fiallo’s *Under an Algerian Sky* (1962), discussed in Chapter 3.

While the 1950s and 1960s re-member relationships with the “Orient” in terms of past struggles and present glories (anticolonial movements and revolutionary triumphs), in the 1990s, the economic decay or Special Period in Times of Peace (resulting from the collapse of Soviet Union and fall of Berlin Wall) drive people to question their commitment (long dwindling) to the Cuban revolutionary project of 1959. The “*criollo*” ambivalence seen earlier in the pages of Martí’s *Ismaelillo* is now more than ever manifested through the figure of the exile/the traveler, and expressed in terms of the physical ruins of the island’s capital. Once again, as Abilio Estévez’s *Los palacios distantes* (2002) and Jesús’s Diaz’s “El pianista árabe” (2001) will reveal in the final chapter, the Moor is the figure that best exemplifies the question (new and also recurring) about what it means to be Cuban at the turn of the twenty-first century.

## The Traveling Moor

We may safely assume that the image of the Moor and its accompanying imaginary arrives in the new world with Columbus and his crew and sometime later (and shortly after its publication) in the pages of Cervantes's magnum opus, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, which reached the New World clandestinely<sup>22</sup> in the annual fleets that sailed from Sevilla and Cadiz in 1605. According to Irving A. Leonard, in *Books of the Brave...*, an account of the Spanish Conquest and the books that arrived to the New World, "[s]towed in the folds and tucked away in the passenger cabins of many vessels of the two *flotas* [of 1605] was quite possibly the entire first edition of this famous novel journeying to the lands of the Conquistadors' descendants" (270). "Authored" by the Arab Sid Hamete Benengeli, translated into Spanish by a *morisco*, and perhaps conceived in the slave quarters of Algiers, Don Quixote could do no less than arrive in the New World with the Moors in tow. Centuries later, and for very different reasons, the first editorial enterprise of Castro's revolution would be to publish one million copies of the same book.

For the purpose of this project, however, the mad knight and his quest interests us for very specific reasons: it is the novel's (Part I and II) engagement with Arab Spain, its unreserved interest in—to foreshadow Martí's own words in Chapter 2—*asuntos morunos* that becomes relevant to our argument. As Carroll B. Johnson contends, in *Don Quixote—The Quest for Modern Fiction*, Don Quixote's world is ultimately made up of the tension between the Old and the New—that is, "[on] one side stood the traditional religiosity, the Old Learning, the great mass of the Old Christian population; on the other, the new forms of spirituality championed by

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<sup>22</sup> Cervantes's novel was banned in the New World, thus the numerous copies that arrived in 1605 and soon after publication did so clandestinely or "stowed away," as Irving A. Leonard reminds us, in *Books of the Brave—Being An Account of Books and of Men In the Spanish Conquest and Settlement of the Sixteenth-Century New World*.

Erasmus, the New Learning, and the minority population of New Christians” (9). Likewise, our discussion is made up of the tension (or rather dialogue) between the Old and the New: the Old World of imperial Spain, and its legacy, which includes not only colonialism and the figure of the Moor, but also a *criollo* culture always ambivalent about its loyalties—and a “New” World that much like Cuba is still finding itself. As in the case of Cervantes’s novel, the “Moor” in the samples that follow is both what links us to the Old and propels us (as in Don Quixote’s sallies) toward the new.

Don Quixote Part II, and in particular the story of the Morisco Ricote, becomes attractive for its engagement with medieval Spain. The issues Ricote’s story raises, such as those concerning immigration and Spain’s Arab past, resonate powerfully with Spain’s contemporary cultural and political matters. Having given up his governorship and regained his freedom, Sancho Panza is on his way from the Isle of Barataria to rejoin his master when he meets some German pilgrims on the road, one of which happens to be his old friend and neighbor Ricote the Morisco. Ricote, upon seeing his old friend, is moved to tell him the story of his exile (II:54). By the time Don Quixote Part II reaches the public in 1615 and Sancho meets his old friend, the *moriscos* are an identity in crisis, as a result of the expulsion of 1609 and, yet, they are characters in the novel. Ricote the Morisco, his daughter Ana Félix, and the population to which we imagine they belong reveals the new anachronistic novelty that is made possible in the pages of the modern novel, ultimately dialoguing with what Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities—Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, calls a “new synchronic novelty,<sup>23</sup>” a sense of parallelism or simultaneity that arises historically “only when substantial

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<sup>23</sup> For the purpose of pointing out a playful synchronic simultaneity (here between fiction and reality, but one that takes place across time and distance), *Barataria*, the name of the make-believe island where Sancho enjoys a short governorship, is also the name of an island, bay and lake in Louisiana. Ceded by the French to the Spanish in 1762,



groups of people [are] in a position to think of themselves as living lives parallel to those of other substantial groups of people—if never meeting, yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory. (188) Anderson, of course, is referring to the conquest of the Americas. According to Anderson,

For this sense of parallelism or simultaneity not merely to arise, but also to have vast political consequences, it was necessary that the distance between the parallel groups be large, and that the newer of them be substantial in size and permanently settled, as well as firmly subordinated to the older. These conditions were met in the Americas as they had never been before.

While the distance that separated the now exiled *moriscos* from Spain did not measure up to the vast expanse of the Atlantic ocean that divided Spain from “*Las Españas*” of the New World, the emotional and psychological distance between the *moriscos* and their lost “home” made possible the sort of gradual and continuous incorporation of the Moor in Don Quixote and, mediated by print-capitalism, in the New World. It is, after all, through the mediation of print-capitalism that the Quixote (with Moors in tow) was read simultaneously in the Old world and (albeit clandestinely) in the New. For Cervantes, the *morisco* Ricote does not represent a lost society, but a contemporary issue that continues to make tangible the necessity for seeking ways to articulate the relationship(s) between East and West.

As the case studies that follow will show, approaching orientalism through the lens of narrative practices and images surrounding Arab themes allows for Said’s orientalist theory to exist alongside relationships that fall outside East-West oppositions and trajectories, as well as those that challenge colonizer-colonized dichotomies. Cuba’s Orient—of which the Maghreb and

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Louisiana returns or is re-ceded to the French in 1800. Is it possible that there was something about the island, bay and lake across the Atlantic that reminded the Spaniards of Sancho’s isle?

the figure of the Moor are representative—functions both on oppositional terms and on affective terms—that is, the Orient is the result of affective identification with the Other and a construction of power relations. This contradictory mode of representation, mobilized in times of crisis, ultimately reveals the general tension at the heart of not only Cuban, but Latin American identity, dependent on both the establishment of difference (hegemonic model) and the establishment of sameness (affective model). While defining the orientalist-identification paradigm through the lens of narrative practices that include the representation of Algeria and Algerians in image and print proves a deeply complex and overdetermined business, the following case studies ultimately suggest that Cuba and, by extension, Latin American perceptions of the Orient dating back to at least the nineteenth century must be located and considered in relation to both Spain's special relationship with the Arab world, the region's ethnic make-up, as well as the interconnectivity between affect and politics in the anticolonial discourse of the time.

## Chapter 1

### *Moros en nuestra costa: The Moor in Cirilo Villaverde's Excursión a Vueltabajo*

“Las hordas beduinas que hoy importunan con sus algaradas y depredaciones las fronteras de Argelia, dan una idea exacta de la montonera argentina [...] La misma lucha de civilización y barbarie, de la ciudad y el desierto existe hoy en África; los mismos personajes, el mismo espíritu, la misma estrategia indisciplinada entre la horda y la montonera.”

(*Facundo*, cit. Verdevoye 1993: 694)

“(…jamás puedo olvidar que es mi patria) que se la llama el Argel de América, puesto que los mismos que cometen estos atentados se han querido dar el nombre de musulmanes.”

(Félix Varela, cit. *Bibliotecas de Autores Cubanos*, 4, Obras de Félix Varela y Morales, vol. IX.)

This chapter explores the representation of the Moor in Cirilo Villaverde's *Excursión a Vueltabajo*. As my study of the work in question will show, the representation of Arab themes in the first half of the nineteenth century is linked to the initial formulations of Cuban nationalism, a process that begins in the 1700s with the rise of the sugar industry, the consequent awakening of a *criollo* consciousness and its politics of *blanqueamiento*,<sup>24</sup> debates surrounding the institution of slavery on the island, as well as to nationalist responses to foreign elements, including North American influences in the geopolitical field. I argue that the intersection of White politics on the island, the interconnected arrangement of national and transnational

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<sup>24</sup> The demand for slaves rose with the flourishing of the sugar industry, which reached its peak in 1840. As a result, slaves arrived in Cuba in great numbers, eventually surpassing the number of whites on the island. *Blanqueamiento* refers to white colonization to the island supported by the Spanish crown, in response to the rising number of blacks, either free or slaves. The slave uprising in neighboring Haiti in 1791, as well as the numerous uprisings in Cuba years later—most notably, The Conspiracy of the Ladder in 1844 and Aponte Conspiracy (the first attempt at Cuban independence)—generated a general fear in the white (Spanish and *criollo*) population that a similar uprising could be staged on Cuban soil. Spanish authorities responded by punishing those involved with extreme brutality and death; the poet Plácido, a free slave implicated in the Conspiracy of the Ladder was one of the executed for his participation at this time.

historical components, and most importantly the need to define what constituted “*lo cubano*”<sup>25</sup> account for the nineteenth-century representation of the Moor within an orientalist paradigm that also includes strains of the Black Legend mode of representation.

As a racial category and a marker of Spanish colonial legacy in nineteenth-century Cuba, the Moor, in all of its guises, becomes a figure through which a negotiation of the Spanish and African elements in Cuban culture can take place. To make the point, I will look closely at the work of seminal figure, Cirilo Villaverde, whose *Excursión a Vueltabajo* anticipates one of the ways in which the Moor will figure in Cuban imagination from the 1950s to the present. For this purpose, it is imperative to understand from the outset that Villaverde’s vision of the Moor operates within a strictly orientalist paradigm—that is, within a hegemonic, oppositional dynamic that situates the Moor outside the national project; as I intend to show (in the case of Villaverde’s *Excursión a Vueltabajo*), although on the surface such a project presents itself as identical to the Spanish project, a closer look at Villaverde’s representational practices will reveal that *creole* economic interests and North American influences contribute to a differing perspective.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “*Lo cubano*” is what—depending on the particular political and economic interests of certain sections of the *criollo* population, namely the white intellectuals and the *hacendados* or planters—is included in a definition of nationhood in nineteenth-century Cuba. Although in a state of contention, “*lo cubano*” is defined negatively by the white *criollo* population: at this time, and at least until interests and, thus, attitudes began to change in the late 1860s, “*lo cubano*” did not include Blacks, either free or slaves.

<sup>26</sup>(Discussed in detail in the following sections) In addition to an Orientalist paradigm, this new perspective also includes at least two versions of the Black Legend mode of representation: On the one hand, the Black Legend mode of representation refers to racially-oriented aspersions about Spain; on the other, the “Black” Legend refers to the disparagement of Blacks and other Africans and people of color in Cuba. The overlap between the two results in the moral and physical “blackening” of Spain and its New World colonies. This conflation or overlapping of Spain with its New World colonies is of concern to Cuban annexationists as well as an obstacle to the construction of “*lo cubano*” at this time, which only includes White Cubans.

In order to appreciate and apprehend the ways in which twentieth and twenty-first century Cuban writers (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) mobilize the trope of the Moor, it is of significant importance to first understand how the appearance of Orientalist tropes during the first half of the nineteenth-century in Cuba interact with debates surrounding the definition of “*lo cubano*.” At this time—besides its fundamental role in the construction of a proto-national identity—the definition of “*lo cubano*” centered around the question of slavery; the convergence of Orientalist tropes and the quest for “*lo cubano*,” I argue, has to do with the impact that attitudes on slavery (at this time) have on the representation of the Moor and Arab elements, and the political implications that those attitudes represent within the national project.

As our account of Villaverde’s *Excursión a Vueltabajo* will reveal, the discursive construction of the Moor within an orientalist paradigm serves to subtend the exclusionary process upon which “*lo cubano*” is predicated at this time: that is, the idea of Cuban identity as a racially and culturally superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures, in particular, of course, the slaves and population of color in Cuba. Furthermore, as I will show, through the trope of the Muslim (Moorish) pirate (*piratas musimanes*) that I will examine in *Excursión a Vueltabajo*, Villaverde strategically returns to the heart of Spain what had been expelled in the Reconquest, namely the Moors (and the Jews). It is in this fashion—and for the purpose of retaining North American interest in annexation of the island to the United States—that Villaverde protects Cuba and Cubans against the Black Legend that characterizes (through racial discourse) Spaniards and the population of its colonies as figures of morally blackened alien whiteness or off-whiteness and doomed hybridity” (DeGuzmán xxv). As such, Villaverde projects and, thus *rejects*, (through the use of the Black Legend) what may also be “mistakenly” taken for “*lo cubano*” (namely, the dangerous, implosive racial mixture of the

island) onto Spain's "barbaric" and impure past (in religious and racial terms). At this juncture, I propose taking a careful look at the social and economic context of the island in the first half of the nineteenth century for the ways in which it may shed light on our discussion on the Moor and the orientalist dynamic to which he or she belongs.

## 1.1 Sugar and Slavery

While discussions on ways to conceive the nation were first and foremost in the mind of mid to late nineteenth century White Cuban intellectuals, decades earlier, it was the question of slavery in relation to the growing demand for sugar in the world market and the need for labor that became the primary topic of discussion. As Louis A. Perez asserts, in *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*,

[...] in no other Spanish colony was the local economy so totally dependent on slavery; in no other Spanish colony did African slaves constitute so large a part of the population; in no other Spanish colony did the total population of color constitute a majority. Creole elites presided over a plantation economy based on a vast slave labor force, a production system that engendered as much antagonism between whites and blacks as the political system had produced between creoles and *peninsulares*<sup>27</sup>. (100-101)

While an attitude somewhere between indulgence and indifference had characterized Spanish administration in Cuba at the close of the seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century<sup>28</sup> the island no longer represented simply a military outpost with little commercial value, but a new

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<sup>27</sup> From the Spanish peninsula.

<sup>28</sup> The appearance of a French fleet in Havana harbor announced the expiration of the Hapsburg dynasty and the succession to the vacant Spanish throne by the French Bourbons, who seeing seizing the opportunity of economic expansion in the Indies, proceeded to regain control of the island and its economic resources.

venture and possibility of economic growth for Spain. As Pérez explains, the results were predictable and by 1717, the crown had established a royal monopoly to control the production of tobacco (Cuba's main resource at the time). Decrees imposing import duties on ground tobacco followed, as well as the effort to control all of the island's foreign trade, suppressing the contraband trade that until recently had flourished on the island and, ultimately, reducing local power and limiting local initiative (Perez 52-54). As a result, Cuban interests were suddenly set aside in favor of Spanish ones, sharpening the distinctions between peninsular interests and creole ones. "No less irksome to local producers," Pérez contends, "was the endless proliferation of new taxes and the increase of old ones" (54). However, everything changed with the British occupation of Havana in 1762. In fact, the British changed everything, abolishing trade taxes and offering Cubans an array of consumer goods, including sugar machinery. Also available now in Cuba was the most highly coveted commodity of all: African slaves. As Pérez asserts,

The demand was almost insatiable. Slave traders of all nationalities converged on Havana in a scramble for a share of the newly opened Cuban market. An estimated 10,000 slaves<sup>29</sup> were introduced to Havana during the 10-month British occupation. (57)<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> As Louis A. Pérez asserts, the slaves available at this time reached a scale hitherto unknown and the number of slaves introduced in Havana at this time constituted as many slaves as would have normally entered in ten years (57).

<sup>30</sup> Too much had transpired during the ten months of British occupation and by 1763, when Bourbon rule returned to the Cuban capital, the acquiescence of former trade restrictions would not take place without the widespread objection of large sections of the population, namely the *criollo* elite. Commerce was eventually liberalized, however, under the reforms of Charles III. Until the Spanish monarch's "enlightened" reign commerce in Havana had been limited to a trade monopoly long held by merchants of Seville and Cádiz; it is at this time that Havana was authorized to trade directly with other cities in Spain.<sup>30</sup> Concurrently, Cubans were allowed to seek additional markets with their own ships, old tax structures were dismantled, and the trade monopoly was abolished. In 1779, following the lead of France and Holland, Spain formally entered the war against England and Cuba became an alternative and an important source of sugar, molasses, coffee and tobacco, as former North American possessions were denied access to the markets of the British Caribbean colonies. As a result, the slave trade flourished during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The supply of slave labor and a guaranteed supply thereafter became vital to the Cuban strategy of expanded sugar production. As the slave population increased, the number of sugar mills increased, the cultivation of cane expanded, and production modernized: the institution of slavery became a central component of Cuban economy, ultimately contributing to the *criollo* elite's realization that peninsular presence on the island was an obstruction to their local interests.

By 1840 Cuba was enjoying an extended period of unprecedented economic growth as the world's leading producer of sugar. According to Robert L. Paquette, in *Sugar Is Made with Blood*,

Sugar production in 1840 had reached the record high of more than 160,000 metric tons, almost six times the tonnage at the turn of the century and dramatic increase from the 5,000 metric tons of 1760. Merchant ships in record numbers and from every part of the trans-Atlantic world entered Havana harbor and such rising ports as Matanzas, Cárdenas, and Trinidad. They carried handmade linens and mining equipment from the German states; jerked beef from Argentina and Uruguay; dyestuffs and chocolate from Middle America; flour, lumber, rice, and saltfish from the United States; cotton goods, metals, and earthenware from Britain; wine, sugar machinery, and elite vestments from France; liquor, fruits, oil, wine, and soap from Spain. They carried away sugar as well as coffee, tobacco, copper, hides, and mahogany. (30)

As sugar production expanded and was favored, in the place of other forms of agriculture and forms of production, prosperity on the island increased, and so did the shipments of slaves. However, the demand for labor that brought slaves to the island by the thousands had also



resulted in the “darkening” of the population. Conditions on the island were now exacerbated by the threat of slave uprisings, in particular after the slave uprising in the neighboring island of Saint Domingue in 1791. Most notably in the history of slave uprisings on the island were the Aponte Rebellion in 1812, followed by a slave uprising in Puerto Príncipe in 1826, and later, in 1844, the conspiracy in the sugar district of Sabanilla. The latter, known as The Conspiracy of La Escalera (The Ladder), for the contraption to which slave suspects were bound before interrogation by the lash, is believed to have been an aborted movement for independence and a turning point in the history of Cuba and the United States, for the stimulus it gave to annexionism. For the purposes of our connection between Villaverde and his use of the Black Legend (discussed later in the chapter), it is also important to note that the conspiracy implicated (among others) Villaverde’s friend and mentor, one of Cuba’s preeminent liberal intellectuals and protonationalist writers, Domingo Delmonte.

## **1.2 Politics of *Blanqueamiento***

As the brief history of rebellion and conspiracies on the island reveal, the threat of slave uprisings was real; and while many intellectuals and landowners considered slavery a necessary and even indispensable condition in the economic development of the colony, others feared its impact on the White:Black population ratio of the island. According to the research conducted by Consuelo Naranjo Orovio and Armando García González for *Racismo e Inmigración en Cuba en el siglo XIX*, the census from 1827 and 1841 show the growth of the slave population clearly. In 1827 the population distribution was the following: 311.051 whites, 106.494 free colored (*libres de color*) and 286.942 slaves. In 1841, the proportions were 418.291, 152.838 and 436.49, respectively. In other words, the presence of “color” in the population changed considerably and

tilted the scale in favor of the colored population and, essentially, in the slave population that by 1841 represented 43% of the total number on the island. In combination with the free colored, the “Africans” prevailed over the whites in a ratio of 58:42. The most significant disproportion took place in the western part of the island: By 1841, in this sector, the relationship between the groups was 61:39, in favor of the Black population. As Orovio and Gonzáles contend, the growing distrust among the groups led to several attempts to control and even prevent slave uprisings. For the first time in the island’s history, the administration applied the laws against the slave trade, condemning over a thousand slaves and free colored. In addition, a great number of landowners began to think about ways of limiting the number of slaves in the sugar cane fields and, even further, how to produce sugar without slave labor. Ultimately, the fear of Blacks and the rising slave prices led to the much desired “*Blanqueamiento*” or “Whitening” of Cuban society; it is in this fashion and as a consequence of this that new ethnic groups contributed to the demographic development of the island and, in the case of the figure of the Moor, to the development of a “Cuban” consciousness (13). The origins, objectives, and social, cultural and economic ramifications of White colonization in Cuba are fundamental to understanding the place of the Moor in a society that, during the nineteenth century, sought to prevent the growth of the population of color on the island through white colonization and the progressive whitening of society through interracial relationships. As Pérez asserts, “[the] fear of slaves rebelling soon generalized into a fear of rebellion by all people of color. When the population of color expanded into a majority, the fear was transformed into horror” (102). At this time, “*lo cubano*” meant white, excluding *all* other populations of color on the island, including the Moors.

As Orovio and Gonzales underscore, White politics contributed to the island’s demographic growth and constituted an alternative to the slave economic system when such

began to show signs of future collapse. White colonization—particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century—was infused with racism (21-22) and, as a result, the proposal of colonization and immigration were founded upon principles of ethnic selection. According to Orovio and Gonzáles,

El miedo a la africanización encerraba no sólo el temor de una clase a perder sus bienes y prerrogativas, sino la alarma de la población blanca ante una posible asimilación por una cultura, o culturas, diferente a la “nacional”, y que, al mismo tiempo, consideraban, como mínimo, inferior. La conservación de la herencia histórica y “racial” se convirtió para algunos de los intelectuales y políticos en uno de los puntos centrales de sus programas. Hasta tal punto el “hecho demográfico” preocupó a los criollos que impregno, según avanzaba el siglo con mayor fuerza, la conciencia y programas políticos.

Among the ways of conceiving the State, there was the central preoccupation over the guardianship of an Iberian inheritance, which excluded the Blacks and the Chinese, who came to the island at the end of the 1840s as an alternative to the importation of African slaves.<sup>31</sup> Neither Black nor Chinese and already part of Spain’s colonial legacy on the island, the Moor, as represented in the works examined in this chapter, negotiates Cuban identity, dialoguing with the politics of White colonization which contributed to the island’s demographic growth and allowing for the existence of other ideological manifestations (including the orientalism-

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<sup>31</sup> Due to pseudoscientific comparative work between the intellectual, physical and moral characteristics of Chinese and Africans, the Chinese occupied a higher place above the African in the evolutionary chain. For a detailed study of Asian immigration on the island, please see “Inmigración de asiáticos para esta Isla principalmente para los trabajos de la industria agrícola”, *Memorias de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País*, T. 42, La Habana, 1851, pp.183-197, 361-365. Since its publication in 1793, *Memorias de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* became synonymous with the principal issues debated in Cuba in the nineteenth century and served as platform upon which the country’s elite (intellectuals, landowners, business owners and bankers) could hold discussions. Included in the publications was the work of French scientists, such as Georges Cuvier, Esteban G. de Saint Hilaire and Louis Flourens.

identification dynamic discussed in the Introduction and strains of the Black Legend discussed in this chapter), expressed and realized in conjunction with the dominant sector. Indeed, the threat of slave uprisings, white colonization to the island, and the increasingly complex network of local and foreign interests that sought to define “*lo cubano*” lent a special place to the ways in which the figure of the Moor is constructed in Cuba during the first half of nineteenth-century Cuba. As I will show in Chapter 2, however, as attitudes toward slavery begin to change in the latter part of the century, so does the representation change.

### **1.3 Independence vs. Annexation**

The situation that slavery represented for the *criollo* elite at this time ranged from a desire to separate from Spain to a need to negotiate with the very power that both threatened and protected their interests. According to Pérez,

Separation from the Spanish Crown posed a direct and fundamental threat to the social order of early nineteenth-century Cuba. [...] Cubans could not reasonably challenge the assumptions of Spanish primacy without inviting slaves to challenge the premises of their subjugation. Creoles preferred security to change and were ill-disposed to risk their positions of property and privilege for independence.

Hence the anomaly of the creole position: the very social forces required to dislodge peninsular elites could just as easily displace the creole ones. (Perez 100-101)

The interests of the two dominant sectors of Cuban society (Spanish businessmen and Cuban landowners) did not coincide, but represented an antagonistic relationship; the two only came together on the issue of slavery, the preservation of which became their primary concern. While

Cuban landowners were enemies of what they considered to be crude Spanish mercantilism, a general atmosphere of censorship persuaded them to use discretion in their call for reforms. As such, editors, writers, and landowners alike proceeded with caution in their demands for the cessation of economic, political, and fiscal obstacles. And it was only when they felt that their colonial relationship with Spain could endanger the slave system on the island that they looked to other options, one of them being annexation to the United States. As Cepero Bonilla clarifies, in *Azúcar y Abolición*,

En la década del cuarenta, el peligro abolicionista por circunstancias, aparentemente favorable, de la política exterior se cierne amenazador sobre la esclavitud. La Gran Bretaña intensifica sus gestiones, y la revolución francesa de 1848' que decretó la abolición de la esclavitud en las colonias francesas, al extenderse, peligrosamente, por Europa, amaga con lograr la liberalización del gobierno español. (39)

There were moments, Bonilla concedes, that Cubans doubted Spain's wherewithal to stand up to Great Britain who, at this time, was a financial accreditor to the Crown and fought with France over its internal politics. Each time the Cuban elite thought of the possibility of abolition and its consequences, they fixed their eyes on the United States—the only place on earth that could offer stability to their economic interests (Bonilla 39).

The uncertainty of independence and the unreliability of Spanish rule on the island ultimately led some sectors of the dominant class to consider annexation to the United States. Union with the United States promised to safeguard the plantation economy, allowing for the continuation of the slave system and the slave trade that made it possible. For disaffected creoles, the annexationist project seemed a logical outgrowth of a deepening economic

relationship. The motivation was partly based on self-interest, as annexation promised—among other things—to do away with Spanish taxation on foreign imports and the removal of North American tariffs on Cuban products, both of which, Pérez explains, “would contribute to increased profits on exports and reduced prices on imports” (107). Equally important was the increase in participation of North American traders in Cuban economy, as the ban on the slave trade threatened the supply of illegal slaves upon whom Cuban planters were wholly dependent. But Cubans were not the only ones interested in annexation. As mentioned earlier, North American interest in Cuba had its origins early in the nineteenth century,<sup>32</sup> According to Pérez,

It assumed form around a combination of several factors. Elements partly sentimental, partly historical, and partly pragmatic were bound up in the abiding belief that Cuba’s destiny was manifest. The destinies of both countries seemed not merely intertwined but indissoluble. So certain were North Americans about the future of the island that they conferred on a policy formulation the properties of physical gravitation,” John Quincy Adams posited in 1823, “and if an apple, severed by a tempest from its native tree, cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union, which, by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off from its bosom.” (108)

Indeed, annexation seemed a logical choice for the two parties involved and, by the 1840s disgruntled planters, including Miguel Aldama and Domingo del Monte joined the membership roster of the Club de La Habana which, from the 1840s to 1850s, served as the center of

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<sup>32</sup> Cuba began to trade with the thirteen colonies when the United States entered the war against Great Britain and trade with British colonies in the region was forfeited.

annexationist conspiracy. As Pérez reminds us, “The ill-starred uprisings of Narciso López were the efforts of the Club de La Habana” (110). The motivation for annexation, however, was not solely based on self-interest. Many Cubans, including Villaverde had developed a deep admiration for North American institutions. According to Pérez, North America was the place “where democratic ideals seemed to coexist comfortably with slave institutions” (107). Many Cubans had sent their children to the United States in the pursuit of education and culture and many others traveled to and lived in the north, nourishing commercial contacts and making binding social commitments in the United States. As such, the North American way of life was admired and, for many, it had come to represent modernity and progress.

#### **1.4 Villaverde, Domingo del Monte, and the Annexation Project**

In order to understand the impact of attitudes toward slavery on the representation of the Moor that we find in Villaverde’s depiction of the Muslim pirate attack to San Diego de Nuñez, and how and why Villaverde’s comes to deploy the Black Legend mode of representation, in this section, I will discuss Villaverde’s involvement in Domingo Delmonte’s circle; as well as the interests of the annexationist project that responded to the question of slavery on the island. My goal in this section is not to establish Villaverde as an annexationist, but to bring light to the complexity of the economic and political debates on the island; and also to show how Villaverde’s representation of the Moor is marked by his early interest in the annexationist project, later confirmed by, among other things, his relationship to Narciso Lopez and the annexationist newspaper, *La Verdad*.

One of Cuba’s first major novelists, Villaverde was born in the island’s western Pinar del Río province in 1812. He grew up in a sugar plantation where his father worked as the

plantation's doctor, seeing to the health maintenance of slaves. As such, early in his life, Villaverde had an understanding of the central place that the institution of slavery held in the island's economic and political system—its advantages, as well as its disadvantages. In his twenties, Villaverde aspired to a career in letters, but his early success, as Lazo explains, “was accompanied by increasing dissatisfaction with colonial society and a growing political conscience” (171). The Conspiracy of La Escalera (1844), discussed earlier in the chapter, seems to have intensified this process. Approximately four years later, in June 1848, Villaverde met Narciso López, a known filibusterer. Soon after, he became active in a conspiracy led by López to overthrow Spanish rule. Also that year, Villaverde worked as one of the distributors of *La Verdad* in Cuba and he is thought to have contributed to its publication. *La Verdad* was a weekly newspaper published by the Consejo de Gobierno Cubano in New York<sup>33</sup>. Circulated widely in the United States and distributed clandestinely in Cuba, it served as the principal means of disseminating annexationist propaganda. From 1848 forward, Villaverde was directly involved in the annexationist movement, seeing in the United States the sole guarantor of liberty in the Americas. According to Lazo,

Villaverde's work for López brought him in contact with John L. O'Sullivan, a newspaper and magazine editor and Democratic Party insider whom many historians credit with coining the term “Manifest Destiny.” O'Sullivan and Villaverde collaborated on articles that exemplify the connection between publication and filibustering. (173)

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<sup>33</sup>According to Louis A. Pérez, in *Cuba and the United States*, “to promote the cause of annexation in Cuba and the United States, Cuban exiles established the Consejo de Gobierno Cubano in New York. One of the founders and early presidents of the Consejo de Gobierno was Cristobal Madan, a wealthy Creole planter, who was married to the sister of John L. O'Sullivan, author of the phrase ‘Manifest Destiny.’ Others included property owners Jose Aniceto Iznaga, Alonso Betancourt, Gaspar Betancourt and novelist Cirilo Villaverde” (45-46).



Ultimately, his involvement in the annexationist project and its filibustering attempts on the island, led to his arrest and exile in the United States, where he lived until his death in 1894.

While scholars, such as Rodrigo Lazo, agree that the years after 1848 were marked by Villaverde's involvement with Narciso López and the annexationist project, the final version of *Cecilia Valdés* (completed and revised in 1878 and published in 1882) has largely defined Villaverde as an abolitionist. As Lazo notes, however, the first version of *Cecilia Valdés* published in 1839 differs significantly from the longer and revised version published in New York forty-three years later (171). The difference in time and distance between the first version of the novel and its final revision and publication in 1881, may be responsible for the writer's reorientation of his novel within a framework that some critics have considered abolitionist. Yet, *Cecilia Valdés* comes late as a critique of the slave system in Cuba. In fact, as Lazo points out, by the time the novel is published in its final form, Cuba had already started to move toward abolition, which was established in 1886 (187). Slavery in *Cecilia Valdés*, then, "[...] is part of a portrait of Cuba but not the main focus of the novel [...]" (187). Villaverde's concern—as later publications confirm<sup>34</sup>—was never for the future of free blacks and slaves; rather, it was the future of white Cubans on the island that drove his political and editorial efforts. His position against slavery was only a part of his development in the United States. It took the U.S. Civil War to produce what Doris Sommer calls an "about-face on the importance of slavery" (Lazo 176). It is instructive to note, then, that although the desire to end the slave trade and the desire for abolition have been understood to be one and the same, they were not. The political and economic interests of the planter class in the first three to four decades of the nineteenth century

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<sup>34</sup> According to Rodrigo Lazo, in *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (2005), Villaverde's position in his newspaper, *El Independiente*, helps to establish that Villaverde was, in fact, not an abolitionist from early on. As Lazo notes, "Villaverde grew into an abolitionist position only after working as a transnational writer and editor for *La Verdad*, *El Independiente*, *La Voz de América*, *El Tribuno Cubano* (New York, 1876), and other newspapers" (176).

resulted in a clear distinction between the two projects. While people like Villaverde and Domingo Delmonte were in favor of abolition of the slave trade, they were radically opposed to the abolition of slavery. For those who called for an end to the trade, slave trafficking represented a threat to the security of the island, continuing to increase the population of color and thus contributing to the possibility of other slave uprisings. In fact, even when the abolition of slavery was considered later in the century, it was thought of in terms of a gradual process that also included the compensation of slave owners. Cepero Bonilla clarifies,

Los ideólogos de los hacendados esclavistas adoptaron, en una y otra etapa, una posición distinta frente al trabajo esclavo. En la primera fueron acérrimos defensores de la esclavitud (Arango y Parreño, Saco, los personeros del anexionismo, etc), y en la segunda defendieron en lo inmediato, pero admitiendo la conveniencia de su extinción futura por la vía progresiva y siempre recibiendo los propietarios la correspondiente indemnización (los voceros del reformismo).

(23)

Annexation to the United States, as discussed in last section, promised not only protection of the slave system on the island, but protection from the slaves themselves—early revolts, such as the slave revolt in Saint Domingue in 1791 and the Aponte Rebellion on the island in 1812, had made this very clear. In addition, as mentioned earlier, many Cubans, including Villaverde and Delmonte, “had developed an abiding admiration for North American political institutions, where democratic ideals seemed to coexist congenially with slave institutions” (Pérez, *Winds of Change: Hurricanes and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century Cuba*, 133). Such political and economic “necessities” made possible Domingo Delmonte’s declaration in 1838 (year of publication of Villaverde’s *Excursión a Vueltabajo, Part I*), “that the United States of America...

[has] since its founding enjoyed the greatest political liberty, and they still have slaves” (qtd in Perez’s *Winds of Change*, 133).

While Villaverde’s connection to the Circle of Domingo Delmonte may not constitute a decisive connection to the annexationist project, it serves to confirm Villaverde’s involvement in the debates of the time and his role in the construction of a national literature. It is my contention that such literature—while seeking to define itself in opposition to Spain—had already begun to work in favor of the annexationist project and show signs of a North American perspective; specifically, in the representation of the Moor.

Indeed, according to William Luis, in *Literary Bondage*, Delmonte’s group was among the first to describe Cuban culture in opposition to Spain’s colonial discourse, negotiating national projects in terms of literary production and, ultimately, playing an instrumental role in the development of the realist novel on the island (28-29). Delmonte had arrived in Cuba from Maracaibo, Venezuela in 1812. As a young man, he studied philosophy and law at the University of Havana<sup>35</sup>. The son-in-law of Domingo Aldama, Delmonte used his advantageous economic position (a result of both his own family’s station and marriage) to hold intellectual gatherings in Palacio Aldama, a neoclassical palace that belonged- to his father-in-law (Otero 725). Given the influential impact of the group on the construction of a national literature, is no coincidence that the first novels published in Cuba were published by members of Delmonte’s circle, such as Anselmo Suárez y Romero, Cirilo Villaverde, and Ramón de Palma.

In Cuba, narrative prose begins in 1837 with the publication of short fiction, followed by the first two Cuban novels, both written in 1839, a year after the publication of *Excursión a Vueltabajo*: Suárez y Romero’s *Francisco* and Villaverde’s *El güajiro*. According to Antón

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<sup>35</sup> One of Domingo Delmonte’s classmates at the University of Havana was Cuban poet José Maria Heredia, in whom Domingo took an early interest, introducing his work to literary critics in Spain.

Arrufat, in *El nacimiento de la novela en Cuba* (1990), along with Ramón de Palma<sup>36</sup>, Villaverde was one of the first two Cubans committed to narrative fiction (749). In his article, Arrufat underscores the special circumstance in which Cuban writers, such as Villaverde, found themselves: Influenced by French Romanticism on the one hand, and challenged by the intensity of the historical moment they were living on the other, writers, such as Villaverde felt a certain discomfort within the limits of the French movement, which they deemed incompatible with the social and political realities of the island (752). In the prologue written for José María Cárdenas y Rodríguez's *Artículos satíricos y de costumbres*, Villaverde explains the need to wed foreign models, such as Romanticism, with elements of reality that constituted *lo cubano*, in political, economic, and cultural terms:

Cuando un país llega a poblarse por la concurrencia de las artes, la industria y la agricultura, el hombre inventa nombres y rótulos con que designar las especies que son de su exclusiva propiedad, y el que se toma el trabajo de enumerarlas para encomendarlas al papel en una descripción, no tiene que luchar con el inconveniente de no ser comprendido, porque una sola frase, cuando fuese exacta, bastaría por si sola para dares a conocer a sus lectores, y que no tuviesen su pintura por demasiado poética y ficticia, como me sucede a mí...

Indeed, Villaverde and his peers were conscious of the radical difference that their position as *criollos* constituted and, as such, sought to articulate a reality unarticulated until then. As Arrufat reminds us, Cuban writers in the nineteenth century lived in a country without political identity,

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<sup>36</sup> Ramón de Palma was editor of *El Album*, a literary journal dedicated to the publication of short stories and novellas. He was also editor of *El Plantel*. According to Anton Arrufat, in "*El Nacimiento de la novela en Cuba*," in 1838, the year of the publication of *Excursión a Vueltabajo* in *El Album*, de Palma includes a review of Villaverde's work, which includes a short study of the novel.

within the confines of a system that had yet to develop organically. Referring to Villaverde and his peers, Arrufat explains,

Por esto, siendo románticos, introducen una rectificación dentro del romanticismo, si puedo expresarme así. Ellos viven la primera etapa nacionalista de nuestra historia, etapa que coincidió con el movimiento romántico en la cultura europea y americana. El romanticismo produjo en ellos un fenómeno singular y creó un problema diferente. Mientras el ideal romántico fomentaba una concepción idealista e imaginaria de la vida, los cubanos hacían frente al duro y realista deber de luchar por la entidad de la nación. Por todas partes sentían el apremio de un realismo moral y económico. El individualismo desatado y la interpretación del destino humano llena de patetismo y soledad el gusto por lo raro y los placeres de la melancolía, reñían hasta cierto punto con el afán de adelantamiento social y la lucha por crear una nación, abolir la trata de esclavos y finalmente la esclavitud misma. El artista literario se encontraba escindido entre el gusto romántico y la responsabilidad práctica, entre la iniciativa individual y las necesidades comunes. La herencia romántica se encontraba en conflicto con el realismo social y político. Este conflicto dotó al período y, en parte, a todo el siglo de singulares matices. (752-753)

It is important to point out that Arrufat himself avoids (perhaps for the purpose of narrative expediency?) making a distinction between the stance against the slave trade and the desire to abolish slavery. Furthermore, it is also significant for our study of the Moor in Cuba to discuss the relationship between what Arrufat calls a difference between French Romanticism and the way the Romantic movement is interpreted or “rectified” (to use Arrufat’s word) by writers such

as Villaverde and the orientalist perspectives that frame the figure of the Moor in the literature examined in this chapter. As Said admits, the impact of Orientalism on Romanticism was a significant and powerful one, as “[p]opular Orientalism during the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth attained a vogue of considerable intensity” (118-119). I would like to, however, call attention to difference between Said’s analysis of Orientalism and the orientalist tropes found in Cuban literature at this time: while in the former Said refers to European views on and construction of the Orient, in the latter (and for the purposes of my discussion on the Moor), I am referring to the ways in which Cuban writers write about the nation or about the way in which the nation writes about itself. In addition, while all expressions of Romanticism are not necessarily orientalist, in the case of Cuban literature at this time, there is general trend toward the idealization of the Moor and the Orient that is influenced by the Romantic movement—Martí’s poetic works discussed in Chapter 2 are a case in point. The passages on the Muslim pirates discussed later in this section, however, constitute a “rectification” of this trend: while Romantic Orientalism revolved around the fantasy of a colonized or subjugated and exoticized Other, in Villaverde’s case, the need to define “*lo cubano*” in cultural, political, economic, and racial terms, as well as the need to serve the interests of the annexationist project (which sought protection and continuation of the slave system on the island), allow for the Orientalist strain of Romanticism to coexist with the Black Legend representational mode. Because the Orientalizing strain of Romanticism cast the Moor in an ultimately inferior or subject position, however idealized, it was easily reconciled with the Black Legend. What we will find in the description of the *piratas musulmanes* is the negative association of the Moor with Spain itself, as well as those elements and people that Spain had rejected during the Reconquista. The passages on the Muslim pirates in *Excursión...*, then, constitute a narrative that constructs its discursive field using the

Moor to articulate the terms of "*lo cubano*" both as a separation from "*lo español*" and as its rearticulation on Cuban soil.

### 1.5 The Black Legend in Cuba

At the peak of mutual interest toward annexation, from the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century—a period that coincides with the publication of Villaverde's *Excursión a Vueltabajo* (Part I and II)—the characterization of Spain in North American fiction is embedded within the rhetoric of the "Black Legend." In *Spain's Long Shadow*, María DeGuzmán defines the Black Legend in the following terms,

Promulgated by Spain's religious and economic rivals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—primarily England and the Netherlands, but also France, Italy, Portugal, and Germany—the Black Legend or *la leyenda negra* elaborated a story or legend about the essential character of Spain around the historical facts of Spain's imperial sway, Inquisition, and treatment of indigenous peoples of the Americas. In this legend, "the Spaniard" became a typological emblem of religious and political intolerance, tyranny, misrule, conspiracy, cruelty, barbarity, bloodthirstiness, backwardness, slothfulness, and degeneracy. (4-5)

It is instructive, however, to distinguish between DeGuzmán's definitions of the Black Legend (racially oriented aspersions about Spain) from the other "Black" legend, namely, aspersions about Blacks and other Africans in Cuba. Keeping this in mind, the overlapping of both modes of representation becomes a possibility. Because in North American colonial discourse New World Spain or the Spanish Americas came to signify as much as much a site of "miscegenation" as "contamination," rather than invigorating and regenerating hybridity, White Cubans' feared

the impact (in terms of the future of annexation) of the “Black” legend on North American interest in the island. The fear was justified, as it is precisely at this time that the figures of the Moor, the Gypsy and the Jew, among others, already established as signs of Old World “impurity,” came to stand for what was represented as the irremediable degeneration of the Spaniard, and also the inescapable impurity of its New World descendants. In a New World context, the Spaniard had inevitably also come into intimate contact with African slaves and Amerindians. According to María DeGuzmán,

The discourse of Anglo-American imperialism in the period leading up to the Spanish-Cuban-American War was increasingly one of race articulated as a way of seeing. Imperial vision cataloged hierarchically and simultaneously reduced the peoples and histories of contact in the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas into a set of interrelated types—Moor, Gypsy, and Indian—that stood for migration, expulsion, racial and cultural intermixing, and ineradicable stain. Imperial vision was a representational mode or practice through which Spaniards, Moors, Africans, Jews, Gypsies, and Native Americans, the Old World and the New, colonizer and colonized, were transformed into tropes of doomed racial mixing: dark-skinned minstrels or dancers; dark-haired, dark-skinned, black-eyed maidens or women in “native” dress”; and sometimes dark-skinned, often aggressive, male figures in full regalia, whether dressed in feathers and war paint, a pirate’s outfit, a Moorish or Gypsy costume, a bullfighter’s garb, or a beggar’s rags.” (73-74)

As such, there is an overlapping of two modes of representation (The Black Legend and the “Black” Legend) that resulted (in terms of representation) in the physical as well as moral



“blackening” or the progressive darkening of Spaniards and those people deemed in some way “Spanish”—namely, Spain’s colonial subjects (67-69).

In an effort to distance Cuba and Cubans from the reach of the Black Legend, and also invested in the Anglo-American project promised by a possible annexation of Cuba to the United States, pro-annexationist figures, such as Villaverde characterize the Moor within an Orientalist paradigm that also includes strains of the Black Legend mode of representation. The passage on the *piratas musulmanes* that I will discuss in the following section is a case in point. In the passage, which describes the attacks of Muslim pirates on the village of San Diego de Nuñez, Villaverde projects the Black Legend mode of representation onto the colonial entity. As Rodrigo Lazo asserts in, *Writing to Cuba: filibustering and Cuban exiles in the United States*,

Cuban writers did not see themselves as one with Spain or its functionaries in Cuba. All too aware of the social distinctions and political favors granted to Cuba’s *peninsulares* (Spaniards on the island), Creoles such as the editors at *La Verdad* were eager to attack Spain. In other words, the exiles did not see the Black Legend as characteristic of Latin America but rather as characteristic of Spain’s colonial rulers, who benefited not only from their racial privilege but also from having been born in Spain, a status granted that granted them access to certain economic benefits. (87)

In much the same way as nineteenth century Anglo-American narratives of travel from novels such as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*, Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad*, and Henry James’s *The American*, to name only a few, do not map Spain in their narrative constructions of “Europe” and “Europeans,” so does Villaverde’s characterization of the Muslim pirates “overlooks” or rather avoids mapping Spain within a European context. In the narrative travels

of Hawthorne and James, for instance, the action takes place in Italy and Paris, respectively. While in James's *The American* the only mention of Spain may be found in a racialized physical description of a certain M. Ledoux's "queer mixture,"<sup>37</sup> in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, Spain is nowhere to be found, except in the passing reference to the Spanish Steps in Rome and the implicit genealogy of Miriam,<sup>38</sup> one of the novel's main characters. In Twain's case, Spain is mentioned directly, but only in reference to its North African neighbor. In fact, in Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, Spain is associated with what for centuries it had labored to expel: the Moors and the Jews. As DeGuzmán contends,

[Spain] was generally considered the starting point for a completely different sort of trip—a journey to North Africa and to the Near East.[...] Old World peninsular Spain [...] conjured fantasies and anxieties about strange and volatile mixture, purging and contamination, attributed to and provoked by the traces and remnants of the Muslim Conquest, the Christian Reconquest, and the Inquisition" (71-73).

So true is this that, in fact, the trope persists well into the latter years of the nineteenth century, in novels such as Anglo-American writer Gilson Willets' *Anita, the Cuban Spy* (1896), which takes

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<sup>37</sup> "M. Ledoux was a great Catholic, and Newman found him a queer mixture. His countenance, by daylight, had a sort of amiably saturnine cast; he had a very large, thin nose, and looked like a Spanish picture." In another instance, Mr. Newman asks Mrs. Tristram, a woman of whom he is quite fond, where she would prefer to reside. One of the places Mrs. Tristram chooses is Barcelona. Her answer, in this case, is used to characterize her as a woman of peculiar tastes.

<sup>38</sup> Hilda's rejection of Miriam in *The Marble Faun* reveals Miriam's place in the novel and the character-type she represents. Hilda, the fair-haired New Englander, who is compared to the Virgin Mary and thus represents a model of Christian virtue, is contrasted to the dark-eyed Miriam. Miriam is of Jewish ancestry. Her name, however, a version of Mary, may be also associated with Islam, as Miriam was also the name of the Prophet Mohammed's first wife. The narrator never tells the reader that Miriam is of Spanish descent; we must, however, consider that in the nineteenth century, a great number of American Jews traced their ancestry to the Jewish communities of the Iberian Peninsula. In fact, as Sarna and Golden remind us, American Jewish history begins in 1492 with the expulsion of Jews from Spain. For more on this, see "The American Jewish Experience through the Nineteenth Century: Immigration and Acculturation," by Jonathan D. Sarna and Jonathan Golden. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/judaism.htm>

place in Ceuta<sup>39</sup>, located on north coast of North Africa surrounded by Morocco. In Willet's novel the main character is a young Cuban woman of questionable hybrid origins who lives in captivity in the Spanish penal colony of Ceuta; at the time, the colony was "home" to Cubans who had been accused of betraying the Spanish Crown. Not only does Willet bring Cuba, Spain and North Africa onto a single narrative map, but sets out to describe in comparable terms the barbaric existence and animal-like ferocity of the young Cuban woman and Spain's brutality toward her and others under their guard.

Villaverde's association of Spain with its Moorish (and, to some extent, also Jewish) past responds to and "corrects" Black Legend narratives such as Willet's. In the next section, I discuss *Excursión a Vueltabajo* and its execution of the orientalist model of representation, with strains of the Black legend mode of representation.

### **1.6 *Excursión a Vueltabajo***

In order to continue expanding our understanding of Cuba's narrative practices with respect to the Moor, I now turn to a discussion of Villaverde's *Excursión a Vueltabajo*. In light of the author's involvement in the annexationist project and the ways in which sectors of the Cuban elite absorbed North American views, the use of the figure of the Moorish pirate in the text seems anything but arbitrary; in fact, as I will show, Villaverde's characterization of the Moor as a composite figure that also includes direct reference to the Jew in racially-derived characterizations, coincides with Black Legend representations of Spain and Spaniards by North Americans. In this section, then, I argue that Villaverde's attitudes toward slavery (namely, his interest in the preservation of the slave system) and the consequent interest in annexation lead

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<sup>39</sup> The official allegiance of Ceuta to Spain was recognized by the Treaty of Lisbon by which, on January 1, 1668, King Afonso VI of Portugal formally ceded Ceuta to Carlos II of Spain.

him toward the construction of the Moor within a strident orientalist paradigm, strategically informed by the Black Legend.

Furthermore, it is my contention that the representation of Spaniards in *Excursión a Vueltabajo* as *piratas musulmanes* and/or Jews was not a mere matter of reaction against colonial rule, but that it responded to and participated in the politics of *Blanqueamiento* of the island, as well as the interests of a planter class and its designs for annexation. Rather than constituting only a guileless regurgitation of Spanish (Old World) imperial rhetoric, Villaverde's representation of the Muslim pirates involves a complex, racially-informed two-way reorientation of the Spaniard, a mapping of New World issues onto the Old World and Old World drama of Christians against Moors onto the new. The incident of the pirates in *Excursión a Vueltabajo* does several things: Firstly, it replays the early drama of *Moros y Christianos*, simultaneously laboring to displace and/or absolve the creole elite's own history of violence and abuse against slaves and the population of color on the island. Secondly, much like the Anglo-Americans imperial discourse took what Spanish empire had endeavored to expel (Moors, Gypsies, Jews) from the Iberian Peninsula, so does Villaverde seem to treat the south, specifically the region of Andalusia with its clamor of *olé*s and idiomatic charm, as the gateway to the dark enigma of Spain, in particular, its brutality. As such, the pirate attacks in *Excursión a Vueltabajo* become a metaphor for the "carnage" and "pillaging" that the Spanish have inflicted on the island.

The importance of *Excursión a Vueltabajo* is that both Part I and II are published at precisely a moment in Cuban history when national discourses are being assembled in disciplines as diverse as literature, social sciences, economics, geography, etc., and whose goal is to speak of, define or even discover a sense of "Cuban." We are speaking, as Benítez-Rojo

contends, in *Cirilo Villaverde, fundador*, of foundational discourses, consequences of an authorial manipulation of Cuban reality from a patriotic-national sentiment that is informed by political and economic interests. According to Benítez-Rojo, among the works considered as “foundational,” in Cuban literary history, Villaverde’s *Excursión a Vueltabajo* is arguably the most important work precisely because it is a text whose principal goal is to narrate the search for what constitutes a sense of the “Cuban.” It is interesting to note that, as Benítez-Rojo reminds us, Villaverde begins to write years after his actual trip to Vueltabajo in 1831. It was only after he had been established as a writer with his short novel, *El espetón de oro* (1838), already a regular in Delmonte’s salon, and knowing himself a writer, that he seeks to legitimize his *cubanía* or “cubanness” and, simultaneously, the “cubanness” of his work.

The book Villaverde assembles in 1891 is made up of two texts, two “excursions” to Vueltabajo, each one published separately decades earlier. The first narrative appeared in 1839, in *El Album*—the same year that he published the first two chapters of *Cecilia Valdés*; the second, in 1842, in *Faro Industrial de La Habana*. As Gema Guevara contends, in “Geographies of Travel and the Rhetoric of the Countryside: Mid-Nineteenth-Century North American and Cuban Travel Writing,” the texts constitute one of the few documented journeys of discovery made by a Cuban to the interior of his or her own island, and for my purposes, it is important to note that it includes sections on the Moor.

*Excursión* narrates Villaverde’s trip to his hometown, San Diego de Nuñez and may be understood as a quest for origins, the importance of which had been, undoubtedly, discussed earlier and preconceived in terms of a “Cuban” national consciousness in Delmonte’s circle. The text belongs to the process of creating an image of the nation through the establishment of origins and a delimitation of the national space which—as a central component of a plantation

economy, such as Cuba's—includes the rural. It is within the context of the quest that the Moor appears both as a menacing difference in orientalist terms and as a specific reorientation of Spain within the constructs of the Black Legend.

Villaverde's travel narrative takes place in 1831 and begins "at the beginning"—that is, in pre-colonial Cuba, with the figure of the Amerindian:

[...] entre los poquísimos recuerdos que nos quedan de los primitivos moradores de Cuba, ninguno, absolutamente ninguno, se encuentra en esa parte septentrional, sino es el Pan de Guajaibón y una puntilla donde se rompen con estrépito las aguas del mar del norte, antes de la boca del Mariel y lleva el nombre de Tango farrango, que ambos me parecen de origen indio; por lo demás nada existe que revele que ha pasado una generación de hombres por esas tierras montañosas y al parecer vírgenes. (7)

The evocation of the Indian is instrumental to Villaverde's quest, as it establishes the possibility of a narrative point of departure (albeit distant and as a kind of prehistory of the island), as well as elucidates the impossibility of "origin" since, as he himself explains, all that may be left of the Amerindians are names, such as Pan de Guajaibón and Tango farrango. As Eduardo Guízar Álvarez's *Excursión a Vueltabajo de Cirilo Villaverde* explains, "[...] para Villaverde, la historia de Cuba comienza a partir de una genealogía de raíces indígenas, cuya presencia discursiva marca la existencia de una naturaleza, figura del pasado y del presente" (221). It is precisely this geographical and historical past that initiates Villaverde's quest. Although, as we will see, this indigenous origin only sets the stage for what will constitute a "real" origin—if, by real, we mean an origin or origins that mark the beginning of a new Cuban consciousness, a new state of

“Cuban.” What follows is a series of questions whose purpose is to define the natural characteristics of an island that, as seen in the earlier passage, Villaverde considers virgin:

¿[Q]ué particularidades presentan nuestras sierras que concurren en las de otros países, tales como la América del Norte y del Sur, o Europa –preguntará acaso alguno de mis lectores? No tenemos unos Andes, ni un lago Ontario, ni un Niágara. Es cierto; pero aún no ha reventado un volcán en nuestras lomas, ni nuestra prolongada y estrecha Isla pudiera soportar la pesadumbre de los Andes, ni mucho menos la ancha mar de un lago sin que se la tragase: esto está bueno para los continentes. Nosotros poseemos en cambio el Pan de Matanzas, célebre por los cantos del poeta; las Tetas de Managua, raras por la llanura en que se alzan; y a Guajaibón, atalaya de los navegantes que surgen del seno y se descubre a muchas leguas de distancia [...] No los vientos invernales, no el sol de Arabia azota nuestros campos, ni los abrasa con su influjo maligno. ¿Qué tiene que temer, pues, el hombre que se acoge en nuestros bosques amenos y deleitosos a estas sierras apacibles y azules? Nada absolutamente, ni del cielo, ni de la tierra que huella. (8-9)

In Villaverde’s discourse these “geographies” (real or imagined) are made up of Latin America, North America, Europe and, last but not least, the Arab world. It is worthwhile to note that the absence of a direct reference to Spain in the passage coincides with North American writers’ avoidance or direct naming of Spain when Europe was concerned. Although it is clear that the purpose of the passage is to establish the distinctive natural features of the island, it may be worthwhile to note that while the comparisons to the Andes, Ontario or Niágara bare little to no

negative weight,<sup>40</sup> “*el sol de Arabia*” is characterized as a malignant “*influjo*” or influx—of what precisely, one may wonder? The characterization of the Muslim pirates in the Güajiro Betancourt’s story of the “*piratas musimanes*” or Muslim pirates who attack the Casa Grande sometime in the 1700s (discussed later in this section) may suggest the answer.

At this juncture, we must clarify that it is the figure of the *güajiro* that, for Villaverde, represents a true sense of the “Cuban”—perhaps only the Amerindians, according to Villaverde, knew the land better than the *güajiro*, a peasant in the Cuban countryside, playing an analogous role to the Chilean *huaso* and the Argentinian and Uruguayan *gaucho*. Following the literary conventions of the time, the *güajiro*, much like his fellow *huaso* and *gaucho*, became a central figure in national narratives. As Gema Guevara explains, Villaverde viewed rural Cuba as a paradise, a kind of Eden capable of answering key social questions, such as those concerning nationalist intellectuals of the time. It is precisely the *güajiro* who, early in the narrative, sends Villaverde along the right path “home” or toward his town of birth, San Diego de Nuñez, the geography of which represents the possibility of a center.

At the Taberna de San Salvador, early in the trip, Villaverde meets a Frenchman who gives him directions. The Taberna is described as “[...] una bonita casa de tabla y teja, con sus colgadizos corridos, situada frente a la loma del Taburete, en la encrucijada de Cayajabos a San Juan de Contreras” (11). The appearance of the Frenchman and the description of the house are in keeping with the region’s prosperous contraband economy and the influence of French refugees who settled there after the slave uprising in Saint Domingue in 1791. It is also interesting to note that it is precisely a Frenchman whom Villaverde encounters at the crossroads that the Taberna represents, for the Frenchman becomes analogous with the path Villaverde must

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, the evocation of Niagara and its role in the construction of a Cuban consciousness brings to mind (Villaverde’s surely, as well as this writer’s) José María Heredia’s “*Niágara*,” published in New York, in 1925.



not take and the coast—toward which the Frenchman’s directions send him—with the kind of territory least suitable for Villaverde’s expression of the national, for, in reference to the rural “center,” the coast represents the least definable border and, thus, the most vulnerable to “contamination,” as the pirates’ attack will later confirm. Villaverde remembers the encounter with the Frenchman:

“Nuestra conversación al principio rodó sobre mil cosas indiferentes, hasta tocar en los caminos y su estado, con especialidad el que debía seguir y las leguas que me faltaban por andar.” (11)

The conversation suffers a timely interruption before Villaverde has time to make up his mind about which path he must take:

a tiempo que un guajiro que nos oía echado de espaldas contra el mostrador, y golpeando la tabla con la espuela que en el pie derecho calzaba, me dijo: --Mire usted, camará, en pasando usted el río de S. Juan, que encontrará más allá del cafetal de Díaz, a poco... como legua y media a dos leguas, entrará en el potrero del Cuzco. Pues bien, en vez de coger el camino seguido que lo llevaría a usted detrás de la Pena-Blanca, quiebre usted a la derecha por medio de Bocur; luego al del Pinar e ingenio de la Ceiba que está al otro lado de las sierras. Desde allí a San Blas y San Diego de Núñez. (11)

Villaverde ends up following the *guajiro*’s advice and the story flashbacks—after some necessary narrative meanderings—to the seventeenth century, with the “*horror*” that the pirates bring “hacia las costas de la isla” (181). In order to understand the encounter between the *guajiros* and the Muslim pirates, we must take into consideration the *guajiro*’s position within the racial divisions of the time: although a peasant in rural Cuba and thus of inferior economic

position, the *güajiro* was aware of his higher social standing by virtue of his white skin and, as such, he fought to differentiate himself/herself from the population of color on the island.

According to Jacqueline Murillo Garnica, in “*Las relaciones interraciales y sociales en la Cuba de Cecilia Valdés,*”

Tanto el blanco de posición inferior como el artesano pardo o Moreno libres, en apariencia tenían los mismos derechos en relación con las clases superiores, aunque el ser amo tanto para el uno como para el otro, no interfería en su posición social. El blanco de pocos recursos seguía siendo denominado como un “hombre blanco del estado llano”, “blanco de baja esfera”, “blanco común”. (45)

As such, the *güajiro*'s story of the pirate attack on San Diego de Nuñez is “colored,” among other things, by his racially-determined standing within the colonial system and the interests of the dominant sector, namely that of the *criollo* elite. In the section on the Muslim pirates, combined with his role as a national symbol, the *güajiro* is a medium for the expression of Villaverde's political and economic interests, namely his interest in the annexationist project and the interests of the Del Monte group of which he was a member. It is thus from the perspective of the *güajiro* that Villaverde characterizes the colonial entity as a composite construction of those elements and peoples that Spain had sought to expel, the Moors and, to some extent, also the Jews.

As the text (Part I and II) will show, the complex process of creating an image of the nation is directly linked to two fundamental elements: firstly, an origin (or several) that function(s) as a point of departure for narrating the nation and that begins in a remote past, culminating in the present and projecting itself into the future (following a diachronic axis of nation building); and, secondly, a limited space, defined by borders, within which it is possible to

conceive the simultaneous existence of the imagined community Benedict Anderson describes (the synchronic axis of the nation), as it moves through time. While the Amerindian evoked early in the text serves as a distant or prehistoric origin, Villaverde establishes two other “points of departures” which, considering the symbolic and historical value of each may be said to confront each other in the text. This “new” past, as the story’s narrator reveals, begins in the 1700s and coincides with a time in Cuban history when the interests of the bourgeoisie begin to be articulated and the Madrid government is asked to make substantial changes in the laws that were currently governing the economic exchange between Cuba and the metropolis<sup>41</sup>. In fact, as José Luis Ferrer asserts, in *Novela y nación en Cuba: 1837-1846*, “Comenzar la historia de Cuba en los años 1761-1763 fue una mentira política inventada por la sacarocracia y que subsistió hasta nuestros días, mientras esa clase fue poder” (8). The encounter between *güajiros* and *piratas musulmanes* in Villaverde’s work, then, reenacts the encounter between colony and metropolis that we find in the political and economic debates of the time. As the characterization of the Muslim pirates will reveal, the encounter between *güajiros* and pirates constitutes both the reorientation of Spain within an Orientalist paradigm that also includes strains of the Black Legend, as well as evidence of how the articulation of nationhood becomes a battle field where an undetermined number of elements “fight it out” for a chance at inclusion.

In the first excursion, Villaverde meets Don Tiburcio, a blind old man who preserves in oral history the origins of San Diego de Nuñez. Don Tiburcio, whom Villaverde remembers from his childhood, is a descendent of the original patriarch of the village. His purpose in the story is

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<sup>41</sup> The basic elements of these demands may be found in Francisco Arango y Pareño’s 1792 document entitled, *Discurso sobre la agricultura de La Habana y medios de fomentarla*.

two-fold: first, he confirms Villaverde's rural origins; second, his portion of Cuba's history, as he has told it to Villaverde, is recovered in Villaverde's narrative (Guevara 20).

Don Tiburcio tells Villaverde the story of the first inhabitants of the area, all family members who, by the turn of the century, owned as many as six haciendas. Following the patriarch's death, Don Tiburcio tells, his descendants begin a dispute over the rights to the land, dividing the region in order to sell it and thus fund the legal disputes that have continued in Madrid to the narrator's present. As these details make clear, the disputes and general antagonism that defined the relationship between the creole elite and the peninsulars, also had a profound impact in the rural areas. Only two generations later, very little is left of the original inheritance, disintegrated into sugar-mills, coffee plantations, and livestock. As Ferrer asserts,

Hasta aquí, esta narrativa "histórica" reproduce en síntesis (y en período que abarca menos de 40 años) la evolución de la propiedad agraria de toda la isla, la subdivisión y venta de las grandes haciendas mercedadas en lotes menores para el fomento de ingenios azucareros y cafetales, un proceso extreme importante para la burguesía productora y el cual había durado siglos. (373)

The historical, however, yields to the symbolic, as the story continues. The patriarch, Don Tiburcio tells Villaverde, builds a house made of cedar—what will be called in this, as well as the second excursión to Vueltabajo, the *Casa Grande*. The act of building the house, "la más hermosa casa de cedro que vieron las montañas de Vueltabajo," is historical but, more importantly, symbolic—in terms of the act's foundational significance. Nailed to the door of the house is an enormous wooden cross, "en señal de su legítima propiedad [the inhabitants'] sobre aquellas tierras." The numerous allusions to las Sagradas Escrituras or Sacred Scriptures, as well as the description of the inhabitants who populate the region as the tribe of Jacob, leave very

little doubt as to the symbolic and historical charge of an attack by Muslim pirates on the same house in the second excursion, an event that symbolically, at least, connects Part I to Part II.

In Part II, during his second excursion to Vueltaabajo, Villaverde meets Pablo Betancourt, who recounts his family's tragic encounter with *piratas musimanes*. "Historia de la familia de un güajiro," the tale of the Muslim pirates who attack a group of unsuspecting *güajiros* constitutes a story within the larger story of Villaverde's excursion and—as the literature gods would have it—is evocative of the ways in which the Moor enters Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, both "The Captive's Tale," in Part I and the Morisco Ricote's story, in Part II.<sup>42</sup> The specifics of the stories themselves are, of course, different (there is no beautiful Zoraida, nor a Morisco Ricote, for example): in Villaverde's case, the "Orient" serves to define the national, in terms of the economic and political interests of his class. The battle that ensues between pirates and villagers then, is both a continuation of a Spanish "project" and a re-orientation of it on Cuban soil, for "Cubans" are now those who come together to fight a clear and imminent danger that Spain and its legacy represents.

The tale of the attack by Muslim pirates is itself made up of two stories, both of which coincide with Black Legend characterizations of Spaniards. The first story is very short and its role is to define the pirates as bloodthirsty criminals capable of burning alive their captives, a scene that is evocative of the Inquisition, as well as New World brutality against the Amerindians. In this first story, we are told that "el capitán de los musimanes, esos que cometieron tamaño atentado" was a certain Gibert, also known as "barba colorada," Villaverde's possible version of one of the Barbarossa brothers, who took control of Algiers on behalf of the

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<sup>42</sup> Villaverde's love and devotion for *El Quijote* and Cervantes's work, in general, has been noted by Roberto Gozález Echevarría in "Cervantes en Cecilia Valdés: realismo y ciencias sociales." *Revista de Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 2007, Vol. 31; Number 2, 267-284.

Ottomans in the early 16th century. In the second, the longer of the two, the entire village comes under attack. Upon first glance, this second encounter, when examined in dialogue with the occurrences in the first excursion, such as the founding of the Casa Grande, may be understood simply as a tale of *Moros y Cristianos*<sup>43</sup>, a reenactment of the Spanish Reconquista and evidence of shared interests; upon closer examination and taking into consideration the debates over economy and politics of the island—specifically, Villaverde’s own early interests in annexation and the need to establish a clear distinction between Spanish interests and the interests of the *criollo* elite—the encounter that ensues between *Moros y Cristianos* becomes an encounter between Spain’s “impure” past (in racial and religious terms) and the sector of the population that for Villaverde embodies a national and autochthonous entity, the *guajiros*. The moment of encounter which, we are told, takes place in the 1700s, establishes a heroic origin: What we are in fact reading in this section of the narrative constitutes a ritualistic sacrifice [left out of the Don Tiburcio’s story of origins in the first excursion] of the members of the *guajiro*’s family, whose blood is now part of the soil. The purpose of the event is to sacralize the rural space and the creation of San Diego de Nuñez and, by extension, the Cuban nation. Much like earlier texts, such as Ramón de Palma’s *Matanzas y Yumurí* where space is sacralized and the origin of the city of Matanzas is established through the encounter between early Spanish conquistadors and Amerindians—resulting in the death of two young indigenous figures, Guarina and Ornofay—in Villaverde’s text, the town of San Diego de Nuñez is sacralized through the bloody encounter

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<sup>43</sup> *Moros y Cristianos*, translated as Moors and Christians, is a Cuban dish of mixed rice and black beans. The beans are representative of the Moors, and the rice of the Christians. “*Moros y Cristianos*” is also a popular dish served at the Feast of Saint George, a festival held in various cities in Spain which commemorates the Reconquista. Generally, the festivals conclude with large mock battles in which the Christians (riding horses) heroically defeat the Muslims (riding camels).

between the Muslim pirates (a composite construction of Spain) and the “Cubans,” making of the latter a new native entity, or new “indigenous” force. Palma, however, goes back to the period of “discovery” of the island and to a first encounter between natives and conquistadors. In contrast, in Villaverde’s text, the past begins in the 1700s, at the moment in Cuban history when the first articulations of a Cuban consciousness begin to take place.<sup>44</sup> In this story within a story, Villaverde reduces the history of Spain to the history of those people Spain sought to expel. This image of the Cuban nation, as well as its economic and political future, then, depends on the island's capacity to either assimilate or fend off a Spanish inheritance, which also includes Moorish Spain. The attack by Muslim pirates against the *güajiros* continues the North American discourse that associates Spaniards with the Black Legend, presenting the heroic *güajiro* (a symbol of the Cuban nation) in opposition to a Spanish past made up of Moors and Jews.

The flip side of this and precisely one of the reasons why it became so important for Villaverde to characterize the Spanish as Muslim pirates is the characterization of Cubans by Spaniards and those who opposed the annexationist project as pirates or Muslims. The following passage from Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdés o La loma del ángel* supports the claim,

Por su parte, los criollos y peninsulares emigrados del continente, como para subsanar su conducta cobarde, egoísta o retrógrada en la guerra por la independencia, a su llegada a Cuba, sólo se ocuparon de falsear el carácter de los sucesos, calificando de injustos, de perversos y de innobles los motivos de los sacrificios patrióticos de los revolucionarios, amenguando sus hazañas, convirtiendo en ferocidad hasta sus actos de justicia y de meras represalias. Para

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<sup>44</sup> In the last decades of the eighteenth century, Cuba experienced an unprecedented prosperity, as a result of the rise in sugar prices. The immediate consequence of this is what Manuel Moreno Fragnals, in *El ingenio*, calls “*el despertar grandioso de la conciencia burguesa cubana*” (36). Conscious of its own social significance, *la burguesía cubana* will draw thus a plan for nation-building that will run over more than fifty years.

esos renegados, el republicano o patriota era un insurgente, esto es, un sedicioso, enemigo de Dios y del rey; el corsario, un pirata o musulmán, como llamaba el pueblo a los argelinos que hasta fines del siglo pasado infestaban las costas del Mediterráneo. (96)

Precisely because of the inconsistencies surrounding the terms pirate and Muslim, debates over what constituted piracy became important at a time when there was a clear need to authenticate the efforts of filibusterers, such as Narciso López, a figure that most clearly embodied the hopes and dreams of the annexationist project. By constructing a composite picture of Spaniards as Muslims, Jews, *and* pirates, Villaverde seeks to establish a definition of the term based on an association to Spain, its past, and its atrocities. Taking this and earlier points into consideration, the need to represent Spain and Spaniards within the Black Legend mode of representation becomes evident. The following passage, in which the *güajiro* recounts the story of the second pirate attack on the island, constitutes a clear example of Villaverde's practice of the Black Legend mode of representation,

“Y todo esto, camará, lo hablaba aquel hombre en castellano tan claro como usted y yo. Solamente que el tonillo y algunas palabras que usaba nadie las había oído nunca. Tampoco crean ustedes que él era un hombre grande de cuerpo, trabado y forzado, no señor. *Parecía el más chico y el más delicado de sus compañeros. Eso sí, tieso y fanfarrón, mirando a todos de arriba abajo, que por eso, sin duda le llamaban el Gallito. Tenía el pelo tan retorcido y corto que cualquiera creería que era mulato. Y no señor, no era mulato, sino judío, esto es, moro. Su naricita respingada y su boca puntiaguda, semejaban andar siempre buscando qué oler y qué comer. No llevaba bigotes, como los soldados sino*



*patillas, y eso de maizlejos. Yo no sé cómo un hombrecito de su figura podía cargar tantas culpas de conciencia. La verdad de Dios sea dicha que el Gallito no tenía cara de musimán. Si se hubiera quitado el chaquetón y la cachucha y se hubiera puesto un futraque y un sombrero nadie lo tomaría por lo que era. ¡Lo que es la ropa, camará! (99) [My emphasis]*

Villaverde's representational practice in this section of the text ultimately projects the creole elite's own fears about miscegenation and hybridity on the island onto Spain, as well as points toward Spain's religious hypocrisy, as regards to a purely Christian pedigree. In the passage, the Spaniards, as pirates in "disguise," are likened to or become the Moor and/or the Jew, in terms of empiricizing and fetishizing detail of physical appearance, behavior, gestures, dress and other particularities; in terms of language, however, the pirates speak Spanish. As if to leave no doubt about the pirates ties to Spain, the *güajiro* tells Villaverde that the Moorish (perhaps mulato, perhaps Jewish) pirates speak in clear Castilian and possess an insatiable appetite for pork. In the following passage, the *güajiro* describes the moment the *piratas musimanes* enter the family house,

Aquellos hombres desaforados y al parecer muertos de frío y hambre, apenas entraron en la casa, registraron todos los rincones, rompieron lo que encontraron cerrado, y como no toparon dinero, sino dos botellas de aguardiente y una tasajera de Puerco todo lo sacaron a la sala y empezaron a comer y a beber como endemoniados. Se chiflaban el aguardiente, camará, como si fuera agua y el tasajo sin mascararlo. Metía miedo verlos comer y beber a un tiempo. (99)

Historically, the practice of eating pork distinguished Moors and Jews from Christians during the Reconquista. Under Islamic and Jewish law, the consumption of pork represented (and continues to represent) a taboo.

It is also interesting to note that the passage above also echoes an observation made by the narrator of Don Quixote in the “The Captive’s Tale.” Speaking of their landing on the Spanish coast, the captive describes the reaction to the group coming from Algiers, which included himself, the Algerian woman Zoraida, and a few others who traveled with them, including a renegade. The group, tired and hungry, and looking for a place to rest, discovers a young shepherd resting at the foot of a tree. The captive tells us,

We called out to him, and he lifted up his head, got up nimbly on his feet; and, as we came to understand afterwards, the first, who presented themselves to his sight, being the renegade and Zoraida, he seeing them in Moorish habits, thought all the Moors of Barbary were upon him; and making towards the wood before him with incredible speed, he cried out as loud as ever he could. “Moors! The Moors are landed: Moors! Moors! Arm, arm!” “We, hearing this outcry, were confounded, and knew not what to do: but, considering that the shepherd’s outcries must needs alarm the country, and that the militia of the coast would presently come to see what was the matter, we agreed, that the renegade should strip off his Turkish habit, and put on a jerkin or slave’s cassock, which one of us immediately gave him, though he who lent it remained only in his shirt and breeches. (I, 41, 377)

Although devoid of the negative associations that construct the composite image of Spain in the passage of the Muslim attack against *güajiros*, the passage above—which coincides with

Villaverde's in its composite characterization of the Moorish figure in Turkish habit—underscores Cervantes's early recognition of the ambiguity present in the established distinctions between “*Moros y Cristianos*.”

In other instances in the story, we may distinguish the occurrence of exclamations and idiomatic expressions, and cultural stereotypes, such as those that associate Spaniards with a taste for *el festejo* or partying and a proclivity toward miscegenation. The following passage of the “fiesta” that ensues soon after the pirates enter the house reveals as much,

Los otros musimanes hacían y decían las mismas cosas a las mujeres que les tocaron al lado. Acabada la cena arrimaron la mesa a un rincón, sacó uno de ellos un tiple que robó en la Casa Grande y se puso a tocarlo y a cantar una música que nosotros nunca habíamos oído, mientras los otros musimanes, con las manos, las tablas y las piedras, le acompañaban gritando de vez en cuando todos a un tiempo: “Olé, olé.

Entonces salió a bailar Cheniche, que era el gracioso y el más feo de los piratas pues tenía una nariz de cotorra más grande que su cuerpo y unos ojitos de caimán. [...] Lo cierto es que se acercó a las mujeres, las miró una por una y cogiendo a mi madre por un brazo la sacó fuera. Mi madre quedó parada como un tronco de palma pues no sabía, ni del susto podía bailar. Esto enfadó mucho a los piratas que gritaron a una: “Menéate, menéate, mala hembra!” [...] “Déjate querer, serrana de mis ojos [...]” (101)

By projecting the Black Legend onto Spain and Spaniards, Villaverde seeks to distinguish Cuba from Spain and spare its participation in the North American representations that surround the colonial entity and its colonies, which includes such racialized physical characteristics as the

hooked nose and the small eyes. As such, Villaverde constructs the Cuban nation and its people (specifically, White Cubans) as racially superior and in sync with the interests of North American dominant sectors.

Following the *güajiro*'s story, Villaverde's trip continues and we leave the "Orient" behind temporarily, only to find it again later in the text, in Villaverde's description of the region. While earlier in the narrative the Arabian sun had been characterized as an oppressive presence, and in opposition to the island's natural features, in the following passage, Villaverde compares "*los pinares de la isla*" to the Arabian desert,

Pero los que no hayan visto y transitado los pinares de la isla, nuestra descripción, por exacta que se la suponga, apenas alcanzará a darles una idea de las molestias y fatigas que experimenta el viajero. Sólo son comparables, a mi juicio, con los desiertos de Arabia, aunque menos extensos, y menos movedizo el piso, porque hasta la escasa sombra que en días calurosos ofrecen los pinos cuyas hojas son ramitas delgadas, como chuchos, sirve más de fatiga que de consuelo. (134)

And later,

Algunas veces, cuando descubríamos en las hondonadas una palmita, algún otro árbol de diferente verde que el de los pinos, sentíamos casi materialmente una frescura indecible en el corazón, sobre él caían nuestras miradas en busca de ese color refrigerante, como sombra las aves fatigadas; recordábamos los oasis de que nos hablan los viajeros del desierto arábigo, y si por acaso intentábamos apagar la sed que nos devoraba al pie de su tronco regado por hilos de agua cristalina, el sabor de copal de que estaba impregnada, y su caliente pesadez, nos hacían arrojarla con violencia. (134)

Although the above passage has the decidedly romantic flavor of a French orientalist aesthetic, recalling the descriptions that may have been found in the texts of French travelers, such as François-René de Chateaubriand and Gérard de Nerval, the difference between the French orientalist construction of writers like Chateaubriand and Nerval and Villaverde's orientalist narrative construction is that Villaverde is attempting to explain an actual geography and not an invented one, as was the case for the French orientalists. In the following passage, Villaverde once again makes use of the figure of the Arab to define "*lo cubano*," in response to an actual geography,

¡Ah! ¡Qué verdad era, que no estábamos acostumbrados a las caravanas del desierto, y a la vida nómada de los árabes y de algunas tribus de indios! Nuestras fuerzas quedaron postradas a la mitad del camino. Tres leguas habíamos andado por aquellos pinares inhospitalarios, cuando divisamos entre otras un pequeño oasis, que por encerrar bajo la sombra benéfica de varios ocujes, yabas y palmitas de cana, de que se componía una fuente de agua tan transparente como el cristal de roca, en la que hiriendo un solo rayo de sol, la hacía reflejar cual un espejo, nos encaminábamos a ella presurosos, apartándonos poco espacio del camino que seguíamos. (135)

As the passage aims to make clear, "*lo cubano*" means civilization, and it is defined negatively by the indirect characterization of Arabs as *uncivilized* and thus capable of adapting to harsh conditions. The Arabs are, thus, opposed to people of more refined breeding who could not possibly be used to such inhospitable geographies. The *güajiro*'s value within the national context, then, lies in his ability to become civilized.

## 1.7 Conclusions

Ultimately, as this last example reveals, Villaverde's representation of the Moor and the Orient in *Excursión a Vueltabajo* is constructed within an Orientalist paradigm that, as the earlier passages on the Muslim pirates reveal, also includes strains of the Black Legend. Ironically, Villaverde's orientalism and his use of the Black Legend mode of representation expose the creole elite's dependence on Spain and Spanish history to formulate a national discourse. Furthermore, in retrospect (and taking into consideration Villaverde's work as a secretary of Narciso Lopez and the latter's filibustering attempts, in particular the aborted mission to Vueltabajo in 1868), the pirate attack on San Diego de Nuñez in *Excursión* appears to deflect the practice of contraband on the island and the annexationists' own filibustering attempts. As the following chapter will reveal, as interest in the annexationist project starts to wane, and Cubans begin to consider the gradual emancipation of slaves, so will the paradigm within which the Moor is represented in Cuban literature and political discourse.

## Chapter 2

### Call Him Ismael: The Moor in José Martí's Selected Works

#### and Gregorio Ortega's "*Las Noches de Nueva Orleans*"

Argel sin fin, La Habana traza  
tu bahía blanca  
el moro quieto, arrestado por la sal  
y el tiempo  
añora tu canción de duelo  
te sueña en otras ruinas  
te busca en otras playas  
yo lo busco en la casbah  
en los jardines de otros jardines  
en las alas de otras palmas  
de otros palacios  
de otras ruinas  
con persianas  
y barandas.

From the unedited manuscript entitled "A  
Thousand and One Exiles" (2009)

In the second half of the nineteenth century interest in the annexationist project starts to wane. Faced with new economic and political demands, Cubans begin to consider the gradual emancipation of slaves. In this chapter, then, I continue the discussion on the figure of the Moor in nineteenth-century Cuba began in Chapter 1, arguing that national and transnational historical components in the second half of the nineteenth century, including changing attitudes toward slavery in the political and economic arena; Arab immigration in the demographic sphere; and the increasingly important role of the eastern part of the island in the movements for independence contribute to the representation of the Moor within an identification paradigm. To make my point, I will first look closely at José Martí's *Ismaelillo, Versos sencillos* ("La bailarina española"), *Flores del destierro* ("Hashish" and "Arabe"), and "Los Moros en España." Secondly, I will look at the recent short fiction of Gregorio Ortega, "*Las Noches de*

*Nueva Orleans*” for the way it articulates a post-Martí paradigm that includes the figure of the Moor in the national picture, while responding to and correcting Villaverde’s orientalist vision. As discussed in Chapter 1, Villaverde’s representation of the Muslim pirates is limited to an orientalist perspective that also includes strains of the Black Legend. In the case of Martí, however, we encounter two different representations: the first—which we generally<sup>45</sup> find in his poetry and prose—is strictly orientalist. The second, brought on by his historical sensibility and a new aesthetic engagement, represents a fissure in his writing that advocates for the inclusion of Arab presence in the national project. As the last example, Gregorio Ortega offers a re-writing of Villaverde’s work and a post-Martí vision of the Moorish presence in the national project that will usher in our discussion on the representation of the Moor within the context of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

In order to understand the ways in which Gregorio Ortega (later in the chapter) and other twentieth and twenty-first century Cuban writers (discussed in the chapters that follow) mobilize the trope of the Moor, it is particularly instructive to also understand how the appearance of identification tropes in Martí in the second half of the nineteenth century interact with changing attitudes on slavery. To that end, the section that follows explains the economic and political interests that make such a shift possible.

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<sup>45</sup> I say “generally” because I take into consideration his early (adolescent) dramatic poem *Abdala* (1869). Writers, such as Enrico Mario Santi and Cintio Vitier admit of yet-to-be-explored ambivalences in Martí’s treatment of the Moorish figure. *Abdala*, I propose (and discuss later in the chapter) represents an early grappling with these very ambivalences.



## 2.1 The Failure of the Annexation Project and Abolition

By the late 1850s and early 1860s annexationist sentiment was on the wane. The Emancipation Proclamation in the United States in 1863 contributed to its decline and had an added sobering effect for those planters who had earlier fixed their eyes on the United States in hopes of protecting the slave system in Cuba. Those who previously sought annexation as the best defense of slavery (such as Villaverde, as discussed in Chapter 1), now opposed it for exactly the same reasons: it endangered the continuation of the slave system on the island. The debate over slavery in the United States had also foreclosed the possibility of admission of a new slave territory into the union. However, not everyone thought of annexation as a solution; and many feared that the potential risk for slave rebellion during a forceful takeover outweighed the advantages of possible results. Consequently, white creoles found themselves in the same position that they always found themselves when it came to the question of slavery: any strategy designed to defend the slave system on the island simultaneously risked the destruction of slavery itself.

In response to the possible uncertainties faced by either separation or annexation, many of the same planters who a decade earlier had advocated annexation organized the Reformist party in 1865. Old creole demands for changes in the colonial system found new political form in the pages of the party newspaper *El Siglo*. Included in their demands were the increase in white immigration and, of course, reform of tax and tariff structures. The question of slavery still hovered over reformist political strategies. By the late 1860s, many Cubans had come to terms with the end of slave trade and the eventual end of slavery. Nonetheless, the only form of abolition most planters could contemplate at this time was a gradual emancipatory process that

included indemnification-reimbursement from Spain<sup>46</sup>. The fear of uncompensated emancipation kept many planters from new investments in slavery. As Cuban-American historian Louis A. Pérez explains,

There was nothing sentimental about planters' conversion to abolition. They desired, once and for all, and on their terms, resolution of what was now called euphemistically the "social question," to settle the issue of slavery and to get on with the business of making sugar without uncertainty. (*Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 114)

With the introduction of sugar machinery to the island, it became even more apparent that a new form of labor was needed. In the next section, I discuss Arab immigration to the island within the context of the new labor needs and, more generally, white colonization during this period.

## **2.2 Arab Immigration**

Those who decades earlier advocated white colonization as a means of combating and reversing the color population majority on the island (discussed in Chapter 1) now did so in order to compensate for the projected loss of slave labor during the abolition period. White colonization at this time promised to provide local producers with an ever-ready supply of cheap white labor. According to Pérez, "The demand for increased white immigration was a central issue of the Reformist party program. And, indeed, the white population increased dramatically during the middle decades of the nineteenth century" (*Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 115).

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<sup>46</sup>The process would allow the planters to recover their investments, as well as facilitate the purchase new machinery and equipment.

As Orovio and Gonzales underscore, White politics contributed to the island's demographic growth and constituted an alternative to the slave economic system when such began to show signs of future collapse. Among the ways of conceiving the State, there was the central preoccupation over the guardianship of an Iberian inheritance, which excluded the Blacks and the Chinese, who came to the island at the end of the 1840s as an alternative to the importation of African slaves.<sup>47</sup> Neither Black nor Chinese and already part of Spain's colonial legacy on the island, the Moor and the Arab, as represented in the works examined in this chapter, negotiate Cuban identity, dialoguing with the politics of White colonization which contributed to the island's demographic growth and allowing for the existence of other ideological manifestations (including the identification paradigm discussed in this chapter), expressed and realized in conjunction with the dominant sector.

Although there are antecedents to the migration of the Moor into the Caribbean, dating as far back as 1492, the most significant Arab migration takes place in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> This second migratory wave arrives in Cuba from the Near East, regions in

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<sup>47</sup> Due to pseudoscientific comparative work between the intellectual, physical and moral characteristics of Chinese and Africans, the Chinese occupied a higher place above the African in the evolutionary chain. For a detailed study of Asian immigration on the island, please see "Inmigración de asiáticos para esta Isla principalmente para los trabajos de la industria agrícola", *Memorias de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País*, T. 42, La Habana, 1851, pp.183-197, 361-365. Since its publication in 1793, *Memorias de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* became synonymous with the principal issues debated in Cuba in the nineteenth century and served as platform upon which the country's elite (intellectuals, landowners, business owners and bankers) could hold discussions. Included in the publications was the work of French scientists, such as Georges Cuvier, Esteban G. de Saint Hilaire and Louis Flourens.

<sup>48</sup> This first immigration, mediated by Spain and documented by official records and letters from the Spanish Crown, was predominantly made up of diverse ethnic groups from Spain and North Africa—namely *Moriscos*, Arab slaves and Berbers from the region known as the Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria), as well as other regions in North Africa. It may be also of interest to note that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Canary Islanders reached Cuba in large numbers, they brought with them a North African genealogy. A study conducted at Ohio State University comparing the dental morphology of a sample of Canary Islanders to that of Northwest African samples of Algerian Shawia Berbers, Kabyle Berbers, Bedouin Arabs and Punic Carthaginians, as well as to six samples from Northeast Africa indicate that the Canary Island sample is most similar to the four samples from North west Africa: The Shawia Berbers, Kabyle Berbers, Bedouin Arabs and Carthaginians. While the contribution to the islands' population is now mainly European, research shows that North African and Sub-Saharan contribution was higher in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

the Ottoman Empire, such as Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and others. According to Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, in *Componentes Árabes en la cultura cubana* (1999), the arrival of José Yabor, “the Ottoman,” to Havana in 1870 marks the beginning of this second migratory wave. While, as Menéndez Paredes contends, the Arab immigrants were not necessarily favored by either Spanish or Cuban authorities, about two thousand Arabs, many of whom became primarily involved in mercantile activities on the island, immigrated to Cuba between 1870 and 1900, a number of whom participated in the War of Independence against Spain, such as Commandant Elias Tuma, from Bicharre, Lebanon. The most important urban areas of settlement were Havana (today Centro Havana) and Santiago de Cuba, although there were also settlements in Oriente and Matanzas. At a time when Cubans strove to differentiate between what it meant to be Cuban and what it meant to be Spanish, the Arabs, as the new immigrants on the island, constitute both a threat to the construction of a white Cuban identity and a familiar historical presence, in terms of Spain’s Moorish past—both elements of a hegemonic relationship, and constructs of affective identification; while in the first case differences are emphasized, in the second—by the time attitudes toward slavery begin to change in the latter part of the century and the possibility of abolition is considered—they are erased. Having understood the new labor needs of the period and, more generally, Arab immigration within that context, I now turn to Cuba’s eastern region: Martí’s discursive practice within the identification mode of representation cannot be fully grasped without a clear understanding of the island’s east-west division.

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century. See D. Guatelli-Steinberg’s “Canary Islands—North African Population Affinities: Measures of Divergence based on Dental Morphology.”

### 2.3 Cuba's Orient

In this section, I focus on Cuba's Oriente (approximately the eastern third of the island of Cuba) and discuss the region's rising significance in the Cuban independence movements. I argue that the historical importance of the region (given its insurgent and revolutionary history) may have contributed symbolically to the representation of the Orient within the identification paradigm that we find in Martí's political discourse and—to some extent—in his early dramatic poem "Abdala" and later *Ismaelillo*. I propose that considering the changing role of Oriente in nineteenth century Cuba can further our understanding of the historical, political, economic and cultural circumstances that contribute to the orientalist-identification dynamic. For this purpose, I provide a brief account of the region's history, as well as consider the symbolic contribution of Santiago Matamoros (Santiago de Cuba's patron saint) to my discussion on Oriente. To take my point further and show how significant Oriente's role continues to be in terms of an orientalist-identification dynamic, I also include (See Appendix A) a short discussion of "Soy Palestino," a 65-minute documentary by Palestinian film-maker Osama Qashoo.

When speaking of orientalism and representations of the Orient in Cuba, the term *Oriente* ('east' in Spanish) appears to be charged with a very particular set of resonances that are both culturally and symbolically linked to that other East and its representations in Cuban literature and political discourse. The region includes the island's second city (and its first capital) Santiago de Cuba, as well as the provincial towns of Baracoa (Cuba's first Spanish city), Guantánamo, Bayamo, Manzanillo, and Holguín. Furthermore, the region contains two of the largest mountain ranges in Cuba, the Sierra Maestra and the Sierra of Nipe. It is also home to the US Naval Station at Guantánamo Bay, known via its military abbreviation as GTMO. The

significant contribution of Oriente to Cuban history and culture has yet to be wholly appreciated. My discussion of Oriente in this section, then, contributes to fill this gap.

### **2.3.1 Oriente: The Early Days**

Since the early days of the colony, the eastern region of the island had been neglected in favor of its western end. Circumstances partly due to geography, partly to choice had served to differentiate the two regions. When in 1515 Diego Velásquez relocated the administrative center of the island to Santiago de Cuba on the southeast coast, the location seemed advantageous for at least three reasons: first, the new capital was located at the crossroads of Spanish maritime activity; second, it provided easy access into the eastern interior; and third, it possessed a large and protected harbor. Unfortunately, by 1515 Spanish maritime activity had already begun to shift its attention westward in search of better trade opportunities, toward the Yucatán Peninsula and beyond. Santiago's location within this new focus offered little: at a time of the rising importance of the Gulf of Mexico, it was situated along the increasingly irrelevant sea lanes of the central Caribbean. Four years later, in 1519, the capital was moved to Havana on the northwest coast. The establishment of the new capital in Havana marked the new direction of empire, as well as contributed to the numerous distinctions that privileged the island's western region over its eastern one.

Decades later, in the 1540s and 1550s, when the great silver discoveries in Mexico and Peru offered vast new opportunities, depopulation to the already neglected east became a real danger. At this time, Santiago was reduced to 30 households, and held an estimated population of 150 Spanish settlers (Pérez 33). The use of the *flota* system late in the sixteenth century also

contributed to the rising significance of Havana. These early distinctions between east and west would only deepen with the passage of time. According to Pérez,

[...] at the end of the century of conquest, both Havana and Santiago occupied sharply different places on the social continuum of colonial Cuba. From these two contrary points would emerge competing views of *cubanidad*, of what it meant to be Cuban. While in general the west flourished as a result of the official presence, in defense of colonial policy; the east flourished as a result of the official absence, in defiance of colonial policy. (41)

Distinctions between east and west were such that interior settlements in the east throughout much of the colonial period—up until the latter part of the nineteenth century—suffered the effects of Spanish neglect, foreign attacks, and isolation, in addition to a slow population growth and an even slower development of the economic sector. In effect, Santiago de Cuba occupied one of the most exposed regions in the central Caribbean, making of it a frontier land: “broken land, irregular, trans-versed and intersected by countless intermountain valleys” (Pérez 11). As such, it attracted numberless outcasts, foreigners, runaway slaves (*cimarrones*), and any other individual or group who sought to exist under the radar of Spanish authorities.

Indeed, the distance from the ruling powers in Havana, as well as the numerous coastal inlets that surrounded the region, contributed to the existence of the east as separate and distinct from the rest of the island, in particular from Havana. Forced to fend for itself, the local economy in the east became integrated into and organized around illicit production for illegal trade with the neighboring islands of Jamaica and St. Domingue. Isolated and insulated from the rest of the island by vast mountain chains, winds and ocean currents, and distance from the trans-Atlantic maritime routes, the eastern region held little appeal for most immigrants. The opposite

happened with traders and locals who had learned to use these “disadvantages” to their advantage; for these groups, the illegal trade represented an opportunity for economic and political independence. From this point forward—and until the latter part of the nineteenth century—the population and prosperity of Havana grew in detriment of the under population and poor living conditions in Santiago de Cuba.

### **2.3.2 Changing Demographics and Racial Distinctions**

In addition to all other factors mentioned above, Haitian migration to Oriente also helped to distinguish the region from the west by contributing to the already unequal racial distribution of the island. According to Benjamin L. Lapidus, in “Stirring the Ajiaco: Changüí, Son, and The Haitian Connection,”<sup>49</sup> Haitian migration to the eastern region of Cuba took place in two major waves: the first, during the years following the Haitian revolution and the second in the twentieth century—in this section, however, I will only discuss the first.

According to Lapidus, at the beginning of the Haitian revolution in 1791, white planters, along with domestic slaves and agricultural laborers, began to flee the island of Hispaniola. While some chose to settle in New Orleans, others remained in the Caribbean, including Cuba. Between the years 1795 and 1805, more than twenty thousand people migrated to Oriente—among them, approximately twenty thousand non-whites. Shortly after the arrival of white planters, free blacks and mulattoes began arriving in large numbers and continued to do so throughout the nineteenth century. This large influx not only contributed to the demographics of

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<sup>49</sup> From Alfonso W. Quiroz’s *Cuban Counterpoints: The Legacy of Fernando Ortiz* (2005).



the region, but to its culture, as may be distinguished in the history of Cuban music, in particular the *son*,<sup>50</sup> but also the *tumba francesa*.

### **2.3.3. Oriente and Movements for Independence**

All of these elements, and those outlined previously, along with a population majority of color, contributed to Oriente's development as perhaps the most Cuban region in Cuba, less vulnerable to outside influences, and more committed to local and traditional ways of doing and being. It was also these elements that contributed to making Oriente the source and site of recurring revolutionary stirrings: generally unused to the influence and proximity of a controlling body of power, Orientals were particularly scornful of authority and were always ready to challenge it. Accordingly, it was precisely in Oriente that Cuba's principal revolutionary struggles originated, beginning with the Ten Year's War and the War of Independence through the rebellion led by Fidel Castro in the 1950s. (Pérez 12)

For the purpose of understanding how and why the representations of the Moor and the Arab in Martí reveal two very distinct paradigms (orientalism and/or identification), I propose considering how the place of Oriente in Cuban history begins to change with the *Grito de Yara* on October 10, 1868, rising to a more significant place that culminates in its central role in the 1959 Cuban Revolution. The Grito de Yara or Shout of Yara marks the beginning of the Ten's Year War, originally called the "Yara Revolution," taking its name from the first action (failed), the attack by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes on the town on Yara on October 11. Similarly, the "Grito de Baire" on February 24, 1895 takes place in the village of Baire, about 50 kilometers

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<sup>50</sup>Cuba's national musical form. It is regarded as coming from Oriente. According to one account, the son was taken to Havana from Oriente in 1909 by soldiers returning to the capital.

from Santiago de Cuba, and marks the start of the War of Independence, commemorating several simultaneous revolts on that date, one of them in the town of Baire. According to Peter Hulme,

Because of the revolutionary initiatives begun in its undeveloped and mountainous parts in 1868, and 1895, and in 1956, Oriente has become identified with revolutionary purity, an identification not hindered by the region being the birthplace of revolutionary protagonists, from Carlos Manuel de Céspedes to Fidel and Raúl Castro. (*Cuba's Wild East* 7)

It is also important to note for the purposes of making a connection between an East-West dichotomy in a general sense and the *oriente-occidente* dynamic that we find in Cuba that just before the outbreak of the Ten Year's War—and for the sake of facilitating governance and the implementation of security measures—the island was reorganized into two departments, Occidental and Oriental, with the Río Jobabo as the dividing line.<sup>51</sup> Sometime after, six provinces were established, the easternmost being originally called Santiago de Cuba until 1905, and Oriente thereafter until 1976.

As Oriente grew in the esteem of many Cubans, so did its population grow and show signs of revitalization. According to Louis Pérez in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, “between 1887 and 1899, years during which all of Cuba suffered a 10 percent population decline, Oriente experienced a 20 percent population increase: from 272,379 residents to 327,716.” This may in fact have been a result of the belief in the laxity of race relations in the region and the existence of opportunities for people of color.

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<sup>51</sup> Referenced in Peter Hulme's *Oriente: Cuba's Wild East*. From María del Carmen Barcia, Gloria García, and Eduardo Torres Cuevas, ed., *Las luchas por la independencia nacional y las transformaciones estructurales 1868-1898 (Instituto de Historia de Cuba, Historia de Cuba, vol.11)*, Havana: Editora Política, 1996, p.8. The latest administrative reorganization has divided the island into 15 provinces and 168 municipalities, including the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud.

As one may expect, however, regional significance rises and decreases based on particulars that ultimately have to do with the construction of a national identity, with the capital traditionally representing the varied interests of the nation. It is only when those interests change or are betrayed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, that attitudes change. This is true of attitudes toward Oriente which, at various times—and for reasons outlined earlier—has been regarded both inside and outside of the island, as emblematic of backwardness and a “darker” Cuba. As Hulme explains,

[...] in colonial contexts, where the nation exists only in embryo, the capital is often the place where those interests are seen by proto-nationalist groups as being betrayed. So, for example, Havana was where the Spanish Captain General and his administrative apparatus was located until 1898 and was therefore the place most easily associated with foreign interests. In 1868 the insurgent leader and president Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and his successor Salvador Cisneros Betancourt operated in *oriental* places, as did José Martí and Antonio Maceo in the 1890s, and Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in the 1950s. These places then become symbolic of national aspirations and, when those aspirations are fulfilled, of national achievement: hence the resonance of place names such as Yara, Baraguá, Dos Ríos, and Moncada, all of which are in Oriente [...]

In many ways, the Romantic topos that ascribes a particular essence to a region is at play in the association of Oriente with the origin and demise of many of its historical figures; however, the topos finds its anti-colonial expression during the independence movements. It is precisely at this juncture that Martí’s political discourse seems to profit from the creation of a symbolic link between Oriente and Orient. What does it mean, then, for Martí to (as Hulme has said) operate in

*oriental* places? In Hulme's case, the significance of this is simply that Martí speaks against foreign interests, but there seems to be more to this, in light of our discussion on the Moor; and that is Martí's ability to reach a broader historical and political spectrum through the metonymy that allows for the substitution of Oriente with the Orient. If Martí—and he does—operate in oriental spaces, it is because he “operates” in opposition to the colonial power in Havana, undermining and “attacking” both with words and action from a symbolic east (of Cuba); but also because of the interest—early and consistent throughout his life—in the Arab world.

#### **2.3.4. Santiago de Cuba and Santiago Matamoros**

The symbolic importance of Oriente in our discussion of Martí's representation of the Moor within both an orientalist and identification paradigm seems to amplify with the consideration of the founding of the island's first capital in Santiago de Cuba and the role of its patron and namesake Santiago Matamoros (Saint James, the Moor Slayer). Indeed, even a short discussion on Oriente (in relation to the figure of the Moor) wouldn't be complete without a consideration of Santiago de Cuba's patron saint and its role in the colonial schema.

In the years following the conquest, the multicultural nature of the populations and exchanges in the Americas including between the colony and the colonial power, coupled with the inequitable distribution of power in the sociopolitical colonial structures, ensured that new behaviors and interpretations surrounding the transported imagery of Santiago would evolve. As scholars have noted, the image of Santiago, in its different depictions, embodies Spain's imperial project. This patronymic—which many cities in the New World carry—represents the indisputable seal of Spain and the search for spiritual unity in a New World context.

Santiago de Cuba is the second city in America to have been baptized with the name—Santiago de los Caballeros in the island of Española was the first. Historical records indicate, however, that by the time Diego Velázquez arrived to the region in the southeastern end of the island, its port was already known by the name of Santiago. What is certain is that Santiago was the name with which Velázquez, in 1515—inspired by the order to which his Catholic Excellency Fernando I belonged and also because of the popularity that the patron saint had acquired during the long and arduous Reconquista—founded the village-capital. Velázquez himself had been baptized with one of the manifestations of the patron and felt a special devotion toward him.<sup>52</sup>

The Saint, Spanish legend tells, appeared to Ramiro, King of Asturias and his troops at Clavijo in 844 A.D, in the battle against the Moors. Thus, Saint James is also known as Santiago Matamoros, which literally means, “Moor-killer.” He is represented riding a white horse, brandishing a sword or staff, waving a banner and trampling a Moor. His iconography also shows him trampling a devil or its counterparts, an enormous viper or dragon. Santiago was the preferred religious representation of the first conquerors of the New World; in their eyes, the conquest of America was a continuation of that other battle against the Moors: Santiago was the equestrian warrior ever ready to join the battle against the infidels and—in the Americas—against the Amerindians. Although Santiago has been represented in at least three distinct manners (apostle, pilgrim, or warrior), in the Americas his representation as warrior in combat with the infidel (in whatever form it takes, depending of place and circumstance) far outnumbers his other manifestations (Miller 64). Given the violent nature and Reconquista character of

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<sup>52</sup> From Hortensia Pichardo, *Documentos para la Historia de Cuba*, Vol. I, pp. 76-82. Quoted in Olga Portuondo Zúñiga’s *Santiago en la intimidad del santiaguero*. Universidad de Oriente. Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, 2000.

Spanish colonization, it falls to reason that it is the representation of the Saint as warrior that is most commonly found in the Americas. According to Miller,

The transference of the mentality of the Reconquista to the American arena justified the military struggle with and the eventual conquest of a people of different practices and spiritual traditions. The protectors of the faith were obliged to convert or vanquish the *other*. (66)

As such, the legend of Saint James was carried to Latin America by the Spanish conquerors from the beginning of colonization where he was invoked in the conquest of the indigenous peoples. Thus, in Andean art, for example, he is often depicted trampling Indians, and is known as Santiago Mataindio, “Indian-killer.”

After arrival in the New World, however, Santiago continues to adapt to his New World context, eventually evolving to join fights and challenges in battle that reflect the new space and time he now occupies. It is not surprising, thus, that Illapa the god of thunder of the Peruvian mountain communities should be associated with Santiago, as well as with the Chunchos, their traditional enemies. Not even, “no matter how paradoxical it may seem, that he should join the American armies and appear in the nineteenth century against the Spaniards” (64). In Cuba, Santiago becomes one of the clearest and earliest representations of syncretism on the island. Far removed from Spain, but also from the center of colonial power in Havana, Santiago de Cuba becomes the ideal site for a reconsideration of Santiago Matamoros’s symbolic significance. While early representations of Santiago or his invocation in Cuban literature, for example, reveal the mutual interests of the island and the colony during the first centuries after the conquest<sup>53</sup>, as

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<sup>53</sup> Spanish colonization in the Americas secured the constant aggression from other European nations and the new settlers will have to come face to face with pirates, corsairs, and filibusterers. Traditionally, the call to combat constituted a call on the patron saint. In Silvestre de Balboa’s seventeenth-century epic, *Espejo de Paciencia*,

Oriente exhibited its rebellious nature against the Spanish crown later in Cuban history, so did Santiago Matamoros come to mean something very different than subjugation to Spanish rule. In spite of efforts by local parochial authorities to instill a devotion for the Apostle<sup>54</sup> in the people of the region, devotion to Santiago never really materialized. Instead, the día de Santiago Apóstol, Santo Patrón (Day of Santiago, Patron Saint), celebrated on July 25<sup>th</sup> and funded by local Spanish authorities became an opportunity for rebellion and *cimarronaje* (runaway, as *cimarrones*), such was the case in 1731. It was in this way that those who were oppressed (slaves, population of color) rebelled against colonial despotism, the stress of which was linked to the yearly celebrations of the Saint's birthday. In one way or another, the cult to Saint did not evolve in the way colonial religious authorities and governmental bodies would have liked. Both free Blacks and slaves equated the representation of Santiago—traditionally depicted on horseback with a raised sword—with Ogún Guerrero (yielding a machete) from the pantheon of Cuban Santería (Bettelheim, 183). According to José Millet, in *El rostro de Santiago Apóstol en Cuba*,

De modo más explícito: Ogún se identifica más claramente con el patrón de España debido a su condición de guerrero, tal como fue recibido desde el arranque mismo de la conquista y se extendiera a lo largo del proceso de la colonización de la Isla. Súmese al hecho de que, en nombre de este Apóstol, fue fundado primero el puerto y luego la villa que lleva su nombre devenida desde aquellos primeros

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Balboa, inspired by the kidnapping of Obispo Juan de las Cabezas Altamirano in 1604 by the French captain Ferrer or Girón, has the personages in his poem sound the alarm and call to battle, Santiago, cierra España! Santiago, close Spain! A phrase inherited from the battles against the Moors. The episode exemplifies a moment in the history of Spanish colonialism on the island when the interest of the colony were shared by sectors of its population.

<sup>54</sup> It was precisely in this way that Juan Emilio Giro, a twentieth-century painter from Santiago wanted to see it. Found today in the Emilio Bacardí Museum in Santiago the Cuba, the painting—which recreates the first moments of the colonizing venture in the capital of the island Fernandina (Cuba) reveals the central role played by the apostle in the consolidation of colonial power in the region.

tiempos en capital de la colonia y segunda ciudad en importancia del país en el presente. Como se estudia en un artículo de este libro, no se trató de la mera designación del santo patrón, sino de su influjo en la subjetividad de sus habitantes, hasta el punto en que generó en ellos un orgullo de ser hijos de la ciudad y un profundo sentimiento de arraigo.<sup>55</sup>

In the 1790s, taking into consideration the events of the Haitian Revolution and the state of rebellion of the locals since 1781, celebrations were suspended during the days of San Juan, San Pedro, Santiago, and Santa Ana. Later, in the 1840s, as a consciousness of *lo cubano* developed and colonial security felt threatened, local authorities went through great lengths to request the manifestation of continued loyalty to the crown. The traditional celebrations of Santiago on July 24 and 25 (*mamarrachos*, as carnivals are called in Santiago) took more official proportions at a time when *santiagueros*<sup>56</sup> interests fell further and further away from the interests of the colony. By mid to late nineteenth century *santiagueros* could no longer feel connected to an image that symbolized imperial domination and the vanquishing of the other. As such, only the image of the warrior on his horse came to be associated with the region's rebellious nature. It should not be lost on the reader that the equestrian image of Santiago the Warrior resonates with Latin American (national martyrs) iconography but, most significantly, with Martí's own interest in such imagery (discussed later) and the image of his last day in battle at Dos Rios, Oriente. In order to understand the suggested connections between Oriente's history and Martí's representations of the Moor and Arab elements within an identification paradigm, we now turn to the important specifics of his interest in the Arab world.

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<sup>55</sup> Fundación Eugenio Granell, 1999.

<sup>56</sup> Natives of Santiago de Cuba.



## 2.4 Martí and the Arabs

Little has been said—and much less written—about Martí’s interest in the Arab world, although the evidence of such interest has never been far from the reader. Martí’s evocation of a recurring symbology that identifies specific values (such as freedom and courage, for instance) with the Arab world has never received scholarly attention, except in brief and general terms. Even articles, including José Cantón Navarro’s “Los pueblos árabes en la pupila de Martí”<sup>57</sup> or Abdesalam Azougarh’s “Martí Orientalista” that address the issue are limited to an inventory of poetic references and do little to address the contradictions therein. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that in order to understand how the Arab Orient figures in Martí’s world, it is imperative to understand how it figures in Cuba in the nineteenth century; and how, as I argue in this chapter, the social, political, and cultural context of the island (which includes both local and foreign elements) impact those representations. Navarro is correct in reminding us, however, that in each of the twenty-eight volumes—without exception—that make up Martí’s *Complete Works* one may find pages dedicated to Arab themes.

What sets Martí’s representations of the Moor and Arab themes apart from Villaverde’s decidedly orientalist scenes and Black Legend mode of representation (discussed in Chapter 1) is the early and fundamental role that the Arab world plays in the development of both his aesthetic and political ethos. The figure of the Moor and a keen interest in Arab politics were present in Martí from his first to his last works. It may be that, as Emilio de Armas contends, Martí sought “al mundo cultural de los pueblos “no-blancos”—marginados del concepto de cultura propio de

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<sup>57</sup> The article was published in two editions, the first in 1995, funded by the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y la Unión Árabe de Cuba, which awarded the article the prize Abdala 1991. The second was edited by the Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos, on the occasion of the First Regional Encounter of Solidarity with Cuba, celebrated in Damascus, Syria, in 2009. Both editions were accompanied by Arab translations of the text.

la Europa colonialista—en busca de una tradición que su insoslayable visión política reconocía como propia.<sup>58</sup>”

Even before the publication of *Ismaelillo* in 1882, Martí had shown a marked interest for the Arab world; his connection of Nubian independence and Cuban struggles against Spanish colonial rule in his dramatic poem (political allegory), *Abdala* (1869) written before Martí was 16 years old is evidence of such interest. *Abdala* was published on January 23, 1869 in Martí’s own newspaper *La Patria Libre*. In it, Martí celebrates the revolutionaries of the 1868 independence movement (Grito de Yara, discussed earlier) and gives the reader an anticipated glimpse of his own life. *Abdala* marks the beginning of the evolution of Martí’s political writing and, with it, life-time identification with the figure of the Moor and the Arab world. As the young Martí tells his readers in his dedication, *Abdala* was “escrito expresamente para la Patria” [written expressly for the Nation]. *Abdala* constitutes a commitment made to the nation through the words and actions of Abdala (literally, God’s slave in Arabic) a young Arab warrior in the African desert.

The poem is made up of eight short scenes and begins with the Senator (one of the few characters in the piece) informing Abdala, Captain of the Nubian army, of the size and force of the enemy troops. Abdala responds with valor and enthusiasm and, nearing the end of Scene I, he exclaims:

En la Nubia nacidos,  
por la Nubia Morir sabemos: Hijos de la patria,  
Por ella moriremos, y el suspiro  
Que de mis labios postrimeros salga,

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<sup>58</sup> “El Ismaelillo: Versos ‘unos y sinceros’...” (quoted in Enrico Mario Santi’s *Escritura y Tradición*, p. 54)

Para Nubia será, que para Nubia  
Nuestra fuerza y valor fueron creados.

And later,

¡Por fin potente mi robusto brazo  
Puede blandir la dura cimitarra,  
Y mi noble corcel volar ya puede ligero  
Entre el fragor de la batalla!  
Por fin mi frente se orlará de gloria;  
Seré quien libre a mi angustiada patria,  
Y quien lo arranque al opresor del pueblo  
Que empieza a destrozar entre sus garras! (20)

The connection between Abdala's words and Martí's patriotic verses later in his life is clear, as is the echo of Santiago Matamoros (of reversed symbolic value) and the battle in La Demajagua<sup>59</sup> (Oriente) created by the young Arab warrior on his horse, brandishing a scimitar. The representation of the Arab figure as a politically engaged body anticipates the ways in which the Moor and the Arab world figure in Martí's mature political discourse. As such, it may not come as a surprise to discover that included in the list of people Martí admired during his lifetime was Algerian freedom fighter and poet Abdel Kader, in whom the Cuban national hero must have seen his own reflection: Abdel Kader was a thin man of small stature, whose equestrian figure and poetic works cannot help but remind us of Martí, as both a man of letters and a man of action—however unaccustomed the Cuban martyr was to the battlefield. In terms of a discursive practice and continued political consciousness, his interests are confirmed by texts, including the

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<sup>59</sup> From his farm, La Demajagua, landowner and slave-owner Carlos Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves and declared war on the Spanish crown, which begins with the historic speech known as the Grito de Yara (Cry of Yara).

series “La revuelta en Egipto,” published in *La Opinión de Caracas*, October 10, 1881: 14, 113-120), or later texts, including “Los Moros en España,” (discussed later in this chapter) among others.

With the exceptions of *Abdala* and *Ismaelillo*, however, Martí’s poetic work ascribes to a strictly orientalist paradigm; so much so that his descriptions of French orientalist paintings (discussed in the following section) found in his *cuaderno de apuntes* [notebook] and recorded during his visit to the Louvre Museum while in Paris are taken for a faithful rendering of actual North African scenes and not for what perhaps even the painters themselves knew them to be: fantasies laden with eroticism. In the following section, I discuss Martí’s orientalist writing and the suggested literary connection between Martí and the French Orientalists.

## **2.5 Martí and French Orientalists**

The influence of French Orientalism or a French Orientalist aesthetic in conjunction with Martí’s own cosmopolitanism and socio-political interest, and other factors discussed earlier, including changing attitudes toward slavery, Arab immigration to the island, the rising importance of Oriente in the wars for independence, as well as Martí’s own historical sensibilities contribute to the way the Moor and the Arab figure are represented in Martí in both an orientalist paradigm and an identification mode of representation. In this section, then, I discuss the ways in which a French orientalist aesthetic contributes to Martí’s representation of Arab themes in orientalist terms.

While Martí's exile in Spain (1871-1873)<sup>60</sup> exposed him to the country's glorious Arab past, according to Quesada y Miranda, in *Martí, Periodista*, it is clear that the French representation of Moorish subjects and themes left a mark (if only aesthetic in nature) on the Cuban writer:

Lejos del alegre ruido capitalino, de las evocaciones de un glorioso pasado histórico, ante los cuadros en los callados salones del Louvre y el Museo Luxemburgo, fué donde sintió los latidos de aquella nación de arte y de belleza, y toda la fuerza y el encanto misterioso de su genio inagotable, que aprisionó con mano trémula de emoción y gozo estético con estas líneas en su libro de apuntes: “Los asuntos morunos han inspirado desnudos hermosos a Gérôme, en “Le bain maure”, cuya mujer revela ya cómo marchitan las caricias ardientes del sultán; en “Un marché d’esclaves”, donde brilla con todo su pastoso relieve, y visible durez, la belleza no tocada,--en “La toilette aun bain”, donde el pintor ha desafiado bravamente la convención, venciendo con la verdad de aquellos músculos, y la realidad de aquellas carnes, y la sencillez de aquella hermosura,--la situación excesivamente humana, y sobrada natural de la abandonada mora;--en todas estas ricas telas,--sobresale Gérome por la lisura de las carnes, fidelidad de la copia, e irreprochable redondez de las figuras. Sobresalen estos méritos en La Bacchante; mujer amplia y robusta, menos clásica ya, y más viva y original que la Phyrnea.

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<sup>60</sup> Martí was deported to Spain in 1871, where he published his first major political treatise, *El Presidio Político en Cuba* that same year and *La República Española ante la Revolución Cubana* in 1873, leaving Spain soon after and traveling first through Paris before settling in Mexico in 1875.

*Los asuntos morunos* or “moorish issues” would preoccupy Martí throughout his life, in terms of a pre-modernist aesthetic, as well as in terms of its historical and political currency. In his article, *Martí orientalista*, Azougarh asserts that Spanish-American modernists—except for a few cases—not only discovered the Orient through France, but inherited the same vision, along with clichés and stereotypes that corresponded to a Parisian Orient, which was, in fact, as close as the French colonization of North Africa, in contemporary terms, and as anachronistic as *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*<sup>61</sup>. Readings and images, such as those Martí had the opportunity to admire in Paris museums, nurtured Martí’s poetic imagination. As Ivan A. Schulman contends, in *Sobre los orientalismos del modernismo hispanoamericano*, alongside the historico-political writings on the región, “*también hallamos en la vasta obra de Martí motivos orientales de índole decorativa, como las construcciones metafóricas de Lucía Jerez, [y] el empleo frecuente del símbolo “caballo árabe”* (39). Consequently, much like the figure of the Moor in French orientalist constructions, Martí’s “Moor,” as we find him or her in his poetic work, is an object of desire, whether that desire is in the form of a pearl, a Spanish dancer with the eyes of a *treacherous moor*, hashish or a noble Arab on his steed. In *Arabe*, for instance, Martí evokes the image of an Arab on his horse, recalling not only the iconography of Santiago Matamoros discussed in the previous section, but also the long-lasting Western fascination (French, in particular<sup>62</sup>) with Arab horsemanship. Memorably portrayed by Delacroix, Fromentin and Gerome, the romantic subject of the Arab cavalier was a favorite among 19<sup>th</sup> century artists, French in particular who, inspired by their voyages to the Near East, sought to recreate on canvas what they had seen in their travels. Faced with the obstacle of distance and cultural

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<sup>61</sup> In addition, there was the marked influence of the orientalism of writers, such as Hugo, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Flaubert, Nerval, Loti and others.

<sup>62</sup> See paintings by Fromentin, Delacroix, Gerome, Géricault, Chassériau, and Moreau.

misunderstanding, their artistic production became what Roger Benjamin, Co-ordinating curator and editor of the first exhibition on the theme of Orientalism, held in Australia and New Zeland in 1997, calls an “Oriental mirage,”<sup>63</sup> a metaphor for the way artists who traveled to the Near East gained only an unstable view of their subject. In Martí’s work, both his literary production and his political discourses, this “instability”—which, in the case of Orientalism meant an ethnocentric perspective—is expressed in the ambivalent relationship between Martí and the Arab world.

While the “Orient” becomes an attractive new aesthetic, physical encounters with places, such as the Alhambra in Spain, and Martí’s own voracious appetite for politics allowed him a more nuanced understanding of the Arab world. Martí’s double vision thus becomes a first moment of ambivalence in Cuban letters toward a North African “Orient.” Exotic on the one hand and a model of revolutionary nationalisms on the other, North Africa provides both a link to a colonial past and a course away from it—it is, in fact, the bridge that both separates and unites Cuba to its past and its future. In *Martí Orientalista*, Azougarh reminds us that orientalist descriptions serve to alienate and make strange the image of the other, thus creating an imaginary distance between East and West:

La visión de Oriente se propone como actual, e incluso niega el presente Oriente en beneficio de su pasado. Hablar también de la realidad coetánea de Oriente, como veremos más adelante en Martí, equivalía a hacer una desmitificación y una desconstrucción del mundo de referencias que constituye el discurso orientalista.

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<sup>63</sup> In “From Delacroix to Klee (1997), Roger Benjamin defines mirage in the following manner: “A mirage is an optical phenomenon of the desert, whereby light refracted through layers of super-heated air produces a reflection of the blue sky on the sandy surface, which thus appears as an illusory sheet of water. Derived from the French word for mirroring or reflection, ‘mirage’ is a properly Orientalist term, taken up during the Napoleonic era to describe a ‘phenomenon...which [the French] army had daily opportunities of seeing, in their march through the desserts of Egypt.” (7)

Oriente no interesa como tal, sino ha sido “orientalizado.” En esta evasión, lo que suele interesar no es la cultura o la historia orientales, sino ese espacio más allá de la historia. (13-14)

The opposite is true of the identification paradigm that—along with a strictly orientalist view—we also find in Martí. Within the identification paradigm that we will find in Martí’s political discourse the Moor and, by extension, the Arab world, is represented as deliberative and purposive agents capable of formulating their own projects. Ultimately, Martí struggles to reconcile the historical urgency of what is taking place in North Africa in the 1880s and its possible meaning to Cuban struggles against Spain (particularly in Oriente) with the Arab as an ornamental figure. This impasse, then, is enacted in the pages of *Ismaelillo*, the collection of poems that Martí writes to his only son and publishes while living in New York in 1882.

## **2.6 *Ismaelillo*: Orientalism or Identification?**

Written in 1881, *Ismaelillo* is Martí’s first published book of poetry. It consists of fifteen poems dedicated to his absent son, José Francisco, born in 1878. Unlike the texts of *La Edad de Oro*, a short-lived journal for children published in New York in 1889, *Ismaelillo* (also published in New York), was not written for children, but tells of one child in particular, namely the son Martí chooses to call Ismael. It is a book, as Cathy L. Jade contends, that “captures the pure, spontaneous joys of parenthood as well as Martí’s hopes for his son and for the future, which come together in the sense of mission and purpose that he aspires to pass on” (26). It is also a book that, as numerous critics have noted, opened the space for the renovation of Latin American letters, a movement later known as Modernismo. Pedro Enríquez Ureña, for instance, would say



that Martí's use neologisms and archaisms in *Ismaelillo* constitutes a new sound, a sensibility and subtlety unknown to Latin American poetry until then.

While *Ismaelillo* cannot be said to represent a determining shift in Martí's representation of Arab themes, it becomes the scene wherein the contradiction between Martí's political and literary sensibilities (in respect to the Arab figure) battle it out. As some critics have argued, Martí's literary orientalism is, among other things, a convention of his time: the exotic themes and descriptions that permeate literature in the nineteenth century, and the Romantic period in particular, from Goethe, Chateaubriand, Larra, Scott, Becquer, Gautier, Nerval, Flaubert, Tablada and contemporary and fellow Cuban Julian del Casal. However, while the Orient becomes a mere ornamental figure in the works of these others, in Martí's case, his identification with the figure of the Moor and his representations of Arab themes are such that—given his political interests and writings on the subject, as well as all of the local and foreign elements discussed in this chapter—it ultimately constitutes a way of engaging with the reality of the island and the world beyond its shores. His work represents, to quote Cinto Vitier, “las nupcias con la realidad”<sup>64</sup> [a marriage to reality]. What we find in *Ismaelillo* is the encounter between Martí's literary spirit (engaged in the images and themes of the time), and Martí's political spirit (committed to the liberation of Cuba from Spain). In this work, then, orientalism<sup>65</sup> coexists with yet another relationship with the figure of the Moor and the Arab that is based on the identification of commonality: colonial condition and a shared past vial colonial Spain. While in the first case (orientalist mode of representation), the Arab figure (often represented as a Moor) contributes to the representation of a collection of the writer's personal symbols and ideals, such

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<sup>64</sup> *Lo cubano en la poesía* (Santa Clara: Universidad Central de las Villas, 1958), p. 242.

<sup>65</sup> In particular, orientalism as nothing more than a literary device capable of representing numerous things, from the escapism of Julian del Casal to the erotic fantasies of *Salammbô*.

as freedom, in the second case (identification mode of representation), the Arab figure constitutes an agent of change capable of purposive action. The encounter between the two explains the contradictions regarding the representation of the Orient we find in *Ismaelillo*. These contradictions are consistent with other opposing images also found in the text, including, for instance, the associative pairs “diablo-ángel” [devil-angel] (“Musa Traviesa”) and “estrellas-negras” [black-stars] (“Príncipe Enano”). In order to show the ways in which the two paradigms (orientalism and identification) interact, I will discuss one of the poems in the collection, “Musa traviesa.” But first, and in light of our discussion on the Moor and Arab elements in Martí’s work, I propose pausing to discuss the title of the work itself and a possible reading of it.

### **2.6.1. Ismaelillo, Arab!**

Why *Ismaelillo*? In his *Cuaderno de Apuntes* (1881), Martí writes, “Porque es necesario que ese hijo mio, sobre todas las cosas de la tierra, y a par de las del cielo, y sobre las del cielo!, amado—ese hijo mio a quien no hemos de llamar José sino Ismael—no sufra lo que yo he sufrido.” [Because it is necessary that above everything on earth and like everything in heaven, above those in heaven! Beloved—that son of mine who we will not call José but Ishmael—doesn’t suffer what I have suffered.] As Cintio Vitier suggests, Martí is probably referring to suffering from incomprehension, loneliness, and lack of love—understandable emotions, if one considers the circumstances surrounding the creation of the poems themselves.

Martí was only twenty-eight years old when he arrived in Venezuela in 1881, following the failure of the second war of independence, known as La Guerra Chiquita, his involvement in which cost him a second period of incarceration in Cuba and his exile in Spain and the United States. In October of that same year, unhappy with their economic situation and the sacrifices

asked of her (as the wife of a man whose real marriage vows were to his country), Carmen Sayas Bazán had returned to Cuba, taking their young son (almost two years old) with her. The departure of his wife and son left Martí in a state of despair. Once in Caracas, however, Martí quickly became acclimated with various social and political commitments, including the founding of the *Revista Venezolana*. Feeling hopeful about the months ahead, he asked his wife and son to come meet him in Caracas; however, Carmen did not leave Cuba—the right decision at the time, given that Martí is soon after forced to leave Venezuela and return to New York (*Temas Martianos* 142). It was precisely under these circumstances—and the burden of his political and personal reality—that Martí wrote the verses that make up his *Ismaelillo*.

While various theories exist that explain the name of the collection, such explanations fail to convince the moment that they don't take into consideration the relationship between Martí's choice in title and his interest in the Arab world. It is logical to suppose that there is a direct relationship between the name Ishmael and the biblical character. It is also logical to assume that Martí's choice has also something to do with the association between Arabs and Ishmael. As Arab legend and Judeo-Christian belief contend, Ishmael, the father of all Arabs, was the son of Abraham and the Egyptian slave Hagar. When Sarah, Abraham's wife, discovered that Hagar was with child, she sent her into exile. In the desert, Hagar was alone and desperately unhappy, but the Lord heard her affliction and sent a messenger to inform her of what He intended to do her child:

I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude...Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael (God shall hear); because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a free man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand

against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. (Genesis 16:10-12)

The biblical story and the direct connection between Ishmael and Arab culture suggest the symbolic meaning of the title of the collection, which is also the name Martí gives his son. The name itself, the diminutive *Ismaelillo* (Little Ishmael), also a figure of endearment, makes of Martí a sort of Ishmael, called to battle (“his hand [...] against every man, and every man’s hand against him”), sacrificing himself for the good of “all his brethren.” *Ismaelillo*, then, the son and heir of Ishmael is both called to follow in the footsteps of his father and to possibly meet the same heroic end (already presaged in Martí’s work).

It is instructive to note, for the purpose of establishing connections to earlier discussions (in this chapter), that Martí’s interest in the Romantic subject of the Arab cavalier is retaken in the pages of *Ismaelillo*. The equestrian image of the warrior is ever present in the poetic description of the son as “ginetuelo” (“Mi caballero”), in the various games in which father and son engage, and in the numerous words (crines, cascos, espuelas, etc.) that remit the reader to the image of the child-warrior on horseback—redeemer of the father who, as the poetic voice tells us, is “hijo de [su] hijo” [son of his son]—“el [lo] rehace” [he makes him anew]. The son, then, is both the force that keeps the father from his duty and the force that incites him to battle. While in poems like “Príncipe enano” (the poem that introduces the collection) the child would like the father to return to battle (“que a luchar vuelva”), the reader cannot help (the poet is well aware of this relationship himself) but associate the game between father and son to the battle taking place (and in which Martí’s role is fundamental) on Cuban soil, with much more serious and possibly permanent consequences.

For Martí, in whose *Obras Completas* may be found approximately three-hundred references to the Arabs and their culture, the choice in title of a collection for and about his son should not be taken as arbitrary. In fact, as Martí himself confessed in a letter to a friend,<sup>66</sup> *Ismaelillo* “is the romance of [his] love affair with [his] son.” One may say, then, given the proliferation of Arab-related images and words, the title, and the direct reference to his son as “Arabe,” that *Ismaelillo* also resonates with the *novelas moriscas*<sup>67</sup> [Moorish novels] and *novelas de caballerías* [romances of chivalry in prose] of sixteen-century Spain, relevant traces of which persist in nineteenth century European romanticism. Consistent with the stylistic and thematic characteristics of these genres are the idealization of the beloved, the chivalric images, the collaboration (implicit in this case) and identification between Moors and Christians, and love as the manifestation of a generous spirit, among other things. In fact, *Ismaelillo* constitutes the idealization of the beloved (the son, in this case) through which the need to find a political expression may be satiated—as in the *novelas moriscas*, the background is always real and historical.<sup>68</sup>

To further underscore the importance of the relationship *Ismaelillo*-Arab, I would like to also point out that the original version of *Ismaelillo* is accompanied by illustrations (chosen by the poet himself) that correspond to Arab elements: the first vignette represents the sphinx of

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<sup>66</sup> In a letter to his friend Charles Dana, editor of the *The Sun*: “[*Ismaelillo*] is the romance of my love affair with my son; one gets so tired of Reading so many romances about love affairs with women.” [Translated by Gustavo Pellón]. The letter is quoted by Gonzalo de Quesada y Miranda in his article “¿Como escribió Martí su *Ismaelillo*?” *Bohemia*: 29 de enero de 1933. De Quesada y Miranda’s versión is a translation into Spanish of Martí’s original letter written in French to Dana: “es le romance de mis amores con mi hijo; uno se cansa de leer tantos romances de amores con mujeres.”

[http://www.bohemia.cubaweb.cu/dossiers/historia/josemarti/marti\\_quesada.htm](http://www.bohemia.cubaweb.cu/dossiers/historia/josemarti/marti_quesada.htm)

<sup>67</sup> The Moorish romance is exemplified by the *Historia del Abencerraje y la hermosa Jarifa*, included in the 1551 edition of *La Diana*. Popular Moorish romances during the 16<sup>th</sup> century were interpolated into other texts, as as the story of the captive, known as “The Captive’s Tale” in Cervantes’s *Don Quijote, Part I*.

<sup>68</sup> See Lama, V. de, y Peral Vega, E., “Introducción” a *El Abencerraje y la hermosa Jarifa*,” Editorial Castalia, Madrid, 2000.

Memphis, the other represents a desert scene with palm trees and a woman, while the illustration that accompanies “Musa traviesa” is made up of a construction in the *mudéjar* style, flanked on the left by palm trees and, in the foreground, two camels. It is interesting to note that the palm tree (the Royal palm tree, in the Cuban case) is also an element of national pride. The palm tree, in this sense, becomes an associative device that allows for the subtle or semi-invisible chain of association or identification between *those* palm trees (the ones that belong to the illustration) and the ones that belong to the Cuban rural landscape and national picture. This last illustration appropriately introduces the focus of our study in this section, “Musa traviesa,” itself one of the richest examples of the underlying ambivalence that characterizes Martí’s representation of the Moor at this time.

### **2.6.2. Musa Traviesa**

“And ‘mid this tumult Kubla heard from far / Ancestral voices prophesying war,” read two lines of verse from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem “Kubla Khan.” According to the poem’s preface, published in 1816 in *Christabel, Kubla Khan, and the Pains of Sleep*, Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” was conceived during an opium-induced dream, after reading a work describing Xanadu, the summer place of the Mongol ruler and Emperor of China Kublai Khan. Immediately after waking, Coleridge proceeded to copy the poem onto paper, but was inopportunately interrupted by a man from Porlock. A comparable interruption accompanies the act of writing in Martí’s “Musa traviesa,” the fifth poem in *Ismaelillo* and perhaps the most enigmatic of all fifteen poems for the exotic images it offers the reader.

As a Cuban writer from the latter half of the nineteenth century, Martí had admired writers like Coleridge; however, any comparison between the English writer and Martí are, at

this time, beyond the scope of my discussion on the Moor. What I seek to highlight by introducing this section with two lines from “Kubla Khan” and the story of the man from Porlock is the element of the dream in Martí’s poem, as well as the son’s role who, like the man from Porlock, interrupts the writer’s work. One of the differences between Coleridge’s poem and Martí is that the “call to war” in Martí’s poem—while one of the dream elements in Coleridge’s—does not belong entirely to the dream, but spills over into the waking moment. However playful the poetic scene that will ensue will propose to be, the historical context surrounding the creation of the poem, as well as Martí’s own political and personal preoccupations and commitments burden the scene with the gravity of reality. In this section, then, I argue that the ambivalence between an orientalist paradigm and an identification paradigm we find in the poem corresponds to a shift in sensibility and the demands of the historical, personal and political context surrounding the life of Martí.

“¿Mi musa?” asks the poetic voice, “Es un diablillo / con alas de ángel” [My muse? It’s a little devil / with angel wings]. With these first two lines, the poet ushers in a world of contradictions. From this moment forward, within the world of the poem, anything is possible, as the unpredictability that characterizes the double identity or duality of the child makes room for chaos. The poem, a travel narrative of sorts, opens up with the description of the father’s dreams, which are, the poetic voice tells us, “sueños graves” [serious or heavy dreams]. In his dreams, the father is on horseback. He tells us,

Yo suelo, caballero  
En sueños graves,  
Cabalgar horas luengas  
Sobre los aires.

Me entro en nubes rosadas,  
Bajo a hondos mares,  
Y en los senos eternos  
Hago viajes.

The dream allows the father to enter the world of imagination and fantasy, a world also laden with sensuality, as the lines above reveal. The rhetorical question that soon follows, “¿Qué el mundo fragil? [The world is fragile?] is answered with another question “Pues ¿no saben los hombres / Qué encargo traen?” [Don’t men know / what their path is?]. The poetic voice answers both questions by suggesting a list of the acceptable actions that men must take:

Rasgarse el bravo pecho,  
Vaciar su sangre,  
Y andar, andar heridos  
Muy largo valle,  
Roto el cuerpo en harapos,  
Los piés en carne,  
Hasta dar sonriendo  
—¡Nó en tierra!—exámenes!

What we find in the lines above is the characterization of the figure of the warrior, who sacrifices himself for “un mundo frágil” [a fragile world] and follows his destiny or his “encargo” [path] to the end. However, the warrior (up until this point in the poem) only exists in the dream and belongs to the father’s imagination. Once the dream-voyage ends, the writer is moved to tell the story. The poetic voice then reveals to the reader that the paper upon which he will write down the story of his travels is yellow. The color yellow is a chromatic symbol that for Martí, Ivan A.



Schulman confirms, is associated with decadence, death, melancholy or moral impurity (484).<sup>69</sup> Also a symbol of self-indulgence and excess, the color yellow inevitably accompanies the joy experienced by the act of writing; and it is contrasted to the light of the sun that follows the child into the room. The door opens and the act of writing is interrupted. The child brings sunlight and fresh air with him, rescuing the father from the possibility of falling yet again into the vertiginous world of the dream:

Suavemente la puerta  
Del cuarto se abre,  
Y éntrase á él gozosos  
Luz, risas, aire.  
Al par da el sol en mi alma  
Y en los cristales:  
¡Por la puerta se ha entrado  
Mi diablo ángel!

The father then asks:

¿Qué fué de aquellos sueños,  
De mi viaje,  
Del papel amarillo,  
Del llanto suave?  
Cual si de mariposas  
Tras gran combate  
Volaran alas de oro

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<sup>69</sup> Ivan A. Schulman, *Símbolo y color en la obra de José Martí* (Madrid, 1960).

Por tierra y aire,  
Así vuelan las hojas  
Dó cuento el trance.

The child introduces confusion, chaos, and uncertainty into the room. The confidence that the writer seems to have experienced during the dream act and the path the voyager-dreamer is to follow disappear the moment the door opens and the “diablo angel” enters the scene.

The old world order to which the father belongs, symbolized by the color yellow also includes the ornamental figure of the Arab cloth or “pañó árabe,” upon which the dream seems to have rested. The child, the poetic voice tells us, “Hala acá el travesuelo / mi paño árabe ; / Allá monta en el lomo / De un incunable;” [Here, he pulls the Arab cloth / There, he rides astride an old volume]. The “pañó árabe” or Arab cloth alludes to a sort of drifting magic carpet, the evidence for which comes in the second verse cited earlier: “Yo suelo, caballero / En sueños graves, Cabalgar horas luengas / Sobre los aires. Me entro en nubes rosadas, / Bajo a hondos mares.” The traveler rides over and into the sea, a distant, ethereal, and fantastic journey that suggests the stage for an orientalist paradigm within which the Arab cloth exists. The world of the child, however, brings in a new sensibility which could be called *modernista*, evidenced—among other things—by the reversal of the orientalist representation of the Arab object from an ornamental and passive poetic image to an active image of the child as Arab warrior:

Oh, Jacob, mariposa,  
Ismaelillo, árabe!  
Qué ha de haber que me guste  
Como mirarle  
De entre polvo de libros

Surgir radiante,  
Y, en vez de acero, verle  
De pluma armarse,  
Y buscar en mis brazos  
Tregua al combate?  
Venga, venga, Ismaelillo:  
La mesa asálte,  
Y por los anchos pliegues  
Del paño árabe  
En rota vergonzosa  
Mis libros lance,  
Y siéntese magnífico  
Y muéstreme riendo,  
Roto el encaje—  
—¡Qué encaje no se rompe  
En el combate!—

In contrast to the orientalist image of the Arab linen that decorates the father's study, the composite Ismaelillo-árabe is a figure of associative power. The pair is made possible through an identification paradigm that remits us not only to the young Arab warrior, Abdala (discussed earlier) but also to the oriental (from the eastern region of the island) iconography of Santiago Matamoros and his Afro-Cuban counterpart Ogún Guerrero (discussed earlier in this chapter). As the above lines reveal, the "warrior" in this scene carries a sword of his own making, namely, the father's quill. The lines describe a scene that suggests a transgression of established literary

norms: (Allá ruedan por tierra / Versillos frágiles, / Brumosos pensadores, / Lópeos galanes!), and also a shift from the orientalist paradigm that allows for the image of the “pañó árabe” to the identification paradigm that makes the Ismaelillo-Arab relationship possible. While the child does not understand the consequences of the game, the father is all too aware of reality. In the poem, such reality is represented in the tearing of the lace that adorns the Arab linen. Until now, the “pañó árabe” had belonged to the atmospheric effect that had also included other decorative objects in the room, as well as the father’s books and “light” or fragile verses. It is precisely in the tear that the reader may sense a shift in Martí’s sensibilities. The ornamental figure of the “pañó árabe” has been “touched” by the reality of the child’s play. The battle between father and son resonates with the historical context of the island and the disarray in Martí’s personal and political affairs.

Now, having understood how the Arab figure in Martí’s *Ismaelillo* functions as a moment of ambivalence between orientalism and an identification mode of representation, I turn to a discussion of Martí’s use of the identification mode of representation in “Los Moros en España.”

## **2.7 Shifting Tides: From an Orientalist aesthetic to a political discourse**

As *Abdala* reveals, from a very early age Martí found a model to follow in the Arab’s (specifically the Maghreb and Egypt) reaction to European imperialism which, at the end of the century sought to occupy North Africa. In particular, Martí admired the region’s burgeoning nationalisms against the colony, be it France, England or Spain. Martí was, in other words, conscious of the gravity and significance of events such as Egypt’s nationalist revolution (1881) against an ever encroaching English imperialism, French invasion of Tunisia in the same year, as well as Spain’s occupation of Morocco in 1893 (Azougarh 15-16). In his political writings, the

figure of the Moor encapsulates what he considered a necessity: the taking of arms against the colonial oppressor. The Orient, in this context, becomes implicitly conflated with the island's Oriente, so that to speak of the Moor is also to speak of those Cubans (as *Santiagueros* were traditionally called) who at the time were fighting for independence in the east.

¡*Seámos moros!* wrote Martí in support of the Berber uprising against Spanish rule in northern Morocco. “Let us be Moors [...] the revolt in the Rif [...] is not an isolated incident, but an outbreak of the change and realignment that have entered the world. Let us be Moors [...] We [Cubans] who will probably die by the hand of Spain.”<sup>70</sup> The phrase belongs to a larger argument that considers both the Moor's condition under Spanish rule, but also Spain's former condition under Moorish rule. The article in question, entitled “Los moros en España,” and published in *Patria* in 1893, begins as follows:

Jamás cede una rata oprimida, jamás cede el pueblo a quien le ocupa el extranjero la tierra amada con huesos de sus hijos. El Riff ha vuelto a guerra contra España, y España vivirá en guerra con el Riff hasta que le desaloje su país sagrado.

The consequences of Spanish colonialism—Martí is well aware—are suffered by the oppressor and the oppressed. More than an indictment of Spanish colonial rule, the phrase represents a warning. Martí is not only concerned for the future of the Rif, but also for the future of Spain, a country that—given his family background and the years spent in Spain—he knows all too well. As Alberto Andino reminds us,

Martí, pues, nace de padres españoles; sus abuelos son también españoles y el lugar donde nace, aunque ya sacudido por ideas separatistas y previamente ensangrentado de cubanos que habían combatido por la independencia de Cuba,

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<sup>70</sup> José Martí, “España en Melilla,” in *Cuba: Letras*, vol. 2 (Havana: Edición Trópico, 1938), p. 201.

es todavía posesión española. Las leyes que rigen son españolas. Las costumbres, aunque algo acriolladas ya, españolas también. Los gobernantes, por supuesto, España quien los envía.<sup>71</sup>

Martí's "recommendations," then, are meant for Spain: "¿Qué nobleza hay [...]," he asks the readers of *La Patria*, "en tener a tiro perpetuo de cañón una raza simpática y altiva, una raza que defiende su suelo con el mismo tesón con que de otros moros defendió Pelayo el suyo?" The previous question serves to appeal to Spain's past in order to create a parallel between Spain's former need to rid itself of Arab rule and the Riff's urgency to liberate itself from its oppressor. Pelayo,<sup>72</sup> Prince of Asturias who, according to Spanish tradition, in 722 A.D. led the first victory against the Moors, is here used as a point of comparison between those who Martí calls "una raza simpática y altiva, [...] que defiende su suelo [...]" and Spain's former enemies. It becomes evident here, as in other discussions on Martí in this chapter, that Martí has a wide political and historical perspective which, not only allows him to include the figure of the Moor in Cuba's national discourse, but also to go beyond the indiscriminate rejection of Spain, Spaniards, and everything Spanish. In 1892, in a memorandum he sends to Presidentes de los Clubs y Cuerpos de Consejo [Club Presidents and Councils], Martí is clear about his position against Spain:

Continuamos la revolución sin odio a los españoles, y sin lisonja, con el propósito sincero de atraer a la neutralidad o a la independencia, por nuestro respeto viril y

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<sup>71</sup> Andino, Alberto. *Martí y España*. Colección Plaza Mayor. Madrid, 1973.

<sup>72</sup> According to Spanish tradition, in 722 A.D., the Moorish army sent to subdue the Cantabrian mountaineers was defeated at Covadonga by the Asturian chieftain Pelayo, also regarded as the first king of Asturias. See Crow, John Armstrong. *Spain: The Root and the Flower—An Interpretation of Spain and the Spanish People*. University of California Press. Berkeley, 2005. (48)

veraz, a los españoles arraigados en Cuba, o deseosos de vivir en ella sin perturbarla ni dañarla. (147)<sup>73</sup>

Neither hatred for Spain nor flattery, only respect, as long as Spain does not become an obstacle to Cuban sovereignty. The battle is not necessarily against the Spanish but against the injustice of a system that opposes the creation of a Cuban republic. In “Los moros en España,” Martí continues,

Cuatro siglos hace que está España en Melilla, y no tiene allí más que el castillo de matar y iglesia vieja. El corazón honrado, español con Pelayo en Covadonga, es hoy moro con el Riff contra la posesión injusta de España, e inútil al mundo. Poseer es obligarse. Bañar en sangre un pueblo, o deshonrarlo con el vicio, no es justo título para poseer, ni en el Riff ni en Cuba. Allá está la guerra. Sea el triunfo de quien es la justicia.

Once the parallel between Spain’s former desire for freedom from Arab rule and the Riff’s own desire for freedom has been established, Martí turns his attention to Cuba:

¿Qué España nueva es esa que hoy ahogará en sangre al moro, a quien en cuatro siglos no ha dado más que una iglesia vieja, y mañana pretenderá, aunque en vano esta vez, ahogar en sangre la aspiración y cultura superior de Cuba?

It is possible to highlight three very important points in this passage: The first is Martí’s direct reference to Spain as a violent oppressor. The second is his equally direct reference to Cuba’s superior culture. This latter point may cause some confusion and begs to be clarified: By suggesting that Spanish colonial legacy in Cuba is superior to its legacy in the Riff, Martí evokes the cultural argument that the conquest was, in fact, beneficial because it succeeded in bringing

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<sup>73</sup> From Lizaso, *Epistolario I*, p. 148-149. Quoted in Alberto Andino’s *Martí y España* (1973).

superior culture to indigenous people. How, then, has the Riff benefitted from the colonial enterprise? The statement, then, dismantles—at least rhetorically—the colonial premise. Martí continues,

Lo del Riff no es cosa sola, sino escaramuza del cambio y reajuste en que parece haber entrado el mundo. Seamos moros: así como si la justicia estuviera del lado del español, nosotros, que moriremos tal vez en manos de España, seríamos españoles. ¡Pero seámos moros!

Ahead of his time (if we consider the representation of Algeria and Algerians in Cuba, in the 1950s and 60s, and current Latin American interest in the Arab world), the passage creates a useful and powerful parallel between the Cuban struggle for independence and the revolt in North Africa. Most significantly, it marks the beginning of Martí's anticolonial stance on an international scale. "But, let us be Moors!" is a phrase that exists within an identification paradigm based, among other things, on the recognition of Spain as a mutual oppressor.

This identification with Arab struggle for independence is made all the more ironic and complex by the fact that Cubans who resisted and/or conspired against Spanish colonial rule were sent as political prisoners to the penal colonies of Ceuta<sup>74</sup> and Chafarinas, remnants of imperial Spain on the North African side of the Mediterranean. According to Louis A. Pérez, in *Cuba under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934*, "Hundreds of Cubans were summarily deported to Spain to serve prison terms in peninsular jails. Others were sent to Spain's African penal colonies in Ceuta, Chafarinas and Fernando Poo" (22). In all, it is estimated that some 10,000 Cuban citizens were shipped to overseas penal colonies on the African coast. Another factor may

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<sup>74</sup> The experience of Cubans in Ceuta at this time has been documented in works, such as *In the Cabanas: A Sunday with the Political Prisoners of Cuba in Their Dungeons* (1897). In fiction, *Anita, the Cuban Spy* (1898).



have also contributed and that is the Algerian taking of the city of Oran (1792). As Hernán Taboada notes,<sup>75</sup> numerous Spanish officials (or Americans, such as José de San Martín) who had served in that battle came to America. For Martí, then, the Moors become a symbol of resistance against colonial rule, while North Africa's developing modernity becomes a pragmatic model for a Latin American modernity. We must ask ourselves, however, if this connection, this foundational and solidary labor—established initially by Martí, but already suggested by the conquest's first projections and Villaverde's own interpretation of the trope—does not succeed at revealing a deeper relationship between Latin American modernity and that found in “oriental” spaces<sup>76</sup>. “*Seámos moros*,” then, begins Martí's political enunciation from a mobile place, a place of multiple exiles and shifting identities, a place in the process of modernization, in order to articulate the politics of Latin America's budding nationalisms. “*Seámos Moros*” becomes a proposal of transnational proportions that—if we think of it in terms of Martí's publication of *Nuestra América* in January 1891 and the project it proposes: the making of proto-nations into one big nation called Our America—at least at the moment of enunciation of “*Seámos moros*,” also includes the Arab world.

It is of interest to note that Martí chooses the ambiguous figure of the Moor over other possibilities, the figure of the Black slave being the most obvious, given the politics of the time. As yet another racial category of Black, the Moor negotiates a new Cuban consciousness both in terms of Africa and in terms of a Spanish past—in fact, when we are speaking of the Black African in Cuba alongside the Moor, we are speaking of two Africas; let us not forget that Muslims in Cuba were also those Black West Africans whose greeting, “Salam Alekkum,” as

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<sup>75</sup> See Taboada's “La sombra del Oriente en la independencia americana.” XI Congreso Internacional de ALADAA. [ceaa.colmex.mx/aladaa/imagesmemoria/hernantaboada.pdf](http://ceaa.colmex.mx/aladaa/imagesmemoria/hernantaboada.pdf)

<sup>76</sup> For a discussion on the subject, see Malone, Cora Gorman. “Epistemology and *The Lettered City*: Ángel Rama, Michel Foucault and Ibn Khaldun.” *Mester*, Vol. XXXIX 2010, pp. 131-148.

Ned Sublette reminds us in *Cuba and its Music*, survives today in Afro-Cuban religion. While the politics of *blanqueamiento* at this time sought to eradicate Black traces and elements of Black presence from society both physically and culturally, there is another Africa that Cubans were already familiar with, North Africa. Moor, as a racial terminology, mediates the relationship between Black Africa and Spain, as Africa—as we find it in North Africa, the Maghreb, in particular—is part of an Iberian inheritance. It is interesting to note that, while in *Nuestra América* Martí proclaims that there is only one race, the human race, in negotiating Cubanness, he makes use of the racial categorizations of the times in order to solve the *criollo* quandary: The Moor he evokes in “*Seámos moros*” is both a member of a community in North Africa and a category of Black in Cuba.

Over a century later, Anouar Majid, a Moroccan-American scholar and the author of several acclaimed books on Islam, America and the West echoes Martí’s original phrase—perhaps unwittingly but coming to similar conclusions: “We are all Moors,” Majid proposes on the cover of his latest book. What is a Moor, then, that we should be and, in fact, are all Moors today? According to Majid, in *We are all Moors: Ending Centuries of Crusades Against Muslims and Other Minorities*,

Because of his or her quintessential difference in the long European imagination, the Moor, I want to show in this book, is not only someone who is religiously Muslim; even more importantly, he or she is also a figure that stands for anyone who is not considered to be part of the social mainstream. It is only in this symbolic or metaphorical sense that minorities living in the West after 1492 are the descendants of the Moors. (5)

As Majid reminds us, we are often asked to think about the East and the West as two separate entities which have “suddenly bumped into each other in their travels” (*We are all Moors*, 4). It is no coincidence that 1492 is both the year of the fall of Granada and the year Columbus sails for the New World; in fact, the Spanish Crown financed Columbus’s voyages with the spoils of war. What Majid proposes is that “a secular, liberal Western culture and Islam were never really parted, that they have been traveling together since (at least) 1492 [...]” (4). In his book, Majid exposes how the Moor has served as a metaphor for minority peoples in the West, drawing comparisons between early events, such as the Spanish Inquisition, and the present growing fear of Muslims in Europe and Hispanics in the United States. However, for Martí, “the Moor” or the Arab “Orient,” such as that represented by North Africa, provides a necessary distance from Spain; Martí’s Moor, as he figures in the exclamation, “Let us be Moors!” is neither Spain’s phantom nor another humanity that exists in a different epoch—the Moor is not a minority but, as an example of resistance, is capable of purposive action. Let us note that, however, while within the political discourse to which “*Seámos moros*” belongs, Martí establishes the contemporariness of the Moor and, thus, proposes a shared humanity; the poetic representation we find in *Ismaellillo* expresses an ambivalence in respect to the Moor that constitutes his position as *criollo*, born in Cuba but the son of Spanish immigrants. I dissent from Majid’s argument and propose that Cubans specifically and Latin Americans in general are not only descendants of the Moor in the symbolic or metaphorical sense, but also in the cultural and genealogical sense. After 500 years under Spanish colonial rule, the “specter” of the Moor resurfaces in unexpected romances, political alliances, musical collaborations, gestures, traditions and physical attributes that, were it not for the Moor and his or her legacy, would have never left a trace.

In the next and final section, having understood the identification paradigm to which Martí's political discourse on the Moor belongs, I turn the reader's attention to Gregorio Ortega's short story "Las Noches de Nueva Orleans." As I will show, Ortega's story offers a re-writing of Villaverde's work and a post-Martí vision of the Moorish presence in the national project, ushering in our discussion on the representation of the Moor within the context of the 1959 Cuban Revolution (discussed in Chapter 3).

## **2.8 Re-Writing Villaverde in a Post-Marti World: Gregorio Ortega's "Las Noches de Nueva Orleans"**

Born in 1926, Gregorio Ortega enjoys an extensive trajectory in journalism and literature. His first novel, *Una de cal y otra de arena*, was published in 1957. Two of his novels *La red y el tridente* and *Del Guatao a Hong Kong* received Premio de la Crítica, in Cuba. Other published work includes *Kappa 15*, *Juego de Espejos* (1998) and *Villa Adelaida* (2000). More recently, his novel *Cundo Macao* was awarded the 2003 Premio de Novela Plaza Mayor. In "Las Noches de Nueva Orleans," published in the fall/winter (2003-2004) edition of *Revista Encuentro*,<sup>77</sup> a literary journal edited by Cuban writer Jesús Díaz (now exiled in the United States), Ortega orchestrates an encounter between Muslim pirates and *cimarrones*, two Africa's that, competing for inclusion in "lo cubano" in the midst of nineteenth-century Cuba, highlight precisely what Cirilo Villaverde's *Excursión a Vueltabajo* hid from plain sight: that is, the connection between attitudes toward slavery, racism, and the representation of Moor in nineteenth-century Cuba. In addition, by presenting the story from the perspective of the *piratas musimanes*, Ortega revises Villaverde's orientalism. As such, his version of the story allows for a more politically correct

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<sup>77</sup> "Noches de Nueva Orleans" is published in the section entitled *En proceso* (In process). I have not been able to find a final or completed version of the story.

representation of the *piratas musulmanes* who, in a post-Martí paradigm are included in the national picture. Ultimately, the encounter between Muslim pirates and *cimarrones* complicates the *criollo* quandary: the question is not only whether to pull away from Spain or remain part of it, but how to construct “*lo cubano*” as a distinctive category that is both part of Africa and part of Spain. The Moor in Ortega’s story, as in Martí, then, becomes a way of negotiating Black and Spanish.

While an observer and narrator of Pablo Betancourt’s oral history in his own text, in Ortega’s, Villaverde becomes an active participant in the story itself. This recent publication borrows several long passages directly from *Excursión...* and, according to Gemma Guevera, also incorporates a portion of Betancourt’s story that was supposedly omitted from Villaverde’s original text. Unlike Villaverde’s story, Ortega’s short story is told from the perspective of the pirates and articulates (with the benefit of hindsight) the push and pull between different sociocultural forces in the context of nineteenth-century Cuba. The Muslim pirates in Ortega’s story remind us that the struggle for the seas in the 1700s is a struggle for both the plantation system for producing sugar in the Caribbean and the control of the slave trade; in the Cuban context, these elements needed to be negotiated in terms of what constituted “*lo cubano*” and the formation of a national identity. Ortega’s short story succeeds at showing the struggle between Muslim pirates and *güajiros* in Villaverde’s story (discussed in Chapter 1) and the use of the figure of the Moor in Martí’s political discourse as the mobilization of categories, either within an orientalist or identification paradigm. The first encounter is, as the following passage will show, a violent one:

Frente a los piratas se alzaba vertical un paredón, y de la espesura surgieron machetes calabozos y lanzas de caoba que los sajaban, los hendían los perforaban,

y únicamente cuando la luna destellaba en las negras pieles sudadas podían distinguir a sus atacantes. [...] Cuando se impuso el silencio, uno de los piratas tenía el brazo izquierdo cercenado desde el codo y otro una honda herida en las costillas. (210)

And later,

La codicia ardía en la mirada de los piratas al pensar en el sollado repleto de negros. Sabían que el infatigable acoso de los cruceros ingleses que perseguían la trata y la necesidad de dotaciones para los ingenios azucareros que se fomentaban en Vuelta Abajo, habían hecho subir el precio de los esclavos, y se prometían la mejor presa de su vida. (211)

Not only do the Muslim pirates come face to face with *cimarrones*, runaway Black slaves, but they, too, are interested in slave trafficking, a fictional detail supported by historical accounts of pirate attacks on slave ships in the late 1600s and early 1700s.<sup>78</sup> While there were numerous people of African descent who found a “home” within the social order of the pirate ship, as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker suggest, in *The Many-Headed Hydra*, a substantial minority of pirates had worked in the slave trade, therefore participating not only in the machinery of enslavement and transportation, but also in the capturing and selling of slaves (165). In addition, North African implication in the slave trade reveals yet another dimension to the Black-Moor relationship in the nineteenth century and one that is left out of both Villaverde’s and Martí’s discourse. The following quote reveals as much,

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<sup>78</sup> See *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker.

Pablo no comprendía la tensión que ganaba a los piratas, hasta que uno le señaló una Goleta en el horizonte, apenas visible contra la luz de la luna y el cielo estrellado. Se acercaban a ella, la brisa les trajo el ácido y rancio hedor de negros. Ese hedor enardecía a los musimanes. (211)

The racially charged language that accompanies the descriptions of the slave ship resonates with definitions of *lo cubano* and the white politics that, during the first half of the twentieth-century, surrounded the term. While the quote above reflects the pirates' interest in the slave ship, it also introduces the element of desire that, in the quotes that follow, exists alongside a sexist discourse:

Esa noche, frente a la luna y el mar, L'Epée le describió con fervor y nostalgia las mujeres de Nueva Orleans. L'Epée hablaba con el mismo dejo del dueño del cafetal Laboy; tenía barba, melena y mostacho rubios, rizados, un gran arete circular en una oreja, y usaba sombrero y pañuelo negros, el sombrero aludo y el pañuelo anudado al cuello, el nudo bajo un grueso aro de oro. Ponía los ojos en blanco y suspiraba cuando se refería a las mulatas de ojos verdes, que olían a jazmín y no se parecían en nada a las que había por aquí en barracones—allá también las había pasuas, pero era en los algodonaes y esas casas no contaban. Habló de las rubias con espléndidos escotes; de las calles de burdeles en cuyos balcones de hierro forjado y ventanas enrejadas no se apagaba la luz en toda la noche [...] (212-213)

And later,

Al anochecer, con la plaga de corasí, precedidas por dos tocadores de tambor, llegaron las negras, sin más ropa que túnicas desgarradas por las púas de los

matorrales, colgadas de collares y pulseras de semillas, sobre todo rojas, y ese fuerte y denso olor que excitó a los piratas. [...] Las negras bailaron, ondulaban sus cuerpos, las manos en alto o en jarras, embestían al ritmo de los toques de tambor con sus vientres o sus nalgas. [...] Los piratas saltaron al ruedo, se contorsionaban, agarraban a las negras por las grupas, y en la noche se amalgamaron todas las lenguas del Caribe, en un alucinante papiamento que era un eructo de barracones, abordajes y saqueos. (214)

The sexual objectification of the female body in the above passages allow for a description of the green-eyed *mulata* that is devoid of grossly sexual references. In contrast, the bestial connotation of terms such as “*grupas*” or “*rump*” are used to describe the *Black* female body, debasing the black female slaves to the level of animals. Furthermore, the description of the Black women who “ondulaban sus cuerpos” [undulated or rippled their bodies] recalls the sort of orientalist images that Martí discovered in the Louvre (discussed in earlier sections) and mistakenly took for realism. The celebratory, carnivalesque description of the scene, then, is necessarily underscored by the carnality of the Black female body. Much like in Villaverde’s version, pork becomes yet another element of the scene, diminishing the significance of the Muslim pirate as quasi-religious category. This last detail is, then, consistent with Villaverde’s characterization of the *piratas musulmanes* in the Black Legend mode of representation (discussed in Chapter 1). I remind the reader that in *Excursión a Vueltabajo*, Villaverde reduces the history of Spain to the history of the Reconquista; as such (and following the norms established by North American Black Legend characterizations), the Spaniard appears as a composite figure that also includes traces (racially-oriented descriptions) of the Moor and, very often, also the Jew. Much



like in Ortega, the consumption of pork in Villaverde's *Excursión...* is an element in the characterization of the *piratas musulmanes*,

Ultimately, the possibility of sexual contact between the Muslim pirates and the *mulata*, as well as the Muslim pirates and the Black women contributes to a more complex and accurate picture of the racial categories of the times, as well as suggest the fear of racial and cultural contamination confirmed by White colonization. As discussed earlier, while immigration of various ethnic groups, including the Arab and the Chinese, were sought as a solution to the dangerously increasing number of Black slaves on the island, their presence also threatened the very future of White politics in Cuba and their relationship to an articulation of nationhood.

## 2.9 Conclusions

As I have shown, the representation of the Moor, the Arab figure, and Arab elements in José Martí, within an orientalist paradigm is linked—in addition to Martí's own interests—to the interests of the Cuban elite in the second half of the nineteenth century, the earlier awakening of a *criollo* consciousness and its politics of *Blanqueamiento*, the impact of Arab immigration on the island and the adaptation in Cuba of foreign elements, such as French Romanticism. In addition, Martí's own historical sensibilities, as well as the rising significance of the eastern region of the island in the movements for independence contributed to an identification paradigm (found in his political discourse) within which the Moor becomes an element of the national picture. In addition, the broad range of racial and color classifications that existed in Cuba in the nineteenth century make Martí's evocation of the Moor a negotiation device along color lines: not as dark as the Black African and not as White as the *criollo*. While on the surface, Martí's “*¡Seámos moros!*” reflects a political gesture, upon closer examination, the evocation of the

Moor becomes a way to “roam” around the Black figure, a way to articulate the terms of “*lo cubano*,” negotiating between two Africas. As the narrator of Ortega’s short story very appropriately tells us, “[...] *los musimanes cogieron el trillo por donde vinieron las negras [...]*” (212).

In a post-Martí paradigm, “Noches de Nueva Orleans” corrects Villaverde’s orientalist vision, allowing for the participation of the Muslim pirates in the national picture and exposing the economic interests and racial ideology surrounding the representations of the Moor in Villaverde’s text specifically (discussed in Chapter 1) and, more generally, in Cuba during the first half of the nineteenth century. To be *criollo* in nineteenth century Cuba meant much more than to be born on the island of Spanish descent; it meant “dictions” and contradictions that persist well into the twentieth century and expose the kinds of transnational, transatlantic relationships that have animated the concept of nation not only in Cuba, but also in Latin America. As the chapters that follow will reveal, the figure of the Moor perseveres in Cuban letters and political discourse well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The recurring image of the Moor (in its various guises) in Cuban letters exposes, among other things, the continued reliance on colonial discourse, as well as the extent to which the figure of Martí has participated in the formation of narrative practices (orientalism and identification) that surround the representation of Algeria and Algerians during the years prior to and following the Cuba Revolution of 1959.

### Chapter 3

#### Let Us Be Moors! Orientalist and Identification Paradigms in Jorge “Papito” Serguera’s

#### *Memorias de un embajador Cubano en Argelia* and Delia Fiallo’s *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*

“*Los mejores van a Argelia*”<sup>79</sup>

Cuban slogan

Between the years 1956 and 1957, the anti-Batista Cuban journal *Bohemia* published over twenty articles covering the Algerian war of independence that had begun years earlier, in 1954 (see Figures 1-3). The articles, which also included photographs, detailed revolutionary struggle in Algeria, the military successes of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the use of torture by the French, and the execution of informers and thugs under French authority. *Bohemia*’s editorial effort to parallel the current events in Algeria with Cuban events leading up to the Cuban Revolution of 1959 are clear: images of Algerian soldiers at war appear in the pages of *Bohemia* next to articles and images covering the street violence and terrorist attacks under Fulgencio Batista in cities like Santiago de Cuba (see Figure 4)<sup>80</sup>. The juxtaposition of graphic elements and editorial content does much to foster (and rekindle) an identification paradigm that links Cuban revolutionary trajectory to anticolonial movements in North Africa. The cultural and sociopolitical connection, as well as the modes of representation discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, then, strongly suggest that the relationship between Cuba and Algeria in the 1950s and 60s, and its representation in print and image exist along a continuum, the tentative origin of which, as the previous chapters discuss, may be found, in part, in the nationalist

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<sup>79</sup> [The best go to Algeria].

<sup>80</sup> I would like to thank the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami, Coral Gables for helping to support this research through their Summer Research Fellowship. I worked with CHC’s archives in the summer of 2010. I have PDFs of all articles (along with images) cited in this chapter. The specific article referenced is entitled “Continúan el terror y la muerte ensangrentando la tierra cubana” by Luis Rolando Cabrera, *Bohemia*, January 1-7, 1957. The article details the appearance of the bodies of revolutionaries William Soler Ladea and Froilán Guerra Ramírez, among others.

discourse and literary representation of the Moor on the island during the first and second half of the nineteenth century.

While the current political situation in Cuba prior to 1959 and the years following Castro's revolution seems to warrant and even explain Cuban interests in the anticolonial movement in Algeria, I argue that the general interest in North Africa before the twentieth-century, as well as the role of the Moor in Cuban literature and nationalist discourse (discussed in the previous chapters) contribute to the ways in which Algeria and Algerians are represented in Cuban print and television in the 50s and 60s. To make my point, I will discuss the work of two under studied figures in the history of Cuban cultural production, Cuban Ambassador to Algeria and later president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (1967 to 1974) Jorge "Papito" Serguera and "Queen of Soaps" Delia Fiallo.

The readings that follow, then, do not represent isolated events in the history of Cuban culture, but participate in a trajectory that, as I discuss in the introduction to this dissertation, begins as early as the conquest of the Americas in 1492 and, in Cuba specifically, with the nationalist movements of the mid to late nineteenth century. In light of the evidence provided in the previous chapters, this chapter discusses the characteristic contradictions in the Cuban representation of Algeria and Algerians. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the representation of Algeria and Algerians in Jorge "Serguera" Serguera's *Che Guevara: La clave africana—memorias de un comandante cubano embajador de Cuba en Argelia* and Delia Fiallo's *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* (1962).

In Chapters 1 and 2 I argued that the special historical circumstances of Cuba in the nineteenth century, including attitudes toward slavery, the rising importance of Cuba's oriental region in the independence movements, as well as foreign elements in the cultural, political, and

economic spheres, contribute to nineteenth-century Cuba's double gaze toward the Orient. The chapters facilitate the understanding of the ways in which Algeria and Algerians are represented in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As such, in this chapter, I argue that continued North American influence in the sociocultural and economic arena; the prominence of the figure of Martí and his political discourse; and the central role of Cuba's Oriente region in the revolutionary movement of 1959; as well as the need to redefine "*lo cubano*" (now in terms of the Revolution of 1959) contribute to contradictory, yet coexistent representations of Algeria in Cuban print and television in the 1950s and 60s. Given the retrofeeding nature of Cuba-Algeria relations,<sup>81</sup> these representations (which support either an orientalist or an identification paradigm) closely resemble the modes of representation (surrounding the figure of the Moor) during the first and second half of the nineteenth century. One of the reasons for this is that interest in Algeria in the 1950s and 60s, as stated earlier, exists along a continuum whose tentative origins may be found in the nationalist discourse of nineteenth century Cuba. Another reason is that the figure of the Moor (for reasons that have to do with Cuba's former colonial identity, as discussed in Chapter 1) remains an expedient way of negotiating the various contradictions surrounding the construction of Cuban identity. While in Chapter 1, I located the figure of the Moor at the heart of the *criollo* quandary: how to separate from Spain while remaining part of it?, in this chapter, I both locate the figure of the Moor as the underlying model for the representation of Algeria and Algerians, and also at the core of what becomes—in terms of the Cuban Revolution of 1959—the revolutionary quandary: how to separate from the West, while remaining part of it? In order to understand the process by which the figure of the Moor becomes a model for the modes of representation surrounding the image of Algeria and

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<sup>81</sup> More specifically, I am referring to the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962).

Algerians in the 1950s and 60s, as well as to further our understanding of Cuba-Algeria relations during this period, I begin with a discussion of Cuba's various missions in Algeria in the 1960s.

### 3.1 Cuba's First Mission in Africa

The articles in *Bohemia* and the general interest in the happenings taking place in Algeria seem to pave the way for Cuba's involvement in the Algerian revolutionary movement. In fact, only months after Fidel Castro's march into the Cuban Capital, his rebel government reached out to North Africa. In *Conflicting Missions*, Pierro Gleijeses recalls that Che Guevara and Raúl Castro travelled to Cairo in June 1959 and again in July. In September of the following year, Fidel Castro delivered a speech at the United Nations, placing Africa at the forefront of the issues discussed (159). The speech takes place only months after French intellectuals (and supporters of a free Algeria) Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir visit the island, following the invitation Carlos Franqui, Editor-in-Chief of *Lunes de Revolución*. Evidence that Algeria is at the forefront of the many concerns of the Revolution and its representatives now comes during an interview with Sartre in the offices of the revolutionary journal.<sup>82</sup> During the interview, it is the Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante who initiates a line of questioning that also includes the Algerian question: "Yo quisiera que usted nos dijera si piensa que la "Solución De Gaulle" sería la solución correcta a la vez para el problema de Argelia y para el actual problema de Francia." [I would like for you to tell us if you think that the "De Gaulle Solution" would be the

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<sup>82</sup> The interview is published in the special issue of March 21, 1960, "Sartre visita Cuba" [Sartre visits Cuba] that includes the text, "Una entrevista con los escritores cubanos" [An interview with Cuban writers]. Writers, including Antón Arrufat, Humberto Arenal, Nicolas Guillén, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Eduardo Manet, novelist and playwright who has been living in France since 1968.

right solution for both the Algerian problem and France's present problem.]<sup>83</sup> De Gaulle's Algerian solution had to do with avoiding committing himself to any one proceeding; in other words, first he tried solutions deemed most favorable to France, and then made concessions until he was able to reach an agreement with the Algerians. Had he, as some scholars of the period suggested, been able to offer more to the Algerians in the beginning, it is possible that the solution would have been far more favorable to France. In any case, the question posed by Cuban intellectuals in the offices of *Lunes* reveals, among other things, the gradual radicalization of the figure of the intellectual within the Cuban Revolution. It is also a possible indication that the Cuba-Algeria connection was largely constructed or staged by Cuba alone,<sup>84</sup> to be later introduced into European intellectual circles by prominent public and intellectual figures like Jean-Paul Sartre.

In the years that followed, Cuba continued assisting the Algerians in their war against French colonialism. In 1961, only a year later after Sartre's visit, a shipment of weapons left Cuba for Algeria. The ship, which transported the weapons that would assist the FLN during its war against French colonialism, also served to transport to Cuba wounded Algerian fighters and twenty children from refugee camps, most of whom were orphans.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Upon his return to France, Sartre would publish *Hurricane Over Sugar* (a text comprised of, among other things, his thoughts on Cuba's economic past and the Cuban Revolution) as a series of articles that appeared in the French journal *France Soir*. I will argue elsewhere that once in France Sartre contributed to construction of a link between the Cuban Revolution and the Algerian War of Independence, in particular in the pages of *Les temps modernes*.

<sup>84</sup> Studies published in Algeria in the 1960s on the dissemination of pamphlets for Algerian support at the beginning of the war, for example, clearly show that Algeria was concerned with reaching other Latin American nations, such as Perú, for example.

<sup>85</sup> I have been unable to locate the current whereabouts of these Algerian children, now adults in their sixties and seventies. It is certain, however, that until the 1970s these children participated in cultural events (dances, presentations, etc.) organized by the Centro Arabe, in Havana. They are mentioned at least once in *El Arabe*, the Center's monthly journal.

### 3.1.1 Grupo Especial de Instrucción

Algeria gained its independence from France on July 3, 1962. Later that year, on September 26, the National Assembly elected Ahmed Ben Bella prime minister. Only two weeks later, Ben Bella left Algiers for New York to attend the ceremony marking his country's admission to the United Nations. On October 16, he boarded a Cuban plane in New York for a two-day visit to the island. Ben Bella's election coincided with the Algerian-Moroccan dispute over the border region of Tindouf and Béchar, areas that France had annexed to French Algeria a few decades earlier.<sup>86</sup> During his visit to the island, Ben Bella is said to have bid Cuban assistance in the conflict.

The Cuban government responded to Ben Bella's visit by organizing a welcoming committee, which included the Algerian children who had been brought to the island years earlier. Official and unofficial ordinances ensured that the streets of Havana would be jam-packed with Cubans calling out Ben Bella's name, as the presidential procession made its way through the main boulevards of the island's capital. Revolutionary slogans and statements paralleling the plight of Algerians to that of their Cuban brothers and sisters headlined the numerous editorials covering the event and published in *Revolución* (see Figures 8-9). One image stands out amongst many others during this time and that is a caricature of two bearded men, Fidel Castro and Ahmed Ben Bella (see Figure 5). The linked *barbudos* create the impression of twins conjoined at the narrowest tip of their beard. The caricature (no more than a few inches wide and a few inches tall) appears in *Revolución* and is part of a the greater media coverage dedicated to Ben Bella's visit. Its purpose, it seems, was to emphasize the perceived

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<sup>86</sup> The dispute would culminate in the Sand War or Sands War, which took place along the Algerian-Moroccan border in October 1963. Demarcation of the Tindouf area was not reached until years later, in a negotiation process that expanded from 1969 to 1972, and concluding with Algeria offering Morocco shares in the iron ore earnings from Tindouf in exchange for recognition of its borders.



symbiosis between the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the Algerian cause. The caricature underscores the Cuban media's (as a governmental organ) general effort to represent Algeria and Algerians in such a way that Algerian struggle becomes one with the Cuban cause and vice versa. The image is peculiar in its construction of a more "oriental" image of Ben Bella whose public appearances, unlike the caricature, always found him clean-shaven and in Western (civilian) garb. By "oriental," in this case, I mean both a stereotyped version of the hirsute Arab and a rebel from the Cuban region known as Oriente.

For the Cuban government, Ben Bella's visit represented a triumph, however small, against the West, here understood as Yankee capitalism. As soon as the Cuban government received Ben Bella's request for assistance, it began organizing the *Grupo Especial de Instrucción* (GEI), the special force that would be sent to Algeria, jeopardizing the three-year sugar contract between Cuba and the Moroccan regime in Rabat signed that same year.<sup>87</sup> In Castro's words,

To visit Cuba when the powerful and rich Yankee empire is redoubling its hostility and hatred toward us and trying through threats and blackmail and bribery to impose a criminal economic and commercial blockade on us in the hope of crushing the revolution with hunger; to visit Cuban when the Yankee imperialists are also threatening to attack our country at any moment and to drown the creative work of our people in blood is, on your part, Mr. Prime Minister, an act of valor and resoluteness that defines your character' it is a

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<sup>87</sup> The Moroccan regime in Rabat had just signed a three-year contract with the Cuban government, promising to buy a million tons of Cuban sugar for \$18.4 million, a considerable amount of hard currency at a time when the United States was trying to cripple Cuba's foreign trade (Gleijeses, Piero. "Cuba's First Mission in Africa").

gesture of friendship that we shall never forget. It is also an act that honors the Algerian nation before the people of the world. (17)

It was immediately after Ben Bella left Cuba that Castro delivered a speech at the opening ceremonies of a medical school in Cuba. Castro told the students that fifty doctors were needed to go to Algeria: “Today [he told the students], we can send only fifty, but in eight to ten years who knows how many, and we will be helping our brothers [...]” As Gleijeses confirms, with over a million more people than Cuba and with the great many diseases left by colonialism, the majority of doctors in Algeria were French and had left the country. The Algerians had only a third—or even less—of the doctors Cuban had at their disposal. The Minister of Public Health, José Ramon Machado Ventura led the medical expedition, which included twenty-nine doctors, three dentists, fifteen nurses and eight medical technicians (forty-five men and ten women).

The majority, wrote a journalist, had only a hazy idea of what Algeria really was. They thought of deserts and palm trees; of Bedouins and the Foreign Legion; of terrorists and Arab guerrillas; of Ahmed Ben Bella and (the French General) Massu; of plastic bombs and Arab dances. But they all agreed on one thing: it was a heroic country that had won its independence with its own blood. It was like Cuba. (*Conflicting Missions* 23)

On May 1963, a mission of fifty-five Cuban doctors, nurses, and other medical workers arrived in Algeria. It was certainly an unusual gesture: an underdeveloped country offering free aid to another in ever more dire straits. It was an act of solidarity that seemed to bring no tangible benefits and came at real material cost. Indeed, as many Cubans still remember today, the slogan went, “Los mejores van a Argelia” (The best go to Algeria). The aid was offered at a time when the exodus of doctors from Cuba following the revolution had forced the government to stretch

its resources while launching its domestic programs to increase mass access to healthcare (*Conflicting Missions* 25).

The missions to Algeria were supported by print publications that praised Algerian determination and educated Cubans about Algeria, its people and its culture. In the years that follow the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and Algerian independence in 1962—and even after Ben Bella was ousted from power in 1965—over sixty more articles of varying lengths, detail and coverage would appear in *Revolución*, *Verde Olivo* and *Granma* (see Figures 6-15). The images and general effort to link the Cuban Revolution to Algeria’s anti-colonial movement resonates with similar approaches in French journals of the period.<sup>88</sup> In *Paris-Match*, for example, an article entitled “Les Guerrilleros” by journalist Jean Lartéguy (See Figure 18) includes the following statement: “Au moment où les révolutionnaires de Cuba veulent créer de Vietnams partout dans le monde, les Américains risquent, ” asserts Lartéguy, “de connaitre avec cette Amérique Latine leur Algérie.”<sup>89</sup> [At a time when Cubans seek to create Vietnams around the world, Americans run the risk of finding their own Algeria in Latin America.] In this spirit, Lartéguy’s comparison between Cuba and Algeria resonates with nineteenth-century rhetorical practices that allowed for anti-American corsairs in the Caribbean to call themselves “los musulmanes del mar” [Muslims of the Sea], through the contact of which Havana—to Félix Varela’s chagrin—came to be known as “el Argel de América” [America’s Algiers]. Lartéguy’s statement also recalls an article entitled “El polvorín del mediterraneo,” published in *Bohemia*

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<sup>88</sup> Part of the intellectual tourism to the island in the early 1960s, French interest in the Cuban Revolution of 1959 is confirmed by visits from novelist Françoise Sagan (*Bonjour Tristesse*, 1954), intellectuals Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, and film-maker Agnes Varda, among others.

<sup>89</sup> The article appeared in July 1967 (pp. 18-29).

May 13, 1956 (See fig. 7). The article implicitly compares the political volatility of the Mediterranean region with current events in Cuba under Fulgencio Batista.

The relationship between Cuba and Algeria at this time is also supported and strengthened by events, including the *IX Festival Mundial de la Juventud y los Estudiantes* [IX World Youth and Student Festival] to be celebrated in Algeria in the summer of 1965<sup>90</sup> (see Figures 16-17). It is also of significant importance that in 1972, as the Algeria “fever” apparently subsides, the journal *El Arabe* (see Figures 19-23), founded by the Association of Cuban Arabs in February of that year, appears on the scene. The journal expanded editorial attention to other Arab countries and included the publication of articles that addressed Arab presence in the Americas. While cordial relationships, Gleijeses contends, were also established with several African countries, in particular Egypt, Ghana and Guinea, as Gleijeses asserts, “Algeria was Cuba’s first love in Africa”—and, I add, at least in the years leading to and during the Cuban Revolution, also Cuba’s first love in the Arab world.

Having understood some of the important ways in which Cuba and Algeria come together in the political arena during the late 1950s and early 1960s, in the following section, I discuss the ways in which the figure of Martí becomes a foundational element of the 1959 revolution. Martí’s interest in the Arab world, I argue, contributes to and authenticates the creation of an identification paradigm in which images of Algeria and Algerians are represented as elements of the revolutionary ethos.

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<sup>90</sup> Due to the Algerian nation’s political turmoil, the festival was suspended and later held in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria.

### 3.2 Martí, the Moors, and the Cuban Revolution of 1959

Before going any further, let us first concede that the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and its institutions succeeded at creating a *locus* from which to think about Latin American identity in the 1960s. It is precisely during these years (and from 1959 on) that Latin American identity and, more specifically, Cuban identity will be challenged. If we understand that the process and category of Revolution is, as Quintero Herencia<sup>91</sup> asserts, a cut or interruption that sets the established mode of perceiving the present in a state of crisis, it behooves us to understand the images and representations that participate in the creation of that specific temporality (and that the revolutionary process privileges) to the exclusion of many other possibilities. In light of this, it is instructive to note that—within the new order (in temporal and cultural terms) set in place by the events of 1959 in Cuba—the figure of Cuba’s national hero José Martí appears as a paradigmatic ghost from Cuba’s historical and cultural past.

As Quintero Herencia asserts, and Cubans in and outside of the island agree, Martí and *la obra martiana* become the object through which a re-evaluation of the national takes place. The new version of the national inaugurated in 1959 not only makes current Martí’s political and poetic discourse, but becomes confirmed by its *ethos* in the process. The anxiety over national identity that Quintero calls genealogical will see a specific cartography, a map to follow in Martí’s writing, a map that, I argue, also includes (in keeping with Martí’s own interests in the region and the necessities of the 1959 revolution) the figure of the Moor.

The representation of the Moor and the Arab seen in Martí’s political discourse and poetic works in the nineteenth century loses its historical and geographical specificity, resurfacing in the late 1950s to satisfy both the international interests of the revolution and its

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<sup>91</sup> See Juan Carlos Quintero Herencia’s *Fulguración del espacio. Letras e imaginario institucional de la Revolución Cubana (1960-1971)*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2002.

practice of inclusion, as well as the need to establish continuity with Cuba's historical past. This process, however, takes place in terms of the anticolonial movement in Algeria and through the representation of Algeria and Algerians in Cuban print and television. As such, Algeria and its representation become a privileged image, to the exclusion of many other possibilities. To the extent that the Revolution's interests in Algeria exist along an interpretative paradigm that can claim a continuum initiated by Martí's own interests in North Africa and the idealization of the Arab figure in his writings (discussed in Chapter 2), the representation of Algeria and Algerians in the 50s and 60s inherits the same coexistent contradictions that plagued the representation of the Moor in nineteenth century Cuba. The anxieties that such contradictions reveal at this time, however, are now situated within the Revolution's own specific concerns: while in the nineteenth century the Moor becomes the figure that both separates and unites Cuba to its colonial past, now (and in terms of the 1959 Revolution), it is the model that informs rhetorical practices surrounding the representation of Algeria and Algerians. Similar to their Moorish antecedents, Algerians are now those who both separate and unite Cuba from the West, here epitomized by the "colossal North," the United States.

In order to understand the role of the United States within this framework and before going any further, let us consider how Cuba's contact with the United States in the nineteenth century propelled the island in new directions, among these, the understanding of itself as culturally exceptional, in terms of its Latin American neighbors—the long colonial relationship with Spain may also contribute to this view. A racial dimension may be also added to all of this, if we consider that due to the extinction of natives on the island during the early years of the colony, white Cubans had slowly acquired an understanding of themselves as racially superior,

not only in terms of the island's African population (as politics of *blanqueamiento* in the nineteenth century confirm), but also in terms of its *mestizo* Latin American neighbors.<sup>92</sup>

### 3.3 Cuba and the “Colossal North”/ the American “West”

As Chapter 1 discusses, the nineteenth century in Cuba was a decisive time in the formation and articulation of Cuban nationality. The vast emigration to the United States during this time, in particular by those who played important roles in the definition of a Cuban identity (such as Martí, for instance), settled in the United States. This emigration, as historian and Cuba scholar Louis A. Pérez reminds us, in *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* (1999), included Cubans of all ages and classes, as well as men, women, black and white Cubans over at least three generations. According to Pérez,

Much in the Cuban sense of future and of place in that future was shaped by or otherwise derived from the encounter with the North. The dominant facets of national consciousness were in formation, influenced by growing familiarity with a larger world in which North American usages, insinuated themselves into émigré sensibilities. The experience was vital, for it enabled a great many Cubans to become familiar with the modern world, out of which alternative ideological systems and moral hierarchies passed directly into what was then being assembled as Cuban. Process created memory, and some of the central sources of nationhood were derived from experience with the North. (7)

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<sup>92</sup> Martí's discourse on the concept of race in his foundational essay, “*Nuestra América*,” may serve as evidence not only of the need to address such topics for a Latin American reality, but specifically of the needs to address racial politics in Cuba.

As a result of this encounter with the North—sustained throughout the nineteenth century and into the present—old values became relative, “to be sorted out and arranged alongside new values, and subject to evaluation” (36). The methods and techniques acquired, accompanied by a new hierarchy of values and new sensibilities, attitudes and standards contributed to a general discontent with the status quo, but also to Cubans’ understanding of themselves as different and, even, exceptional. To a great extent, the main characteristics of Cuban notions of modernity, progress, and above all civilization resulted from contact with the United States. As such, the *criollo* quandary, “How to separate from Spain while remaining part of it?” becomes—in the late 50s and 60s—“How to separate from the “North/West” while remaining part of it?” This last question—which I consider fundamental—also contributes to the modes of representation surrounding Algeria and Algerians in Cuba during the years leading up to and following the Cuban Revolution of 1959. In order to understand the geographical reorientation that takes place at this time, it is instructive to recall the place of Oriente, the eastern region of the island, in the revolutionary events of the time.

### **3.3.1 Son de Oriente: Cuba’s Wild East and the Revolution of 1959**

As a step toward the understanding of the relationship between representations of the Moor in nineteenth-century Cuba and Cuba-Algeria relations in the twentieth century, I would like to now discuss the role of Oriente in the Cuban Revolution. In addition, I will also discuss the manifestations therein of earlier relationships, in particular the link between Afro-religious deity Ogún, Santiago Matamoros (Saint James, the Moor Slayer), and revolutionary struggles. As earlier chapters have shown, the role of the eastern region of Oriente in the Cuban Revolution of 1959 is only the last in a series of uprisings, rebellions, and revolutions that trace their origins to



the region and to the religious symbols associated with it. Following a tradition that goes all the way back to the first slave rebellions in the Caribbean, Castro's Moncada attack on July 26, 1953 was set to coincide with the Santiago carnival in eastern Cuba. This carnival, an annual celebration held in July, is actually a three-day Afro-religious festival whose roots date back to the first festivities commemorating the birthday of the city's patron saint, Santiago Matamoros. Santiago or Saint James is a Christian saint whose legend and iconography may be traced to medieval Spain's battles against the Moors. In a new world context and in response to the socio-cultural and political needs of the region, Santiago is eventually syncretized as the Afro-Cuban orisha Ogun.<sup>93</sup> For the purpose of seeing the broader connections between Santiago Matamoros, and the history of uprisings and revolutions in the Caribbean, it may be instructive to recall that it was precisely during a legendary Vodou ceremony in honor of the orisha (Ogou) that Haiti's revolt against slavery began in 1791.<sup>94</sup> The attack to capture the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, then, is yet another substantiation of the revolutionary character of the eastern region of the island and also a continuation of a revolutionary tradition associated with the orisha Ogun and its doppelganger Santiago Matamoros.

As is common knowledge for Cuban history aficionados and scholars alike, the Moncada attack initiates a series of actions for which the eastern region readily provides a stage. Castro's stay in the Sierra Maestra, Cuba's largest mountain range located in Santiago de Cuba, is a symbolic point of reference for the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The area served as refuge and

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<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 14-19 for a detailed discussion on the subject.

<sup>94</sup> As Donald J. Cosentino claims, in "Repossession: Ogun in Folklore and Literature," "In no other New World country does Ogun claim a more central role in the national culture than in Haiti. In the guise of Matamoros/St. Jacques, Ogun's image is plastered in sitting rooms and on temple walls throughout the republic. Every taxi has his red ribbon tied around the base of its rear-view mirror. Unlike Santería which treats the god like a dangerous hired gun, Vodou indulges in unabashed celebrations of Ogou. From all over Haiti, pilgrims travel by truck, car, and foot to the town of Plaine du Nord to participate in the world's largest annual Ogun festival" (298). From Sandra T. Barnes' *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New* (1997).

encampment to Cuban insurgents dating back to indigenous revolts in 1511. During the Ten Year War (1868-78), the Little War (1880) and the War of Independence (1895-98) the Sierra Maestra was as much an active center of operations and rebel camps as it was in the Cuban Revolution of 1959. It was in precisely in Oriente that Castro and a group of over eighty young revolutionaries, including his brother Raúl, and Argentine doctor, Ernesto Che Guevara, landed in the small yacht bearing the name of Granma, a province bordering the Santiago de Cuba province.

Taking into consideration the role of the Oriente region in the independence wars, as well as its continued rising importance in the Revolution of 1959, I argue that a South vs. North in North Africa is transmuted (as early as the nineteenth century) into an East vs. West in Cuba where the South (North Africa) is anticolonial, as is Cuba's east. Ultimately, the "oriental" history of the Cuban revolutionary plight in general, and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 in particular supports and is extended (in metaphorical and geopolitical ways) by Cuba's "oriental" relations, here defined in terms of Cuba-Algeria relations.

Having understood the continued importance of Oriente in Cuban revolutionary history, as well as the links between Cuba's colonial history and Cuba-Algeria relations, I now turn to a discussion of the ways in which the orientalist-identification paradigm in respect to the figure of the Moor in the nineteenth century is found to inform the ways in which Algeria and Algerians are represented in the 1950s and 60s.

### **3.4 Identification and Orientalist Paradigms in the Cuban Revolution of 1959**

The case studies that follow, namely Jorge "Papito" Seguera's *Memorias de un embajador Cubano en Argelia* in the early 1960s and Delia Fiallo's soap opera "*Bajo el cielo de*

*Argelia*,” broadcast in Cuba in 1962, reveal two coexistent and yet contradictory representations of Algeria that, as indicated earlier, resonate with nineteenth-century representations of the Moor in Cuban literature: On the one hand, Algeria is represented within an identification paradigm, reestablishing and confirming the revolutionary genealogy that begins in the nineteenth century with Martí’s political discourse. In this sense, Algeria is one with the Cuban Revolution and, thus, exists within the historical and political specificities of its time; It provides for the Cuban revolution a kind of mirror image that allows the revolutionary process to distant itself from the West (here understood in terms of US capitalism), while aligning itself with the South/East. On the other hand, as found in Serguera’s memoir, Algeria is also represented as an Other, a backward and, thus, inferior entity that serves to resurface inherited colonial anxieties (of racial and cultural undertones) over the Arab world, understood (in these terms) as an Orientalized Other.

These two coexistent yet contradictory representations may be better understood, as discussed in earlier chapters, in terms of Cuba’s own historical ambivalence over national identity (inherited, as discussions in Chapter 1 and 2 have suggested, from Spain’s own uncertain position in the European continent), which resurfaces at the moment that the revolution seeks to establish a New Order. For the orientalist-identification paradigm to exist, then, the representations that support it must adhere to at least two very different cartographies and, if we like, misnomers: On the one hand Algeria becomes an Orientalized East and, on the other, an anticolonial South. As South, Algeria is involved in a guerrilla revolution against an oppressive colonial regime, and Algerians are forward-thinking and heroic, as early portrayals of the anticolonial struggle in journals, such *Bohemia* and later *Revolución*, *Verde Olivo* and *Granma* reveal. This representation of Algeria, mostly found in news journals and corroborated by the

Revolution's leader and *porte-voix*, Fidel Castro, may be included in a revolutionary “*nosotros*” that also includes Latin America. As an Orientalized East, however, Algeria and Algerians are represented as culturally inferior and distant, and excluded from participating in a “*nosotros*”; this latter portrayal, however, contributes to the imperial revolutionary goal of expanding the Revolution's politics and ethos to other parts of the oppressed world.

While Castro's revolution is not the first and perhaps not the last to turn the island of Cuba on its axis<sup>95</sup>, no other revolution in Cuba would have so much in its favor: namely, an extremely advanced system of communication, such as that represented by Cuban press, radio and television industry in the 1950s. The voice and image of the revolution would not only resound inside the island, but well beyond its coast. Reproducing the Cuban Revolution of 1959 in the rest of the oppressed world, gaining territory, became Castro's greatest goal, ironically making Cuba's missions overseas an imperialistic enterprise. As Jaime Suchlicki reminds us in *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro*,

[by] July 1960 Castro was boasting that he would convert ‘the Cordillera of the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of Latin America,’ and money, propaganda, men, and weapons began to flow from Havana in increasing quantities to foment the “anti-imperialist” revolution. (143)

Cuba became more than a satellite of the Soviet Union, more than an imperial subject of the USSR—its own imperial desires are manifested in the exportation of Castro's own kind of revolution to the rest of the Third World via images, such as photographs and posters—ironically, it is not Castro's image that is a thousand times multiplied around the world, but Che

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<sup>95</sup> Cuban uprising against Spanish rule in the late nineteenth century and later civil upheaval against encroaching dictatorships culminated in the 1933 revolution which ousted Cuban dictator Gerardo Machado from power, making for a trajectory of a revolutionary spirit on the island, and situating the Castro revolution as the last in a series.

Guevara's. While Latin America became the Revolution's fastest and most practical recruit, North Africa—given the island's colonial inheritance and anticolonial history, Martí's interest in the region, and the Revolution's own fascination with the Cuban patriarch—became its most natural conquest overseas.

### 3.5 Why Algeria?

We may wonder, of course, why not speak of Cuba and Angola, after all, Cuba spent many years in Angola and we have memoirs, such as *Spared Angola: Memories from a Cuban American Childhood* by Virgil Suárez to account for that relationship. Cuban novelist, Leonardo Padura's characters, for example, are evocative of a past also marked by Cuba's role in Angola. However, while these as well as other publications focus or at least make reference to Cuba's role in Black Africa, they completely ignore Cuba's link to Algeria and thus, North Africa and the Arab world. The answer to the question, "Why Algeria?" is simple: Cuba and Angola, for instance, did not share a pre-revolutionary past, such as that found in the pages of *Bohemia*. Cuba and Cubans had already been introduced to North Africa, via colonial Spain and the remnants of Al-Andalus, through the numerous *Quixotes* sent to the New World, through an Orient imaginary in the *Arabian Nights*, required reading in many Cuban households, and through an American film industry that brought among others, the unforgettable *Casablanca* in the 1940s to Cuban movie theatres. In fact, Cuba's response to Angola's request for aid in the early 70s was slow to arrive. Cuba had to think about its involvement in Angola—with Algeria, this was never the case. Aid to the FLN came from Cuba without previous request. As Piero Gleijeses suggests, in *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa 1959-1976*, although Cuba's delayed response to Angola's request may have been due to the political tension

of the times, there is no real explanation for its initial lack of enthusiasm toward the Angolan cause. Before Angola, there was Algeria—as far as Cuba’s involvement in Africa is concerned, Algeria was the first.

If we can understand the Cuban revolution as also a kind of imperial enterprise whose imperial subjects are made up of the masses (in Cuba, as well as the Third World) and whose system is made up of a language and imaginary of its own, we may begin to understand Algeria, as found in the work of Jorge “Serguera” Serguera and Delia Fiallo, in terms of Cuba’s first (imperial) mission in Africa; however, there is more to this than merely revolution international: the contradictory, yet coexistent modes of representation we find in Seguera’s and Fiallo’s work have been pre-conditioned by and inherited from the complexities of a Spanish colonial past. According to Ofelia Schutte, in “Resistance to Colonialism: Latin American Legacies,”

Cuba is one of the most interesting countries in the Western hemisphere when it comes to the analysis of colonialism and post-coloniality. Unlike most other “Hispanic-American” nations, which obtained their independence from Spain in the earlier parts of the century, during Martí’s lifetime (1853-1895) Cuba was still a colony of Spain. (33)

The “voyage” to Algiers, then, may be also understood as a revolutionary triumph and a “reconquest,” as well as the melancholy search for Al-Andaluz. Jorge “Serguera” Serguera’s memoir of his time in Algeria is a case in point.

### **3.6 Algeria, the Key to Africa**

*Che Guevara: La clave africana—memorias de un comandante cubano embajador de Cuba en Argelia* opens up with what may be considered a meditation on time and its ruins.

Written decades after Castro's revolution, Serguera's work constitutes a retrospective look at the moment of revolutionary enchantment—that is, the moment from which the future is marked by the fulfillment of a promise, by the glow of messianic zeal. At the time of the work's publication in 1997, there is only melancholy, the search for a time now lost, the need to decipher the past, and the certainty that the present—what was once to be the future—now lies in ruins. The work is a narrative memory of revolutionary high-times, but more importantly, it is the cultural consequence of the impact of colonial legacy on Cuba-Algeria relations. While Serguera's "memories" are meant to be factual, the unavoidable *literariness*<sup>96</sup> or literariness of his gesture (narrating the passing of time), the moment of encounter between fact and fiction is always a strange occurrence in the text. The very unexpectedness of the literary in what would have normally been a prosaic account of political facts and figures becomes a kind of literary device. In Serguera's work, narrative practice paves the way for a Cuban orientalism that echoes nineteenth-century orientalist representations of the Moor in the work of Cirilo Villaverde and José Martí. Although, as discussed in the previous chapters, differences in attitudes and historical circumstances (including changing attitudes toward slavery, personal interests, changing politics, and foreign influences) contributed to fundamental differences between Martí's orientalist representations and Villaverde's, the two coincided in ideological biases and depictions that characterized the Moor (in varying degrees) as Other. In this sense, Serguera's representation of Algeria and Algerians are no different.

Serguera's memoir opens up with an implicit admission that the most modern conceptions and understanding of the Arab world belong to the past. It is worthy of mention that

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<sup>96</sup> Formalist Roman Jakobson declared in 1919 that the object of literary science is not literature but *literariness*, that is, what makes a given work a literary work is a series of devices used, the most important being *ostrananie* or defamiliarization or "making strange."

Serguera's understanding (or lack thereof) of Algeria is consistent and, thus, supports the Revolution's own ambivalence toward the Arab world. In Brad Epps's *Proper Conduct: Reinaldo Arenas, Fidel Castro, and the Politics of Homosexuality*, Epps recalls Tomas Borge's 1992 interview with Castro:

Castro described the 'problem' of homosexuality as a problem of history. For him, prejudice against gays and lesbians is the result of machismo, and machismo the result of colonialism. Machismo is, as Castro sees it, one of the many 'bad habits' Cubans received from Spanish conquistadores, who themselves received it from Arab conquerors. While the slippage of cultural and historical responsibility-- away from Cuba and the present to an ever-distant Arabic past--is revealing, the thing that so slips is perhaps even more significant." (259).

As Epps points out the slippage is significant: where in Castro's map is UMAP?<sup>97</sup> More importantly, for our discussion, what does this *slip* have to do with orientalism in Cuba? It seems that in order to set orientalism's hegemonic mechanism in motion, a distancing of the other is fundamental. Ironically, in the Revolution's imperial paradigm (here represented by Castro's words, as well as Serguera's) Cuba becomes North (West), a civilized and civilizing entity, and Algeria becomes an Orientalized East: backward, stuck in time, somewhere across a temporal and geographical border, a projection of everything Cuba's revolutionary dream of progress is not. For Serguera, this "distancing" nourishes the soil on which to anchor an orientalist discourse. The presumed to be known cultural past is superimposed on the present, or projected onto the present. Serguera's journey to Algeria becomes a voyage to the past, a Carpenterian *viaje a la semilla*, the discovery of lost steps:

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<sup>97</sup> (U.M.A.P.) Unidad Militar de Ayuda a la Producción.



El 2 de enero de 1963: El tiempo se hundió. Esta sensación de transcurrir, de alejamiento de una época, de hechos, tal vez de la juventud, lleva implícita una emoción, una sensación sentimental. El tiempo, para algunos, todo lo cura, para otros todo se olvida. Es un motivo nostálgico, de poetas, a veces, melancolía concentrada. El ilustre filósofo de Atenas, Platón, lo definió con gran desenfado como la imagen móvil de la eternidad. (Captítulo 1, 17)

Jorge “Serguera” Serguera set out for Algeria early January 1963. The man who would be known for banning the music of The Beatles in Cuba had been named Cuban Ambassador to Algeria. Serguera tells us: “[...] Salí rumbo a Argelia como el primer embajador extraordinario y plenipotenciario de Cuba en ese país” (31). The lines resound with a kind of papal pomp, recalling Carpentier’s introduction to *El arpa y la sombra*, the apocryphal diaries of Christopher Columbus. What follows is the confession of what Serguera calls “sensations” (as opposed to perceptions) of his encounter with a new world. It is almost as if the New World were on the other side of the Atlantic, the destination and not the point of departure. Because the other is always at a distance, Serguera experiences Algeria as an object of desire, as a world of sensations; this is particularly evident in the way that—during a flashback—he describes an Algerian woman who came to Cuba as part of a delegation:

Completaba la delegación Miriam Belmihoub, abogada. Era una de las mujeres prominentes de la reciente historia de Argelia. Alta, de ojos semitas negros, muy blanca de piel, pelo negro, piernas torneadas en el paraíso, con una cara y una sonrisa capaces de despertar a un muerto, por sí sola constituía un estímulo para querer conocer a Argelia, su pasado y presente. De aquella risa allende al Atlántico que evocaba en sueños, mediterráneo, desierto, montes Atlas, turbantes,

sabor a almizcle y aquel frescor nocturno de *Alger la Blanche* con su música estremecedora que provocaría en mí el afán de adentrarme en aquella cultura. Era mi primer encuentro con el Islam. (29-30)

What does it mean to have legs that have been shaped in paradise? Where are the coordinates of this “Eden” Serguera is referring to? What does it mean to have “semitic” eyes? Are semitic eyes the equivalent of Moorish eyes or *ojos moros*, a categorization that exists in Cuban culture and that becomes synonymous with Spanish eyes (almond-shaped eyes)? Moorish eyes or *ojos moros* as a description of a facial feature underscore the continuation between a Cuban geneology and Spain’s Arab past, an example of which is Marti’s Spanish dancer with the eyes of a treacherous Moor (discussed in Chapter 2); on the other hand, calling eyes *semitic* creates a hegemonic distance: the observer (Serguera) becomes West and the observed (the Algerian woman) becomes Other or East. What is at play here, then, is the force of invention and imperial drive that purposely racializes and defamiliarizes through the use of the word *semitic*, circumventing the moment of negotiation and foreclosing all possibility of common ground. As far as paradise was concerned, Serguera was undoubtedly well aware of the national (misogynist) imaginary that linked Cuba (its women, its beaches, etc.) to an island paradise, not to mention the revolutionary rhetoric that accompanied such imaginings—to quote the words of Cuban writer Zoe Valdes’s Yocandra from *Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada*, Serguera was surely aware that “[He] [came] from an island that had wanted to build paradise” (1) or that, at this time, still believed it was possible. In this case, the observation regarding the Algerian woman’s legs succeeds at short cutting the distance between him and his object of desire by identifying paradise as the origin of her legs, an origin that—by virtue of the cliché of the association in question—may also be claimed by a Cuban woman’s legs, according to local (Cuban) logic. One

may, therefore, speculate that Serguera is referring to dreams of a distant conquest overlaid with eroticism.

The symbolic *gesture* of conquest seems complete when Serguera evokes the act of naming and “baptizes” an Algerian waiter with a new Christian name:

Con posterioridad a los funerales fuimos a comer al restaurante de un hotel, después de ordenar la comida yo pedí adicionalmente dos cervezas como cosa muy natural y para mi asombro el camarero comenzó a gesticular y a levantar la voz en tono amenazante. Mi compañero de mesa, el chofer de la misión, un argelino que nosotros habíamos bautizado con el nombre de Benigno, ante los gritos del hombre, casi me imploró que le dijera que esa cerveza había sido idea mía y que él nada tenía que ver con el asunto. Este incidente y las particularidades de aquel velorio me confirmaron que estaba conociendo un mundo que ni siquiera imaginaba (441).

Until this moment, religion (and/or an open discussion of religious differences) has been avoided; it is, however, the act of naming that suggests both religious differences and a moment of possession.

Afirmar que yo tenía una idea preconcebida, instalada, prefabricada antes de llegar a Argel no me lo creería nadie. Mis criterios provenían de terceros, prensa, informes de nuestro Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, libros de historia, etc. Recuerdo que el último libro que leí y finalicé su lectura en Argel fue El legado del islam de la Universidad de Oxford.

Nobody would believe me if I said that I had a preconceived, set, prefabricated idea before arriving in Algiers. My criteria were shaped by third parties, the press,

reports from our Ministry of Foreign Relations, history books, etc. I remember that the last book I read and finished while already in Algiers was *The Legacy of Islam* from Oxford University. (My translation)

It is interesting to note that, while Serguera contends that he did not have a preconceived notion about Algeria before setting foot in Algiers, he also tells us that his knowledge of the region had been strictly extracted from his reading of secondary sources, such as publications from the press, the Department of Foreign Ministry, history books and, his last read, *The Legacy of Islam*,<sup>98</sup> a product of orientalist academic research.

*The Legacy . . .*, which is made up of thirteen essays, includes titles such as *Spain and Portugal*, *The Crusades*, and *Geography and Commerce*, among others. A quick look at Chapter 1, *Spain and Portugal*, written by J. B. Trend, will reveal that, contrary to Serguera's contention that he arrived in Algiers in January 1963 without expectations, *The Legacy of Islam* alone was enough to provide a lens (albeit orientalist) through which to imagine Algeria—Miriam Belmihoub was not, in fact, his first “encounter” with Islam, as he tells us—J.B. Trend's essay possibly had been there first, not to mention the fact that Serguera was born in Palma Soriano, in Santiago de Cuba where, among other architectural elements, the Mudéjar<sup>99</sup> style (Moorish style of architecture or architectural elements) could be appreciated in such historical dwellings as the

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<sup>98</sup> In attempting to identify the text to which Serguera refers, I searched for *The Legacy of Islam* under Oxford Press publications. I discovered a new edition published in 1974 by Oxford at the Clarendon Press and supervised by the late Islamic law scholar, Joseph Schacht. Schacht's 1974 edition replaced the one published by Oxford in 1931 with entirely new articles. According to Jeanette Wakin in *Remembering Joseph Schacht (1902-1969)*, the work was completed by C.E. Bosworth after Schacht's death. See Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, *Occasional Publications 4*, January 2003. *Remembering Joseph Schacht (1902-1969)* by Jeanette Wakin.

<sup>99</sup> See *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture*, Vol 1 (2011) <http://contemporaneity.pitt.edu> for history and use of the term. According to Ila Nicole Sheren, in “Transcultured Architecture: Mudéjar's Epic Journey Reinterpreted,” “This style of architecture and ornamentation originated with Arab craftsmen living in reconquered medieval Spain. Embraced by Spanish Christians, Mudéjar traveled over the course of the next four centuries, becoming part of the architectural history of Latin America [...]” (138).

Velazquez House (Museo de Ambiente Colonial Cubano) in Santiago. Built between 1516 and 1530, the house/museum is an extraordinary example of the Mudéjar influence on the island, which flourished during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>100</sup> Ironically, the term Mudéjar comes from the Arabic word *mudayyan*, literally “one permitted to remain.”<sup>101</sup>

Before returning our attention to Serguera’s memoir, I would like to pause for a moment and turn to a discussion on the construction of Algeria and Cuba as an imagined community. Using Benedict Anderson’s definition of the term as my point of departure, in the next section I will attempt to clarify why and how Algeria comes to be included in a revolutionary “nosotros.”

### **3.7 Algeria and Cuba, an Imagined Community**

In *Imagined Communities*, published in 1983, Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). By imagined community, Anderson means a community where the majority of its members will never meet or learn about other members of the nation and, yet, will share a common view about their relationship within the community. According to Anderson, the nation may be imagined as a community inasmuch as it ignores inequalities and exploitation in favor of a horizontal “comradeship” (7). It is printing and the circulation of vernacular languages that make possible the integration and fraternity that community members experience. One of Anderson’s

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<sup>100</sup> The style included carved and patterned ceilings known as *alfarjes*. One of the most prominent features of Casa Diego Velázquez in Santiago de Cuba are the window screens known as celosias, which cover the second floor. The term *celosía* comes from the Spanish word *celar* (*to hide*). The purpose of the screens was the protection of the private sphere and the safeguard and anonymity of the women in the house, who could look out to the street from behind the screen without being seen.

<sup>101</sup> Perhaps originally referring to the influence of those Spanish Arabs who were allowed to stay during the Reconquest, now the terms speaks to the resilience of the style and its integration into local architecture over the centuries.

revolutionary contributions to the concept of nation is the idea that the nation is a homogeneous totality whose advancement is constant in the historical process through representation in literature and print journalism. It is through the printed material of what he terms “print-capitalism” that this camaraderie makes possible a sense of sacrifice, which ultimately reaches each member of the nation through mass printing. While Anderson refers to local elements and relationships when he speaks of an imagined community, I would like to extend the term to also include outside or generally considered foreign elements and transnational relationships that due to specific historical circumstances and political necessities are admitted for inclusion (to the exclusion of other elements) in the national project.

In keeping with Anderson’s discussion of the imagined community and the revolutionary “nosotros,” in this case also facilitated by calendric coincidence<sup>102</sup>, Serguera tells us that,

[...] [En] Cuba existían criterios, desde los niveles más bajos hasta la más alta jerarquía, de que el proceso argelino, la revolución argelina, era muy similar a nuestra revolución, a nuestro proceso. Que eran gemelas. El hecho de que la lucha haya coincidido en la misma etapa y que su duración hubiese sido similar las homologaba. Otro elemento semejante era la desproporción de las fuerzas enfrentadas. El ALN (Ejército de Liberación Argelino) contra las Fuerzas Armadas francesas y el Ejército Rebelde contra las Fuerzas Armadas del estado cubano. Generalizada la analogía: el pueblo argelino contra el Estado francés, el pueblo cubano contra los usurpadores del Estado cubano. En ambos casos, potencias extranjeras de primer orden apoyaban a los enemigos de los pueblos.

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<sup>102</sup> By calendrical coincidence, I am referring to the fact that both the Cuban Revolution and the Algerian War of Independence share a particular time in the calendar. The Cuban Revolution triumphs in 1959, while Algeria wins its independence in 1962. Castro rises to power during the years that Algeria is engaged in a bloody struggle for independence (1954-1962).

Había otros elementos que aproximaban los hechos, en su argumentación, a situaciones muy próximas a la identidad. Adelanto que todos estos argumentos eran, dentro de lo rudimentario, superficiales. Ni eran similares como fenómeno político, económico ni histórico. Mucho menos gemelas, mellizas ni hermanas. Aun cuando la época coincidía cronológicamente, su diferencia cualitativa en lo político, económico e histórico no guardaba semejanza. Argelia se hallaba insurrecta frente a una potencia colonialista. Cuba estuvo enfrascada en una lucha interna en la que la mayor parte de la población apoyaba, contra una dictadura política (115-116).

This notion that the Algerian and the Cuban experience are *semblable* is a product of Cuba's imperial drive to export the Cuban revolution to other parts of the Third World through the creation of relationships that, as Serguera points out, may or may not be sustainable. To speak of Cuba-Algeria as an imagined community means that Algeria has been successfully included in the "nosotros" so defined by the Cuban Revolution. For Algeria to participate in "nosotros," distances must be overcome and, as we will discuss in the next section, in terms of Delia Fiallo's *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*, also time and difference.

This process of making the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the Algerian struggle for independence into parallel processes and experiences must also include the process through which the image of the Moor has persisted in Cuban literature, informing not only culture, but political affinities. It is in fact—as evidenced by earlier discussion on the coverage of Algerian war for independence in journals like *Bohemia*—an imagined community, a "nosotros" across time and distance that we are referring to when we discuss Cuba-Algeria relations. As a relationship based on continuity between the former colonial power (Spain) and the former

colony (Cuba), as well as a continuous process between the aborted efforts of Cuba's war of independence (I consider Martí's own discourse here), the revolution of 1933 and Castro's 1959 revolution, the Cuba-Algeria connection constitutes a crossing of historical forces—namely the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, the conquest of the New World, the Algerian war of independence and the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

While the narrative construction of Algeria and Algerians in Jorge "Papito" Serguera's memoir constitutes an example of orientalist representation, in the following section, I discuss the ways in which Delia Fiallo's soap opera "Bajo el cielo de Argelia" [Under an Algerian Sky] functions within an identification paradigm that—much like Martí's political discourse does with the Moors—includes Algeria and Algerians in the national picture.

### 3.8 Under an Algerian Sky

Delia Fiallo is a novelist and scriptwriter born in Havana, Cuba in 1918. She studied philosophy and literature at the University of Havana and, in 1948 received the now little known, *Premio Hernández Catá Internacional*<sup>103</sup> for her short story, "El otro," which tells the story of a love triangle between *los guajiros* Jerónimo, Antonia, and Macho Cabrera. Fiallo was one of the founders of the group "Nuestro Tiempo," which remained active for about three years, and later one of the original founders of the art journal *Nueva Generación*, which included the collaboration of young writers and artists, such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Fernández Retamar, Nilo Rodríguez, Juan Blanco, José María Mijares, and the sculptor Sila Sanchez. The

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<sup>103</sup> Antonio Barreras, Cuban writer and author of the short story collection, *La culpable* (1924) and disciple of Alfonso Hernández Catá, established, in memory of his mentor, the annual competition (national and international) awarded to the best short stories submitted. Among those who received the Hernández Catá Award were Lino Novás Calvo (1905-1983), *La luna*; Félix Pita Rodríguez (1909-1998), *Cosme y Damián*; Dora Alonso (1918-2001), *Negativo*. For a complete list of recipients and a brief bibliography of Alfonso Hernández Catá, please see Notes and Annotations.



group, however, Fiallo confessed during an interview with this author, dissolved due to differing political views. Fiallo began her long and illustrious career in television writing *radionovelas* or radio serials in Havana in 1949. Her first *telenovela*, *Soraya*, was broadcast in Cuba in 1957. Since then, she has written over thirty scripts. Some of her major successes have been *Esmeralda* (1970), *Leonela* (1983), and *Cristal* (1985), her first European success. Much like others of her generation and political views, Fiallo left Cuba in 1966, seven years after the triumph of Castro's revolution, establishing herself as a scriptwriter at *Venevisión*, one of Venezuela's largest television networks. Now known as the "Queen of Latin Soaps," Fiallo ultimately established the aesthetic codes of the most popular massive television genre. In 2003, she received the *Premio Inte*, presented to Spanish-language TV Industry's Most Outstanding Figures.

Fiallo's *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* is comprised of 88 chapters and was broadcast in 1962, in Canal 6 de CMQ-Televisión, from 8:30 to 9pm, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays<sup>104</sup>. The setting and plot of the novel are certainly peculiar, but not surprising, given the historical connection between Cuba and Algeria. The story takes place during the last months of 1961 and the first months of 1962 and, in the author's own words, "*narra la gesta heroica del pueblo argelino por obtener su independencia*" [narrates the Algerian people's heroic *geste* toward independence] (*Bajo el cielo de Argelia* 1).<sup>105</sup>

The writing and broadcasting of *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* is best understood within historical, political, and economic contexts, including relations between Cuba and the United States and Cuba and Algeria, as well as within an Orient imaginary or (post) orientalism that

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<sup>104</sup> Programming information and brief description of the soap was discovered in *Verde Olivo*, Año III, No.7, February 18, 1962.

<sup>105</sup> The quote is taken from a copy of the original synopsis of the work, given to the author by Delia Fiallo during an interview, on Thursday, June 17, 2010, at her home in Miami, Florida.

makes possible characters in the novel such as Alain Ben Arús, half-brother of Marcel, a French journalist without scruples, and son of French General Etien Dubois and the Algerian woman Maiedine. *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*, which has never been broadcast outside of Cuba and is now lost in the archives of CMQ, constitutes a narrative memory of a time when Algeria made a transition from Cuba's political scene into Cuba's cultural production, anticipating characters such as Abilio Estévez's *El Moro*, the Algerian pilot in *Los palacios distantes* (discussed in Chapter 4), novelistic "extras," such as *el argelino* in Zoe Valdes's *Yocandra and the Paradise of Nada*, and even recent soap operas, such as *El Clon*, written by Brazilian writer Gloria Pérez.

*El Clon* had 221 chapters; it was broadcast in Brazil, Monday through Saturday at 9 pm, from October 2001 to June 2002. In the United States, *Telemundo* aired the Spanish-dubbed version Monday through Friday at 10 pm., from January 2002 to December 2002. While certainly entertaining, *El Clon* relied on absurd representations of present-day Moroccans both in Morocco and Brazil as odalisques and pashas living in lavishly decorated harems where polygamy is the norm. The novel, however, also makes an attempt to present a positive view of Islamic practice, a much needed perspective after the September 11 attacks. While *El Clon*'s recent success speaks to public interest in such topics and Latin America's continued reliance on colonial trends, Fiallo's novel came first.

Given the historical background of the novel and the surrounding events of the time, Fiallo's soap seems to take a different approach and, unlike *El Clon*, begins by steering completely away from religion. The novel takes place in 1962 during the last year of the Algerian war of independence, in the province or *wislaya* of Biskara, or Biskra, in northeast Algeria. Because the name of the capital of Biskra is also Biskra and the author does not identify if the story takes place in the capital, we are only certain about the general geographical setting

of the novel. Biskra (the capital) was a military post and the battle scene in the rebellions of 1848 and 1871, and was, as was the rest of Algeria, a ground for Algerian resistance against the French. Fiallo's choice, however, may possibly stem, at least in part, from a pre-existing literary reference, such as Andre Gide's *The Immoralist*, which takes place in Biskra—if not all, at least its key sections. Biskra as a location is perhaps the better choice, as choosing Algiers would have inevitably involved The Casbah, not only difficult to reproduce for television, but a difficult location, in general, from which to anchor the plot. The use of Algiers and, consequently, the use of the Casbah would have facilitated scenes such as those later found in Perez's *El Clon*, or in earlier cinematic (exotic) representations of the Casbah, such as those found in Julian Duvivier's 1937 film, *Pépé le Moko*; instead, the plot is developed between the café or *cafetín* and the mountains, which are not identified by name. It is interesting to note, then, that Fiallo gives up the more potentially (and traditionally) exotic Casbah for the mountains, which have immediate resonance to Cuba's own Sierra Maestra and its crucial role in Cuba's 1959 revolution.

In a society where media censorship had matched and perhaps surpassed levels of repression during the last years of Batista's regime, the spectacle of the Algerian revolution for a Cuban audience under Castro suggests the ways in which the Castro regime believed and insisted in promoting the Algeria-Cuba connection established earlier in the pages of *Bohemia*. As the melodrama distances itself (by its very definition) from "real" information, analysis, serious documentation, and/or expert discussions on the topic, its political importance goes unnoticed. *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*, as cultural evidence of a Cuba-Algeria connection is, then, both historicizing and dehistoricizing. While melodrama seemingly gives up intellectual and political complexity in exchange for pure entertainment factor and emotional impact, Fiallo's *Bajo el cielo...* is a politicized expression of culture from the outset. As expressed in an interview

conducted by this author in the summer of 2010 (See Appendix C), *Bajo el cielo...* was a “covert” critique of the situation in Cuba in 1962.

*Bajo el cielo...* was not a single example of this, Fiallo had already written several scripts which aired in the previous years and shared the theme of social struggle, such as *Mexico indómito* and *Soraya*. In the first, Fiallo told the story of the Mexican Revolution, while the second focused on the liberation of India from British colonialism. In a similar role to that played in the *Bohemia* articles from the late 1950s, Algeria once again would become a disguise, a way of deceiving the censors set in place by the current Cuban state. It is interesting to note that, while Fiallo’s soap opera is being broadcast, and before the author has a chance to adjust the end to the whims and wishes of a mass audience, Algeria reaches independence and the Evian Accord is signed. According to Fiallo, she only learned of the Algerian triumph from a colleague and hurried to inform herself of the successes of the FLN, in order to end her soap opera accordingly. As Fiallo explained to this author during the 2010 interview, the ending was written “*en la marcha*,” that is, during the actual broadcast.

For CMQ, the Algerian struggle was a current event already dehistoricized by its own televised spectacle. Cut from its historicity, the Algerian fight was reduced to the level of the absurd, as the viewer saw only those elements that could be shown (due to budget constraints, set limitations, and censorship) at a given moment, as well as cut off from its antecedents and consequences. However, the deterritorialization and dehistoricizing of “*a bataille d’Alger*” for Cuban consumption does not exist in isolation; on the contrary, *Bajo el cielo...* complements Cuban interest in Algeria in the political sector, as evidenced by not only the earlier articles in *Bohemia*, but later articles in *Revolución* and *Verde Olivo*. While *Mexico indómito* and *Soraya* remained in the ambiguous realm between fiction and fact, the broadcast in Cuban television of

*Bajo el cielo de Argelia* was supported by not only earlier interest in the region, but by the currency of Algeria as a topic of discussion in Cuban news.

Were it not for the role Algeria (as a region in North Africa) played in Cuban print media in the years preceding and following the triumph of Castro's revolution, *Bajo el cielo...* would be understood only as one in a string of stories about a poverty-stricken, colonized part of the world that all end up sounding the same were it not for the change in proper names, sets, and costumes. While Fiallo, in an interview with this author, insisted that *Bajo el cielo...* constituted a political necessity, whose purpose was not only to arouse consciousness, but to call for reconsideration (in particular at this early stage) of revolutionary goals and questioning of the regime's true intentions, it is more likely that the soap opera had as its *raison d'être* the same early enthusiasm for the revolution that also brought Fiallo's *Zoraya* and *México indómito* to Cuba's small screen. Written within a historical perspective and dictated by real-time events, *Bajo el cielo...* is an example of what Elias Canetti and more recently Peter Sloterdijk, in speaking of the phenomenology of the masses, have called "discharge," in reference to the mass's interior movement. According to Canetti, in *Crowds and Power* (1960), the most important phenomenon that takes place within the masses is the moment of "discharge"—that is, the instant wherein everyone belongs to the mass, where differences are dissolved and everyone becomes the same. The divisions created by hierarchies, individuations that give way to differences and the distances that separate one human being from another all disappear and yield to a feeling of sameness, what may be called a suspension of disbelief in difference.

While, as Canetti contends, only in the crowd (here understood as that which both shapes and consumes the soap opera as a genre of and for the masses) can humans free themselves from the burden of the distances that separate them. It is precisely this discharge, this suspension of

disbelief in difference that would have mediated a possible reversion of Algeria as a signifier of revolutionary loyalties that, as an “inside job,” could have threatened the consolidation of the (revolutionary) mass mentality. Fiallo’s ambiguous position (not a politician or a journalist) would, in fact, have allowed her to reverse political signifiers in order to escape censor control and critique Cuba’s political situation. The irony of depicting Algerian struggle for independence in television—and is particularly true of all media in Cuba in the last 40 years—is that television itself by nature constitutes a loss of independence, linked to the conditions (as it always is) imposed on those who write, direct, produce, act for television. Media censorship in Cuba at the time of *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* was, of course, political, as newspapers, radio and television stations were under the direct and strict control of the state—Jorge “Papito” Serguera’s banning of The Beatles is only a small example in a series of “bans” during the first decades of the revolution. Algeria, then, becomes the fugue, deceiving the censors through its repetition as an already established symbol, a signifier of Third World solidarity and political conformity under Castro that suddenly becomes a signifier of political dissent under Castro. Quietly and surreptitiously, Fiallo’s *Bajo el cielo...* strikes at the mass of Cuban spectators, appealing to their individual appetites through the passionate embraces shared by the main characters, Alain Ben Arús and his love interest, the French journalist Nicole. As Canetti reminds us,

Everyone belonging to such a crowd [to which Fiallo herself presumably belongs] carries within [her] a small traitor who wants to eat, drink, make love and be left alone. As long as he does all this on the quiet and does not make too much fuss about it, the crowd allows [her] to proceed. But, as soon as he makes a noise about it, it starts to hate and to fear him. It knows then that he has been listening to the enticements of the enemy. (23)

Although referring to television in Europe and the United States, Pierre Bourdieu in, “On Television,” contends that factors, such as who owns a television station, very often create a series of mediations that although so crude that “they are obvious to even the most simple-minded critique, hide other things, all the anonymous and invisible mechanisms through which the many kinds of censorship operate to make television such a formidable instrument for maintaining the symbolic order” (16). In the case of *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*, however, the symbolic order is reversed. Algeria-as-symbol no longer stands alongside revolutionary efforts, but against them. This new mobilization of Algeria as image and covert political discourse, according to Fiallo herself, influenced the enthusiasm with which Ahmed Ben Bella was received by crowds of Cubans in the streets of Havana during his first visit to the capital city on October 16, 1962. If I speak of an identification paradigm in the case of *Under an Algerian Sky*, it is because ultimately Algeria and Algerian struggle for independence is not dehistoricized or devoid of political power, in spite of its representation for mass production; on the contrary, it is the very political and historical charge of Algeria that Fiallo is counting on. It is the very (seemingly) dehistoricizing gesture of writing Algeria into the soap opera genre that would allow Fiallo to deceive Cuban sensors and reach a Cuban audience.

### **3.9 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have shown that representations of Algeria and Algerians in print and television in Cuba in the 1950s and 60s are not born ex nihilo, nor are they only the result of

socio-cultural and political changes brought on by the Revolution of 1959. Instead, what we find is that the orientalist-identification paradigm serves as model for the ways in which images of Algeria and Algerians are constructed at this time in Cuban history. The continued reliance on colonial dynamics for expressing the national reveals that departure from the colonial model still remains difficult, if not impossible. At the turn of the millennium, however, a change takes place. In the next chapter, I will show how identification with the Moor at this time means the creation of transnational relationships, a kind of cultural aperture, as well as recognition of a common state of exile and loss, the complex combination of which I will discuss in detail.





Figure 1. "Continúan el terror y la muerte ensangrentando la tierra cubana," Bohemia, January, 1957.



Figure 2. "Así es la Guerra en Argelia," Bohemia, July 7, 1957



Figure 3. "Lágrimas, terror y sangre en Argelia," Bohemia.



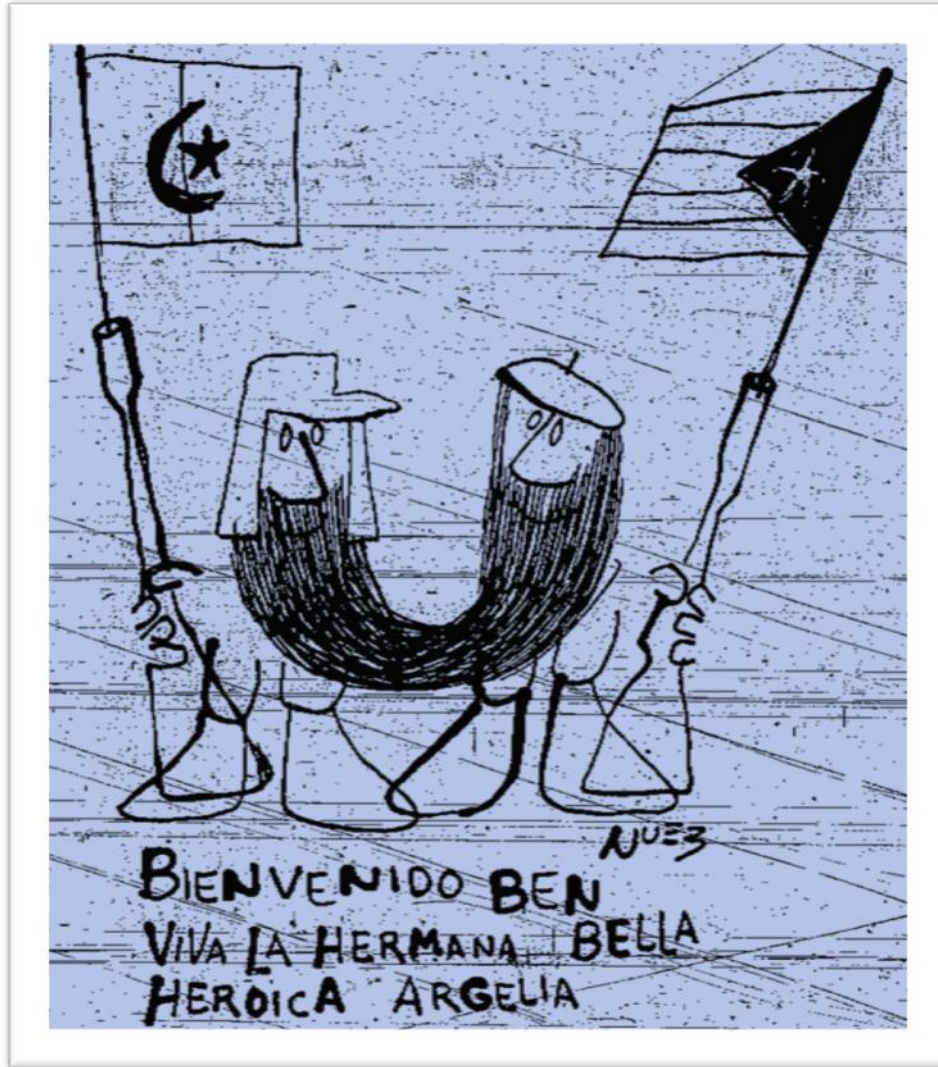


Figure 5. “Bienvenido Ben Bella—Viva la hermana heroica Argelia”  
*Revolución*, October 17, 1962



Caption: Los niños argelinos leen en *Revolución* el mensaje de Ben Bella, enviado desde Nueva York a través de Prensa Latina. (Foto Prensa Latina)[Algerian children read Ben Bella's message in *Revolución*, sent from New York courtesy of Prensa Latina. (Photograph by Prensa Latina)]

*Figure 6.* Algerian Children read Ben Bella's message in *Revolución*.

**ARGELIA: Un pueblo dispuesto a morir por su liberación**

## **Pelea hasta la Inminente fin de libertad total la larga guerra**

**Se está con la revolución o se está contra ella en Argelia**      **Esperan se disponga el alto al fuego antes de fines de mes**

• El responsable político del Movimiento de Liberación de Argelia, Haraigue Omar, declaró en La Habana que "el Movimiento de Liberación de Argelia está integrado por hombres y mujeres del pueblo, dispuestos a dar su última gota de sangre, bajo la misma consigna del pueblo cubano: Patria o Muerte, Venceremos". Omar se encuentra en Cuba conjuntamente con 75 combatientes del Ejército de Liberación Argelino y 20 niños huérfanos muchos de ellos, que visitan Cuba invitados por el Gobierno Revolucionario. Añadió que "en cada hombre del pueblo ar-

• PARIS, febrero 16. (PL).— Pesé al hermetismo oficial sobre el resultado de las conversaciones secretas que celebran en algún lugar cercano a la frontera con Suiza los representantes de los gobiernos francés y argelino, se asegura aquí que se ha llegado a un acuerdo en principio y que dicha reunión deberá terminar de un momento a otro. El optimismo en algunos círculos políticos franceses es tal que se da por descontado que antes de que finalice este mes se pueda firmar el alto al fuego en Argelia. Sin embargo, será preciso primero que tanto el gabinete francés co-



**NIÑOS ARGELINOS**  
... la paz está cercana?

(Continúa en la página SEIS)      (Continúa en la página SEIS)

Figure 7. "Argelia: Un pueblo dispuesto a morir por su liberación," *Revolución*,





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# Permanecerá constantemente junto a la Revolución de Cuba la argelina



**Importantes declaraciones hizo el Primer Ministro Ben Bella en torno a diversos asuntos**

ARCEL  
REVISTA PLENIA LATINA

● El primer ministro de Argelia, Ahmed Ben Bella, declaró que la Revolución argelina permanecerá constantemente al lado de Cuba, porque no puede haber construcción del socialismo sin una actitud internacional socialista.

Durante una conferencia que ofreció aquí sobre el tema "Perspectivas Socialistas de Argelia", Ben Bella agregó que su país "jamás aceptará un pedazo de pan a cambio de la libertad de otros, a cambio de la libertad de Cuba".

Luego señaló que al optar fundamentalmente por el socialismo, Argelia se dio obligaciones en el plano internacional, afirmando que él mismo irá a la conferencia de Addis Abeba para afirmar la posición argelina frente a Angola y exigir de los países africanos el boicot efectivo contra Portugal".

(Continúa en la página CUATRO)

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Con un desfile de niños abandonados dio inicio el entusiasta acto conmemorativo del Segundo Aniversario de la Unión de Pioneros de Cuba. (Foto Borca).

## CONMEMORADO EL SEGUNDO ANIVERSARIO DE LA U. P. C.

● Con un entusiasta acto al que asistieron decenas de niños pioneros y familiares de éstos, se celebró ayer en el Teatro Campesino el Segundo Aniversario de la creación de la Unión de Pioneros de Cuba.

A nombre de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, organización que dirige la U. P. C., el compañero José R. Calderón, director del Palacio Nacional de Pioneros, usó de la palabra en el inicio del significativo acto destacando lo que representa para el futuro de nuestra patria la Unión de Pioneros, exaltando el honor y el compromiso revolucionario que constituye para los niños el pertenecer a

la Unión de Pioneros, y cómo los actuales pioneros habían entendido este deber estudiando en sus estudios, desarrollando con entusiasmo y responsabilidad las tareas extraescolares que se realizan en los círculos y en el Palacio Nacional de Pioneros, de lo cual serían una hermosa muestra las representaciones ofrecidas en el curso del día por los niños que practican música, gimnasia, teatro, danzas y otras actividades de las programadas en el Palacio Nacional.

Para disfrute de los asistentes fue presentada una obra teatral corta y seguidamente la Coronel del Palacio Nacional de Pioneros con

(Continúa en la pág. CINCO)

## 1895 1963

### "Guillermón" Moncada

H OY se cumple 66 años de la muerte del general Guillermón Moncada, conocido y llamado cariñosamente por sus compañeros de lucha "Guillermón".

No era el aumentativo de su nombre un merecido tributo producto de la simpatía que por él sentían sus amigos. El mote afectuoso pretendía, lo grandioso, dar una noción de su hielco sino de la estructura moral y de la valentía del joven carpintero que, al estallar la guerra de 1895 se puso al frente y se incorporó a la legión de cubanos de héroicos patriotas, que veían cómo el colonialismo español saqueaba las riquezas de la poverosa Isla.

De familia humilde, sufrió el hambre, la discriminación de que era víctima por el color de su

(Continúa en la página CUATRO)

## Los Lunik aventajan a los Ranger

YURI MARININ

La estación automática "Lunik-4" deberá continuar las investigaciones del espacio circunlar y de la propia Luna, iniciadas por la "USSR" hace años. La estación "Lunik-4" ha sido lanzada por el mismo esquema aproximadamente que la estación "Marat" (en 1962). En órbita intermedia fue puesto un pesado Sputnik de la Tierra, la crítica de

(Continúa en la pág. CINCO)



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## GUSANERIAS

### Huelga de hambre de los Gusanos contra Kennedy

● TEGUCIGALPA, abril 5.— (AP).— Una huelga de hambre de todas las organizaciones anticomunistas y exiliados cubanos, comenzará el 1 de mayo hasta que "los Estados Unidos varíen su inextinguible actitud de prohibir y condenar los ataques de cubanos al régimen de Bruchese y Castro que se juzga a Cuba", según declaró aquí el comandante Máximo Hernández, presidente de la delegación del Colegio Nacional de Periodistas de Cuba en el exilio. Agregó que se dirigirá a todos los organismos exiliados cubanos a fin de organizar la huelga.

El Sr. de R.—Este cable de AP que transcribimos textualmente revela que la irritación gusanera está subiendo de grado, que el "pataleo" llega hasta el grado de amenazar con el show de la huelga de hambre a quien hasta hace poco llamaban "papá Kennedy". Remember Orange Bowl. Lo demás no tiene importancia. El Manifiesto "ni chicha ni limoná", es decir, ni comendante ni periodista).

(Continúa en la pág. CINCO)

Figure 9. "Permanecerá constantemente junto a la Revolución de Cuba la argelina," *Revolución*, April 5, 1963.





Figure 10. "Así en la paz como en la Guerra en París, Revolución, May 6, 1963.



# REVOLUCION

Año VII

5 Centavos

No. 2408

La Habana, Martes, 5 de Noviembre de 1963

## Aceite y vino de Argelia para Cuba

Importante cargamento de dátiles, higos y alcaparros es remitido también desde ese país en el "González Lines"

**CUBA AYUDA A ARGELIA CON CERCA DE CINCO MIL TONELADAS DE AZUCAR.— MENSAJE DE SERGUERA**

ARGEL.  
Prensa Latina

• El embajador de Cuba en Argelia, comandante Jorge Serguera, hizo entrega oficialmente ayer de 4,744 toneladas de azúcar como parte de la ayuda del gobierno y el pueblo cubano al gobierno y al pueblo argelino. A nombre del gobierno argelino recibieron el cargamento, Ait Cuall, representante del Ministro de Economía y A. M. Delleci, director de Comercio Exterior de Argelia. El azúcar cubano fue transportado en el vapor "González Lines", que hoy retornará a Cuba con un cargamento de 165 toneladas de aceite de oliva, 240 mil botellas de vino, 200 toneladas de dátiles, 200 toneladas de higos y 50 toneladas de alcaparros, que forman parte del convenio comercial cubano-argelino suscrito el pasado mes por el Ministro del Comercio Exterior de Cuba, comandante Alberto Mora. El buque conduce también diez mil latas de leche donadas por los funcionarios de la embajada de Cuba en Argelia a los damnificados del ciclón que azotó las provincias orientales de la Isla. Al hacer entrega del azúcar, el embajador cubano declaró que con ello se quería hacer patente los lazos profundos de solidaridad de ambos pueblos en su lucha común contra el imperialismo. Posteriormente, Serguera se reunió con la tripulación del "González Lines" y relató las torturas y sufrimientos del pueblo argelino durante sus 7 años de lucha y su independencia lograda a un costo de millón y medio de vidas.

Explicó luego como Cuba un país pequeño acudia desde tan lejos en socorro de los argelinos porque los unía la lucha por la liquidación de la explotación del hombre por el hombre.

"Ustedes, dijo a los marinos cubanos, entrarán en la historia por ser los portadores de esta ayuda".

Finalmente, el Embajador pidió a los miembros de la tripulación que llevaran un mensaje de todos los cubanos residentes en Argelia al pueblo cubano, patentizando la pena por el

A LA PAGINA CINCO

Repara

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a Holguín

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60 v 77

Figure 12. "Aceite y vino de Argelia para Cuba," *Revolución*, November 5, 1963.



Figure 13. "Suplemento de *Revolución*," *Revolución*, July 6, 1964



Figure 14. “Argelia: El fin de la guerra inicia la batalla por la paz,” Verde Olivo, April 1, 1962



Figure 15. “Cuba, ¿Excepción histórica o vanguardia en la lucha anticolonialista?” Verde Olivo, April 9, 1963

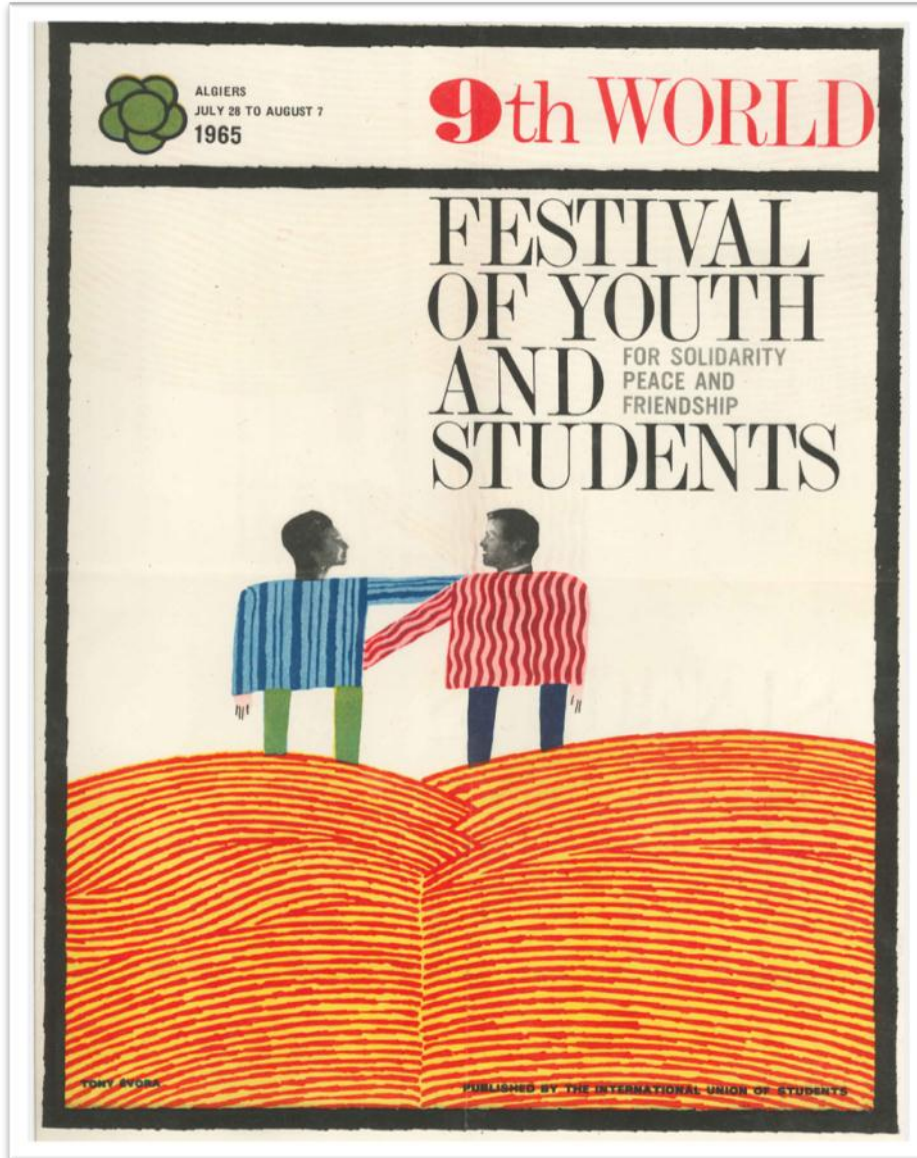


Figure 16. 9th World Festival of Youth and Students 1965 [poster 1]

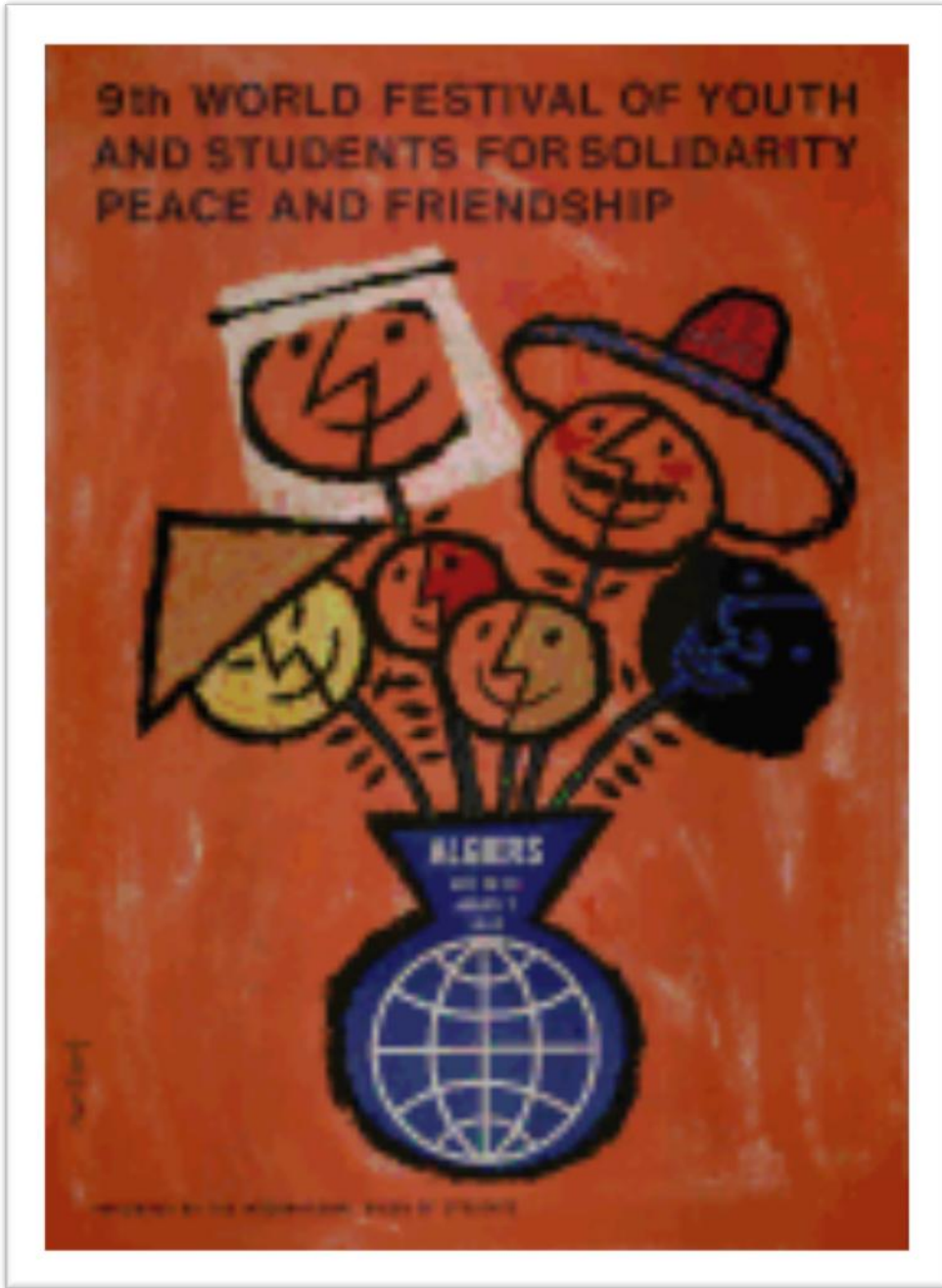


Figure 17. 9th World Festival of Youth and Students 1965 [poster 2]





Figure 18. "Les Guerrilleros," Paris-Match.

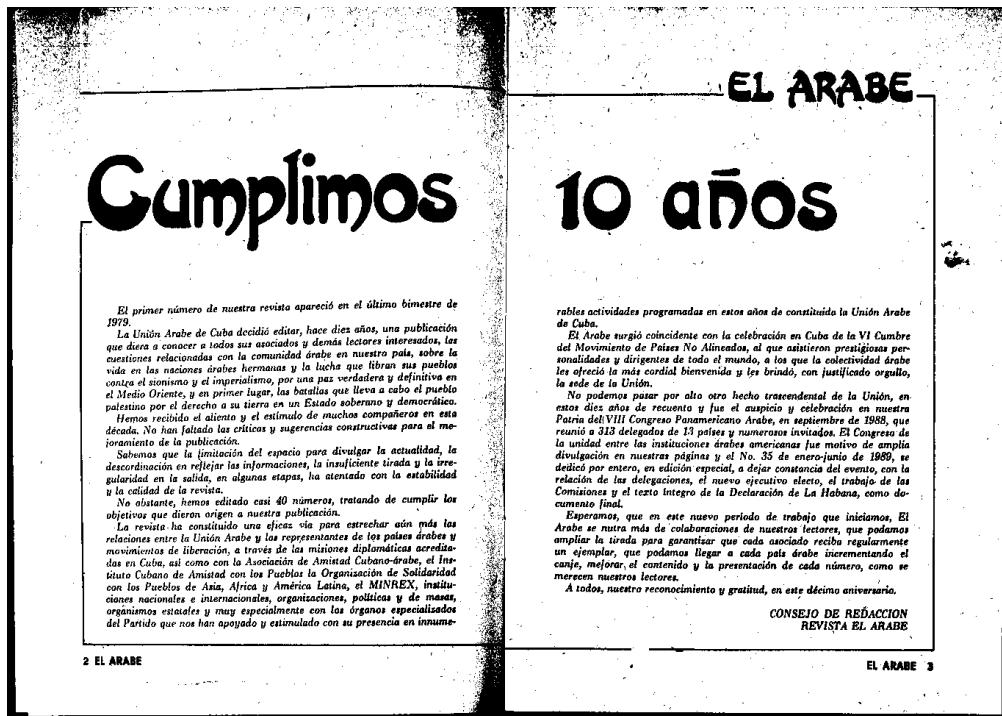


Figure 19. "10th Anniversary of El Arabe," El Arabe.



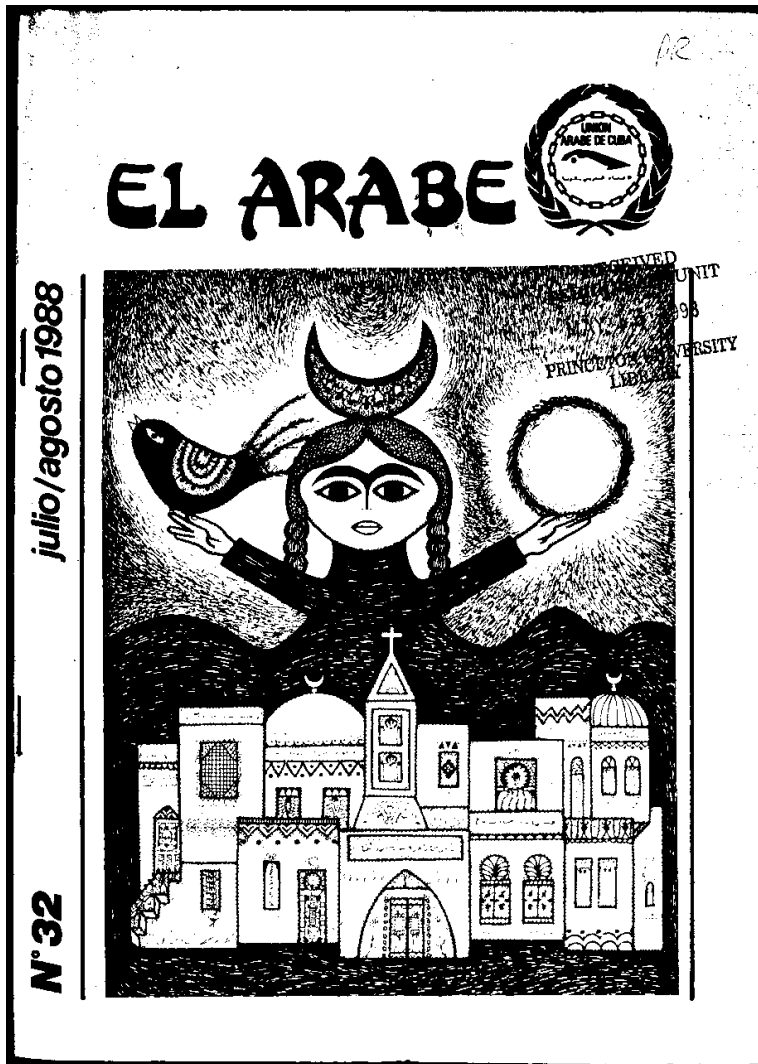


Figure 20. *El Arabe*, No. 32, July/August, 1988. (cover)



Figure 21. "II Copa de Futbol '86," *El Arabe*, November 2-December 21, 1986



Figure 22. "Solidaridad con la justa lucha del pueblo palestino," *El Arabe*, (cover).

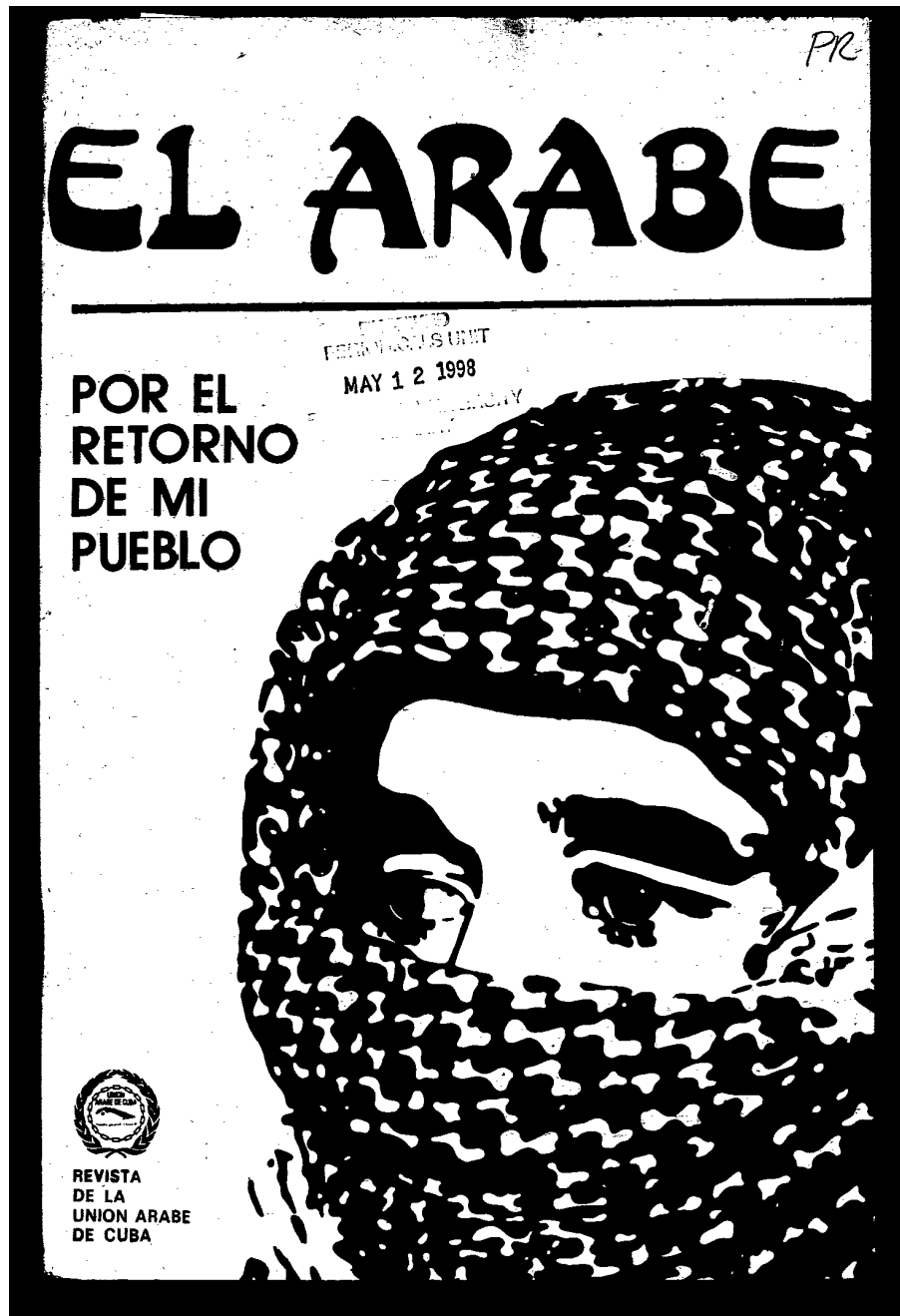


Figure 23. "Por el retorno de mi pueblo," *El Arabe*, (cover).

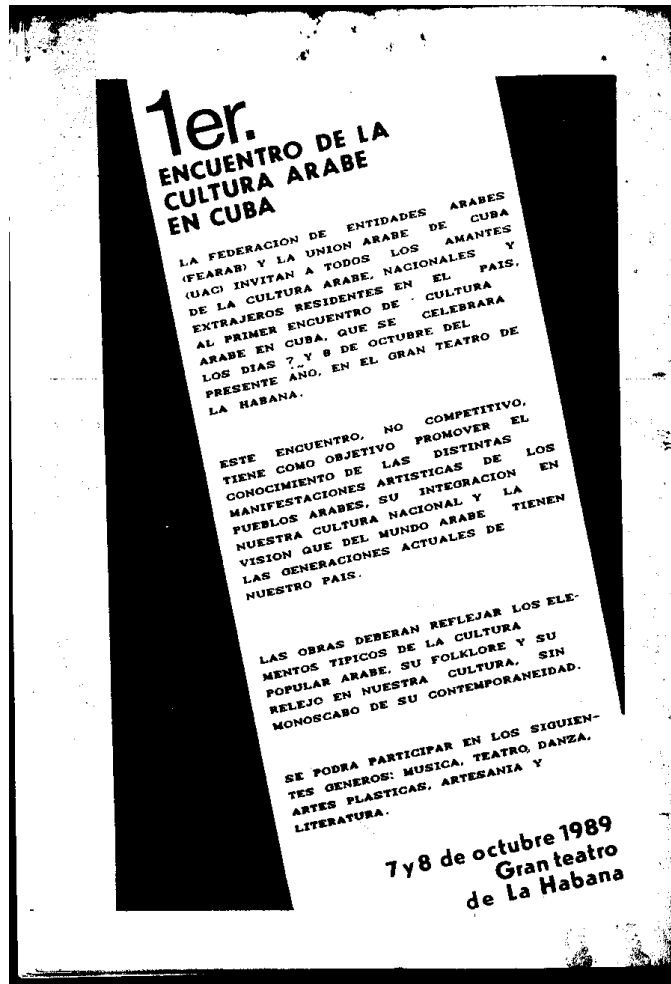


Figure 24. "Primer encuentro de la cultura árabe en Cuba," *El Arabe*, October, 1989

## TIMELINE

- Jul. 1953            Attack to Moncada barracks.
- 1954                Algerian War of Independence begins.
- 1956-1957        Articles detailing Algerian armed struggle appear in Cuban revolutionary journal *Bohemia*.
- 1959                Cuban Revolution.
- Jan. 1962         The vessel Bahía de Nipe leaves Havana toward Algeria with aid for the FLN.
- Dec. 1962        Delia Fiallo's *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* is broadcast in Cuba, in 1962, in Canal 6 de CMQ-Televisión, from 8:30 to 9pm, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Jul. 3, 1962      Algerian independence.
- Jun. 27, 1961     Cuba—alone in the Western Hemisphere—recognizes Algerian government in exile.
- Jul. 1963         Ché Guevara arrives in Algeria.
- Sept. 26, 1962    The National Assembly in Algeria elects Ben Bella prime minister.
- Oct. 15, 1962     Ben Bella meets President Kennedy in Washington and attends the ceremony marking his country's admission to the United Nations.
- Oct. 16, 1962     Ben Bella leaves New York for a two-day visit to Cuba.
- May 23, 1963     First Cuban Medical mission to Algeria.
- Jun. 1964         Second medical mission to Algeria.  
*Note: Other missions follow.*
- May 1963         Ben Bella calls for the liberation of Africa in Addis Ababa, at the founding conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).
- Sept. 23, 1963    Moroccan troops under King Hassan II occupy Algerian border posts of Hassi-Beida and Tindjoub.
- October 8, 1963   The War of the Desert begins: Algerians strike back, retaking Hassi-Beida and Tindjoub in a bloody clash.

- October 1963 First flight to Algiers on a commercial flight of *Cubana de Aviación* carrying Cuban exiles bound for Madrid.
- October 17, 1963 Andrés González lines.
- October 21, 1963 Two special flights leave Havana headed for Algeria in *Cubana de Aviación* carrying 170 Cubans ready to join Algerians in their struggle against Morocco.
- October 22, 1963 Merchant vessel Aracelio Iglesias arrives in Oran carrying the GEI.
- July 1960 French journal *L'Express* sends, then twenty-five-years-old French writer, Françoise Sagan (*Bonjour Tristesse*, 1954) to Cuba.
- February 1960 Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir visit Cuba.
- 1963 Agnès Varda visits Cuba. *Salut les Cubains* (1963).
- May 1968 Student Riots in France.

## Chapter 4

### A Thousand and One Ex(iles) in Havana: Cuba Transnational and the Moor in Abilio Estévez's *Los palacios distantes* and Jesús Díaz's *El pianista árabe*

*“Une petite maison en ruine vaut mieux qu'un palais en commun.”*  
Arab proverb

*A palm tree stands in the middle of Rusafa,  
Born in the West, far from the land of palms.  
I said to it: How like me you are, far away and in exile,  
In long separation from family and friends.  
You have sprung from soil in which you are a stranger;  
And I, like you, am far from home.*  
Abd al-Rahman, 8th century

Nearing the end of his life, the exiled Umayyad prince, Abd al-Rahman, founder and powerful sovereign of the Umayyad Emirate of Córdoba,<sup>1</sup> still known today as al-Andalus, wrote the lovely and melancholy poem<sup>1</sup> that introduces this chapter—an ode to a palm tree, a fortuitous creation, in terms of the Cuban landscape and the place of the palm tree in it. Known as *al-Dakhil* (“the immigrant”) and the “Falcon of Andalus,” Abd al-Rahman died in Rufasa in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, far from his ancestral home. He was a man who had spent his life yearning for his homeland, searching for the palaces, both literal and metaphoric, of his Syrian childhood in the remote hinterland of Córdoba. An ambitious young man and the sole surviving heir to a caliphate in Syria, Abd al-Rahman’s great melancholy was always his exile, the unbearable loss of his homeland in Syria, which he—in all but name—brought across North Africa, rebuilding, memory upon memory, the palaces of old, to fill the melancholy void of his permanent place in the West. While obviously outside an orientalist definition, this biographical detail and historical fact, along with Abd al-Rahman’s poem, evidence a moment of affective identification based on the recognition of a common state of exile and loss, the complex combination of which and its



connection to the orientalism-identification dynamic in Cuba at the turn of the millennium, this chapter is keen on examining. It is perhaps possible that the memory palaces of Abd Al-Rahman, the ones with which he turned the once wild outpost in Southern Iberia into a prosperous and civilized world capital, are related—if only by virtue of a kind of defective amnesia—to the distant palaces a Moorish character promises exist in Cuba during the Special Period in Times of Peace.

More than an economic crisis, resulting from the island's sudden need to rethink its identity away from Soviet subsidies and in terms of a global market, the 1990s in Cuba marked a moment of disengagement with revolutionary fervor, as Cubans on the island began to question the successes of a revolution that had until now masked its failures with the rhetorical games of a charismatic leader. The crisis at this time is also a crisis of identity that has at its core the need for both a personal and collective redefinition in the light of recent losses, most significantly, the loss of faith in the revolutionary project. The literature produced during this period, then, responds to and reveals the anxieties of the moment, turning—in the case of the detective fiction of writers like Leonardo Padura Fuentes,<sup>1</sup> for instance—towards a past that must be deciphered, in the hopes of finding answers to the present. Although there is a decidedly nostalgic glance in the so called Literature of the Special Period, there are writers, such as Abilio Estévez and Jesús Díaz, whose literary work is profoundly marked by the experiences of exile and loss.

While in the preceding chapters I showed how the figure of the Moor entered the initial formulations of Cuban nationalism as both an oppositional Other and an identifiable same, later informing and contributing to the ways in which the Moor figures in twentieth-century Cuban politics and cultural production and, specifically, in Cuba-Algeria relations in the 1950s and 60s, in this final chapter, I focus on the figure of the Moor in Cuban literature in the twentieth and

twenty-first century. As it is obvious from Chapter I, as well as subsequent chapters, the figure of the Moor in Cuban political discourse and cultural production has served to negotiate and support, as well as expose elements that both compete for membership in and threaten the national. The manifest Moorish presence—political, cultural, physical and symbolic—in Cuban culture speaks to the Moor’s relevance in the Cuban imagination, as well as Cuba’s continuing reliance on former colonial rhetoric (however oriented) for the purpose of self-definition. The figure of the Moor, I have discussed, is most prevalent at times of crisis, in particular, at those crucial moments when the cohesion of what constitutes the Cuban nation is at stake, as may take place during revolutionary high times; or, more appropriately for this chapter, at the time of postrevolutionary ruins, both in their concrete and abstract sense. It is precisely from the vantage point of ruins, physical and metaphorical, national and transnational that—I intend to show in this chapter—that the Moor is represented in Cuba of the turn of the millennium within an orientalist and an identification paradigm.

Approaching the representation of the Moor from the perspective of Cuban cultural production and also in terms of Cuba-Algeria relations has allowed me, thus far, to discuss relationships based on affective identification that exist alongside the hegemonic discourse discussed by Said. In the case of an identification mode of representation in Cuban literature since the nineteenth century, the representation of the Moor, the Arab, the Algerian, and Arab-Islamic elements have included both positive and negative feelings of affiliation. In this chapter, I examine Abilio Estévez’s *Distant Palaces* and Jesús Díaz’s *El pianista árabe*, in terms of a literary identification with the Moor and the Arab that is directly related to the Moor’s quintessential exilic condition and its relationship to melancholy at the turn of the millennium. For the purpose of understanding how the works discussed in this chapter dialogue with each

other and with our greater discussion on the Moor, I now turn to the relationship between exile and melancholy in Cuba at the turn of the millennium.

#### **4.1 The Moor in Cuba at the Turn of the Millennium**

This combination of loss and displacement affixed to representations of the Moor, within a Cuban context, is a remarkably rich connection between Cuba's national concerns and greater transnational trends. The relationship is further buttressed by the fact that the Moor, in its various guises, has played a long and complex role on the general history of the island. In a sense, the figure of the Moor in Cuba, irrespective of a specific framing paradigm, has always had a great deal to do with exile and melancholy, for the fact that the Moor exists and persists in Cuban imagination is due, in part, to the Moor's original exile from Spain and to the island's relationship to its colonial past—which, as we have seen, has forcibly included the Moor, in all of his/her guises. It is not coincidental, then, that works explicitly and implicitly concerned with exile and loss evoke the figure of the Moor—however minor and inconsequential his role may at first appear to be—to both exploit and express the unique anxieties of Cuba at the turn of the millennium.

As a privileged trope of orientalist discourse, the Moor not only participates in fantasies of early travel narratives, as seen in Villaverde's *Excursión a Vueltabajo*, but as recent recastings, such as Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* (1993), Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and Amin Amaalouf's *Ports of Call* (1999) express, he is the transient figure *par excellence*, an exile, a nomad, a fundamental connection between the local and the transnational. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Moor is, as Peter Sloterdijk's theory of the *Sphären* would suggest, a metaphor for the errant and the decentered, for those in search of

the absolute sphere, of the absolute shelter. Indeed, as Anouar Majid suggests in *We Are All Moors*, “[c]onnecting with one’s Moorish or Jewish heritage is to be united with kindred spirits who endured and survived discriminations of the worst sort because they found themselves in a world not of their making” (61). It comes as no surprise, then, that Emilio Estévez’s *Los palacios distantes* and Jesús Díaz’s *El pianista árabe*, works that are first and foremost concerned not only with the experience of Cubans in Cuba in the new millennium, but also with the ways in which Cuban experience of exile and loss is echoed across the globe, situates the figure of the Moor at the margins of a historical moment that takes place in Cuba, but connects Cuba to the rest of the world. In other words, the loss of shelter and belonging in the works, Cuba in the time of ruins, Cuba of the broken spheres, to follow Sloterdijk’s logic, is not only historically and geographically bound, as the works may suggest, but also a global phenomenon. Having understood the ways in which the Moor will figure in Cuba at the turn of the millennium, I now turn to a discussion on how the shared experience of exile and melancholy (both at home and abroad) allows for the representation of the Moor in affective terms.

#### **4.2 Exile and Melancholy**

As a central cultural idea in Western European history, melancholy shaped and organized the way that people related to themselves and to each other, creating a scale upon which one could measure the lacks and excesses of the universe, as manifested in the human mind and body. A combination of two Greek words, *melas* (black) and *khole* (bile), melancholy, as articulated by Hippocrates’s writing—one of the earliest studies on the subject—was defined as an imbalance in the health of the body and mind, due to the spleen’s abnormal production of black bile. In spite of competing and contradictory theories, Hippocrates’s humoral theory

persisted in varied forms and degrees of influence until the advent of modern medicine and scientific research. Although melancholy in the twentieth and twenty-first century is of little interest to the medical field, such disinterest is unambiguously matched by enthusiastic scholarship in the academic world, in the form of loss theories and cultural causation theories. More recent writing on the subject, such as Julia Kristeva's *Black Sun*, follows a Freudian theoretical line, linking object loss to melancholia and attributing the latter with decidedly pathological characteristics through a direct association with clinical depression. Paradoxically, the same overabundance of writing on melancholy that facilitates any study on the subject is what hinders or makes difficult the construction of a working definition that befits historical and personal losses in the twenty-first century.

In the very long tradition preceding Freud's 1917 essay "Mourning and Melancholia," one finds melancholy in Greek understanding of humoral divisions of the human body, in Aristotelian discussions on genius and inspiration, in the sin of acedia condemned by early church fathers, in the writings and preoccupations of Arab physicians, and in the "ailments" afflicting cloistered women of the faith in the early and late Middle Ages. In the seventeenth century, Robert Burton's treaty on melancholy exerts much influence into the study and writing on melancholia in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, reaching Freud's own writing on the subject: if Burton does not explicitly discuss an association between loss and melancholy, he certainly makes such an observation in some of his brief, but always entertaining, descriptions of particular cases. It is not until Freud's new theorizing on the subject, however, that a direct association between melancholy and object loss is established. Freud's emphasis on loss redirects the understanding of melancholy from a state of (humoral) imbalance and a mood of despondency to a state of mind characterized by the loss of a loved person, object, or ideal. It is

interesting (and significant) for our purposes to point out that in the short list Freud offers of possible losses, he also includes fatherland.

According to Freud's definition, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, mourning is by and large the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, personal liberties, an ideal, and so on. In some cases, the same influences and comparable losses produce melancholia instead of mourning and we may consequently suspect them of a melancholic disposition.

The distinguishing mental characteristics of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in delusional expectation of punishment. (20)

All the same traits, Freud contends, are found in mourning with the exception of the disturbance of self-regard, and there is an ultimate turning away from reality and clinging to the lost object vis-à-vis a hallucinatory wishful psychosis. In melancholia, Freud explains, there is a loss of a more ideal kind. The object has not died, but has been lost as an object of love; although one knows that a loss has taken place, it becomes impossible to identify with certainty what it is that has been lost; in other words, "He [the subject] knows whom he has lost but not what he has lost in him [the object of his loss]" (21).

According to Freud, the melancholic subject is ultimately incapable of withdrawing the libido from the lost object of desire and reinvest it in a new one. While mourning, on the other hand, involves a successful transfer of the desire for the lost object onto a new object. In the *Ego and the Id*, Freud modifies this paradigm by considering melancholy a potential stage of the

mourning work, and by suggesting that mourning is almost never “complete,” and very often leaves behind some kind of residue.

In this final chapter, I borrow from early accounts of melancholy that place the blame on “earthly” causes—such as the excess of bile or the movement of the planet Saturn—and define melancholy as the acute awareness of large-scale *dis*-order and chronic displacement, such as it is found in the experience of exile in the mid to late twentieth and early twenty-first century in Cuban literature.

Reinterpreting Freud’s elaboration of the feelings of loss that accompany early separation from a loved object, as well as Melanie Klein’s subsequent contention that the period of separation associated with the infant’s feelings of love and hate toward the mother (or parts of the mother, such as her breasts), during weaning involve a kind of infantile neurosis, or melancholia in *statu nascendi*, it is my position that the exile condition is itself a kind of infantile stage or adolescence that forces the exile to reposition him(her)self in relationship to the lost—or presumed to be lost—object (the homeland) which is both loved and hated. The exile is both an exile at home and abroad, for s(he) both wishes to leave (hate) and wishes to stay (love). Thus, much like in Klein’s understanding of its role in child development, I recognize melancholy as central to the exile experience. While reality testing for both Freud and Klein is part of normal mourning, for the exile, reality testing is a manifestation of the melancholic condition and involves the projection (which very often means reconstruction) of the lost object onto a new environment or host country, as is the case of Abd al-Rahman and his memory palaces, in the historical note and poem that introduce the chapter. What Klein calls the depressive condition (the distressed experienced by the infant at the moment of separation) is, thus, a universal experience, reactivated during adult life in response to other moments of separation or loss. In

this chapter, however, my focus is not on melancholy as a universal experience; instead, I explore a specific state of affect that is directly related to the experience of exile, although its origins may precede such an experience. Much like Klein emphasizes the infant-mother dyad, I focus on the exile-motherland dyad, a relationship that is fundamental to understanding the connection between the exile condition and melancholy. It is my contention that in the works under study in this chapter, the grief and feelings of loss experienced by the exile's initial and very often indefinite separation from the homeland or "home" resurface or are revived whenever separation is experienced later in life. Although I subscribe to Freud's distinctions between mourning and melancholy, I rely on Walter Benjamin's definition of 'work' in *Trauerspiel (The Origin of Tragic Drama)* (1925) to speak of the exile's work as the commitment to a deepening of the experience of loss and its expression. Unlike mourning, in Benjamin's understanding of melancholy (as it relates to the exile experience), the object is not parted with, but exposed and given a voice. Drawing from Benjamin, then, I propose that the exile's journey, although fraught with displacement (as Victorio's case will show) is not a manifestation of detachment and thus, the result of mourning, but constitutes the most profound articulation of loss and its traces. As in Benjamin's theory, I forward the idea that loss is a condition of possibility, here understood in terms of the exile's journey. It is not rare, one may have noted, to find exiles who are avid travelers—El Moro, the Algerian pilot, Salma and Victorio in Estévez's novel, and Patrocínio Mendoza in Díaz's story are cases in point.

With the purpose of underscoring that, despite its perceived insularity, as well as its historical and political distinctiveness, Cuba is by no means outside the context of transnational forces, I have arranged the two case studies in this chapter to follow a specific narrative and geographical trajectory. Consequently, the perspective I offer here is set in motion in Cuba



(Abilio Estévez's *Los palacios distantes*) and continues in Paris (Jesús Díaz's *El pianista árabe*), a city that, due to historical (such as colonial history and Maghrebi immigration) and cultural specifics is home to "Moros y Cristianos" alike. Specifically, I begin by focusing on the minor character of El Moro in Estévez's novel in order to establish a relationship between the disillusionment and disenchantment of the Cuban characters in the novel to a postrevolutionary melancholy that is both local and global, thus linking—from the outset—the Cuban "condition" in the new millennium (according to Estévez and Díaz) to the postcolonial reality suggested by an Algerian in Havana and a Cuban-Arab in Paris, respectively. While in Estévez's novel Havana becomes the stage for affective connections between El Moro and the main character, Victorio, in Jesús Díaz's short story, *El pianista árabe*, it is in Paris that the model<sup>1</sup> figure of the Moor (this time as the Arab pianist Hassan Ibn Hassan) comes in very close contact with his Cuban counterpart through a shared condition of exile and melancholy.

When I speak of melancholy, then, I am concerned with a melancholy that exists in the confines of individual consciousness, as well as in the collective consciousness of a community or nation-state. When I say, "melancholy," within this context, I am referring to the relationship between personal and collective losses, and between what has, at times, been perceived as foundational absences, but are, in fact, nameable (identifiable) historical consequences, such as the loss of one's homeland and/or home. Unlike nostalgia which always looks to the past, melancholy involves displacement, a movement towards an uncertain journey. Melancholy propels the journey, while nostalgia plots the return—the exile (whether home or abroad) walks the plank somewhere in between: that is, he both at once wishes to leave and desires to return.

### 4.3 El Moro, an Algerian Pilot

In Estévez's novel, melancholy finds expression in the city of Havana itself. The ruins of the Cuban capital constitute the material representation of the melancholic's loss, and they are both linked to the private and the personal, as well as to the public and collective (historical) experience of that loss. Published in 2002, *Los palacios distantes*, Estévez's second novel, takes place in the ruined topography of Havana City, and tells the story of Victorio, a forty-something homosexual who is evicted from his apartment days before the building collapses. As a response to the notice of eviction, Victorio burns almost everything he owns and abandons his job. Among the items he keeps is the photograph of El Moro, a childhood friend, whose promise that everyone possesses a private palace, a private utopia, sets Victorio's melancholic quest in motion.

Deprived of the most basic necessities, but armed with the knowledge that his own paradise awaits him in some unknown Elsewhere, Victorio wanders through the city in ruins, avoiding tourist enclaves and their heightened state vigilance, until he meets Salma, a beautiful young "jinetera,"<sup>1</sup> or Cuban sex worker. Sometime later, Victorio encounters an old clown, whom he decides to follow. Homeless and without a job, Victorio is finally overcome by hunger and exhaustion and faints, to later wake up in the presence of the old clown, Don Fuco, and in the ruins of an old theater, the *Pequeño Liceo*. Don Fuco, who lives in the ruins of the theater, spends his time making people laugh, showing up at hospitals and hospices, and appearing and disappearing in cemeteries and wakes, remedying the disillusion and hopelessness of Cubans in the year 2000 with artifice and hope.

Together, and led by El Moro's promises of palaces in the distance, Salma and Victorio join Don Fuco in the ruins of the theatre. Don Fuco trains them in the art of buffoonery and the

three new friends begin to hold improvised performances throughout the city. At one point, they are arrested. One day, when Salma returns to the home of her now diseased mother, she encounters El Negro Piedad, her former boyfriend and pimp. Piedad, responding to the needs of a postsoviet tourist industry, would like Selma to continue working for him and locks her up. Fortunately, Selma escapes with Victorio and together they return to the old theater. Up until this point, the old theater appears to be the palace Victorio has been searching, the one that El Moro promised him and to which door he gave Victorio a key. However, El Negro Piedad soon finds out where Selma is living and shows up in the ruins of the theater one night, shooting and killing the old clown. Salma reacts by hitting Piedad on the head with a bust of José Martí, ultimately killing him. At this point, it is obvious that the danger and overall hostility of the ruins of Havana have found their way into the ruins of the old theater. Salma and Victorio have no choice but to flee to the rooftops, carrying on their shoulders the cadaver of Don Fuco.

While El Moro promises Victorio that his own private palace exists, it is certainly no longer found in the ruins of the old theater. Because ruins always speak of loss, the ruins of Victorio's city, and the ruins of the *Pequeño Liceo*, are no different. Havana's ruins are "the material ruins of a failed project," as Guillermina Ferrari asserts, in *Las palabras y las cosas: El lenguaje de la revolución en El siglo de las luces, de Alejo Carpentier, y Los palacios distantes, de Abilio Estévez* (253) (My translation); they are the collapsed dreams of the Cuban Revolution, as well as the concrete remnants of modernity's utopias. Very appropriately, the novel opens up with an image of ruin:

El antiguo hotel Royal Palm en la calle Galiano y el viejo palacio de una familia de abolengo cuyo apellido ya nadie recuerda son construcciones unidas por el mutuo destino de los puntales. Entre un edificio y otro han colocado una

enmarañada trama de vigas y horcones que intenta afincarse en cuanto parezca exhibir alguna esperanza de solidez. Ennegrecidas por el paso de tantos días y noches, por la dureza del sol y las turbonadas, por la ubicuidad de las sales marinas, las tablas pretenden impedir un derrumbe que de cualquier modo parece inminente. (*Los palacios distantes* 17)

Victorio's world is collapsing, and with it the certainty and security that home and state represent or, in any case, should represent. Passages like this introduce into the narrative a utopic element, irreversibly tingeing the overall tone of the novel with melancholy; that is, what the reader, in many cases, assumes and feels to be nostalgia, is nothing more than the pangs of melancholy, for the loss evoked in Estévez's novel, the loss Victorio feels walking through the ruined landscape of Havana city, is not the "pain of home," but the loss of something that may not have been his to begin with: the idylls of childhood and the dreams of a revolution lost.

From the outset, Victorio, who lives in a mansion that once belonged to someone else, has been deprived of the everyday dignity that comes with the rootedness of belonging. His "home" is threatened even before he is evicted from the building. Victorio is, thus, an exile in his own city, and his only true possessions include several books, a ring, and the photograph of El Moro that hangs on his wall. It is from this point forward that El Moro contributes to our study of the orientalist-identification dynamic in Cuban literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While upon first glance, one may cast the figure of the Moor in Estévez's novel aside as inconsequential, upon a closer look—and armed with comparative historical and cultural details—one finds that it is, in fact, El Moro, who gives a *raison d'être* to Victorio's quest.

In this study, then, I locate the minor figure of the Moor at the center of Estévez's novel, for his presence in the text not only makes the dreaming and imagining of other geographies a

possibility, but it is he who makes possible Victorio's initial journey, revealing the relationship between the ruins of Havana City and the metaphorical ruins of utopian dreams. To put it simply, it is El Moro, possibly an Arab with an unequivocally short novelistic lifespan, who sets Estévez's text in motion, linking Victorio's *ins-ile* condition in the ruined city of Havana to the post-colonial, transnational reality his presence in the text suggests. As opposed to exile, which presumes a geographical distancing from the homeland, *ins-ile* refers to a disengagement or withdrawal that takes place within the geographical boundaries of the nation. All of the characters in Estévez's novel belong to one of the two categories; as a North African living in Cuba, El Moro belongs to the first.

As the narrator tells us, El Moro is an eighteen-year-old Algerian pilot of a small fumigation plane that flies over the fields of Güira de Melena, a municipality and city in the province of Havana. Described in the novel as having dark skin, blue-black hair, and Arabic eyes, El Moro first appears as the prototypical object of desire: Victorio-as-a-child is "impressed by El Moro's height, his walk, his ballet movements (he never seemed to set foot on the ground), his deep, light voice [...]" (105). Although his life ends prematurely when his plane catches on fire, El Moro's presence haunts Victorio's childhood memories, for not only is he linked to Victorio-as-a-child's sexual discovery, but to adolescence loss, for El Moro dies tragically when his plane crashes and burns; in addition, it is also El Moro who tells Victorio that there is a palace waiting for him. The direct link between El Moro and loss is not only found through his auspicious presence in the text, but because it is precisely a "Moor" who suggests that there's a place for Victorio in the world, and one that he identifies as a palace.

Very simply stated, and at first glance, El Moro, a young pilot, promises a future of possibilities and establishes a yearning for lost ideals, for a world and a place of childhood and

promise that is now lost. “Is there ever a morning when Victorio does not think about El Moro? He owes him so many things. Thanks to him, he became (and remains certain that a proud palace exists somewhere, waiting for him” (8). Certainly, as the previous passage suggests, El Moro may also be understood as an Othello of sorts, who—in much the same way Othello woos Desdemona—woos Victorio the child with tales and dreams of other places, over the objections of Victorio’s own father, the infamous Robespierre; however, while in the Shakespearian drama Othello’s origins are uncertain, the narrator tells us that El Moro was thought to be the son of an Algerian revolutionary, “an expert in economics who had graduated from the Sorbonne and was a confidant of Ahmed Ben Bella” (105). While this “thought to be the son of an Algerian revolutionary,” seems to challenge an identity that is fundamental to my argument, we are, in fact, in the presence of an association that is only possible through Cuba’s historical links to Algeria.

The real and symbolic geographies that El Moro maps in his trajectories, then, point to complex historical interconnections between Cuba and the rest of the world and, specifically between Cuba and Algeria, as well as to overdetermined categories or experiences of exile and loss. Through El Moro, we cannot help but associate the sense of absence and lack evoked by the ruins of the opening paragraph to a larger cultural and political project. El Moro is not only, then, a mere composite fantasy of the European “colonial harem,” as Barbara Harlow may concede, following Said’s model of Orientalist representation, but also the result of an affective identification that allows Estévez to gesture beyond the text, somewhere outside the text and beyond representation into the realm of the real and the historical, both in terms of the local and global failures of utopian dreams at the turn of the millennium.

#### 4.4 Cuba, Algeria, and the Special Periods

As the previous chapters have revealed, this historical connection between Cuba and Algeria is not surprising, as the Cuban revolution itself began to take shape during the Algerian struggle for national liberation in the 1950s. And Algeria and its revolution became the medium through which Cuban intellectuals could articulate their disapproval and overall indignation over the last years of Batista's regime. According to Roberto Gonzalez, a Cuban intellectual, and one of Piero Gleijeses's sources, in "Cuba's First Venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961-1965,"

A very close bond, a kind of spontaneous 'brotherhood,' developed between the Cuban revolution and the Algerian revolution even before 1959, because they were working along parallel paths. The Cuban people identified with the Algerian struggle to a degree that would not be repeated until, perhaps, the Nicaraguan revolution.<sup>1</sup> (Roberto Gonzalez Gómez, letter to Piero Gleijeses, Havana, 7 July 1994)

Anti-Batista papers, like *Bohemia*, encouraged this identification with the Algerian situation, discussing the military successes of the FLN, Algerian torture of French officials, and the violence used against informers and thugs under French direction. Algeria, as Gleijeses asserts, was Cuba's first love in Africa; and Cuba was one of Algeria's most fervent and faithful supporters, at least until Ben Bella was ousted from power in 1965. The solidarity between Castro and then Algerian leader Ahmed Ben Bella made of the Cuban and the Algerian revolution one struggle: the struggle of the third-world nations against Western imperialism. From the late 60s to late 70s, Castro and Houari Boumediene, President of Algeria (1976-1978), became members of a mutual-admiration club, which led the Cuban leader to visit Algeria several times, as well as to welcome the Algerian head of state on many occasions. A speech

from 1974 at Algeria Solidarity Rally held at the Moncada Barracks, in Santiago de Cuba, Fidel Castro underscores the convergence between Cuban and Algerian history:

We have many things in common with Algeria. In the past century when French colonialism, aided by its greatest economic and technological resources, conquered Algeria, it did so just to have one more territory, one more colony. It oppressed a nation that many centuries before France already had a culture and a civilization superior to those of France. The Algerian people were forced to spill rivers of blood to resist colonial subjugation, and that is why the Algerian and the Cuban people talk about Abd el-Kader, [applause] the Algerian national hero who resisted French subjugation for 17 years, who makes us recall Martí, Gómez, Maceo, Agramonte, Céspedes, all our patriots of the past century. [applause]

(Source: Havana Domestic Radio, Date: 19740416)

The speech, delivered on the occasion of Boumediene's visit to Cuba, highlights the Cuban head of state's admiration of Algerian resistance against French colonial power. It is interesting to note that Castro's comparison of Algerian hero, Abd el-Kader, to Cuba's own pantheon of martyrs builds on Martí's early discourse and his own admiration for the warrior and poet, establishing his revolutionary project as a continuation of Martí's own struggles, in terms of Cuba's relationship to the Arab world. More recently, in July 2009, Raul Castro visited Algeria (his second trip in 2009). While in Algiers—as if continuing the conversation that started long ago—the second Castro visited the Sanctuary of the Martyrs, where he paid his respects to those killed in combat during the independence war against French colonialism.

While the relationship between Cuba and Algeria was never quite the same after the death of Boumediène in 1978, the historical impact of their social and political transformations



would bring them together once again among the ruins of nationalism and the “special” period experienced by both nations in the 1990s. In both cases, whether a combination of civil violence and overall disillusionment or economic deterioration and hopelessness, the “special periods” of the 1990s saw the mass exodus of Algerian and Cuban nationals. As Albert Memmi asserts, in *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, the great disillusion of our time is that “the end of colonization should have brought with it freedom and prosperity. [...] The slogans of national unity, heard at a time when everyone felt as if they were members of the same family, have been extinguished, and the faces we see are the pale faces of egotism” (3). While in Algeria the civil unrest of the 1990s quickly turns into a civil war that ends up claiming the lives of 200,000 people, in Cuba the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Bloc bring about a national economic depression, for once revealing the failures of an—until then—seemingly viable revolutionary project. Algerian presence in an island that, although not geographically linked to those other “islands” of *al-Jasāir* in the north of Africa, was nonetheless bound to them through pledges of Third World brotherhood and solidarity—establishes a connection that also reveals a trajectory of colonial conquests, early migrations, and postcolonial exiles.

According to Piero Gleijeses’s, on Castro’s return from his first trip to Algeria, in 1961, the Cuban leader took back to Cuba a group of Algerian orphans who lived on the Algeria-Morocco border. It was Castro’s intention to allow these children to live on the island and grow up to be outstanding Algerian citizens. Whether El Moro is (or could be) one of those orphaned children or, as the narrator tells us, the son of an Algerian economist, he is an exile. As Victorio tells us, El Moro rolls his *rs* in the French manner and it is precisely on this seemingly insignificant detail that postcolonial realities collide.

As a colony of France from 1838-1962, Algeria inherited—for better or worse—the French language, the use of which is a point of contention for many Algerian writers, francophone and otherwise. Algeria, much like Cuba, was late (compared to Morocco and Tunisia) to gain independence from France; in fact, Algeria was not a French colony, in the strict sense of the word but, more specifically, a *département d'outre-mer* or *DOM*, an overseas department, an extension of France itself, a historical detail that has complicated the ways in which Algerians see themselves, in comparison to the rest of the Arab world, as well as the ways in which the Arab world sees Algerians. In either case, a sense of Algerian exceptionalism—based on colonial experience—colors Algerian national identity. It is interesting to note (for the purpose of future research) that the *criollo* we find in Cuba in the nineteenth century has at least one thing in common with the *Pieds Noirs* during the Algerian War of Independence: his loyalties (a series of contradictions) tear him/her apart.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Estévez's novel, the “Moor” in El Moro's name is enough to evoke an entire past of diglossias and displacements—in other words, of exile and loss.

As an Algerian exile, possibly raised on Cuban hospitality, El Moro is the only character in the novel who has both lived in Cuba and “abroad.” As the pilot of a fumigation plane, we may safely assume that he has not gone too far beyond the sky above the fields of Güira de Melena; as a melancholic dreamer, however, he has traveled the world. What his small plane affords him is the fantasy, the melancholic journey, the birds-eye-view of the world—if only for a short distance above the island's topography. El Moro is a kind of postcolonial Baudelaire looking down from the small window of his plane toward the rooftops of Havana City and perhaps thinking of Algiers—“Oh,” he may exclaim to himself, echoing Baudelaire's own

words, “the spleen of Algiers!” El Moro is the eternal, the absolute exile for, although he can see the world from above, he is forever outside of its sphere.

The following passage exemplifies the ways in which the exile understands and is able to articulate the notion of place. For the exile, every place constitutes both the possibility of homecoming and the possibility of displacement—and herein lies a reason for the journey. Reminiscing yet again about the past, Victorio recalls a conversation he had with El Moro:

¿La vuelta al mundo? Afirmó enfático con la cabeza antes de exclamar Como lo oyes. ¿Y has visto París y Bogotá y Sevilla? Y Nairobi y Roma y Bangkok, y quiero decirte algo, muchacho, cuando estás en el cielo te das cuenta de que todos los lugares son un solo lugar. [...] Sí, óyeme, entiéndeme, un lugar es todos los lugares, no te quepa duda, [...]. (Los palacios distantes 23)

And later:

Lo importante, Victorio, es encontrar el palacio [...] ¿qué palacio? El hombre sonrió, se inclinó hacia el niño como si fuera a revelar el más notable de los secretos. ¡Ay, muchacho, estos sí es grande!, ¿tú no sabes que todos tenemos un palacio en algún lugar? (*Los palacios distantes* 24)

It may be interesting and even fruitful at this point to recall Abd Al-Rahman’s palaces, for it is precisely the Moor in this novel who points to the possibility of “home” far away from home, at once making a connection between Victorio’s losses (at both personal and national levels) and *in-islic* condition in the city of Havana, and historical and transnational losses. Furthermore, El Moro’s palace remits us to both the palaces of Havana—now in ruins—built during the Republican years and to the palaces of al-Andalus, themselves, as Abd Al-Rahman’s biography reveals, the remedy to the *disorientation* of exile and the heartbreak of loss. The figure of the

Moor in Estévez novel is not an emptied exoticism and the result of a hegemonic relationship, but an engagement of historicity and a producer of transnational connections built upon affective links. El Moro does not simply suggest connections, he clearly articulates them: “When you are up in the sky,” he tells Victorio, “you realize that all those places are just one place” (9). While the statement seems to collapse all national differences, what El Moro is really saying—this will become much clearer when we discuss the *Pequeño Liceo*—is that it is the production, exhibition and performance of culture that distinguishes one country from another. That Estévez chooses the figure of the Moor to impart this statement reveals a connection with the Orient that has little to do with hegemonic structures and a great deal to do with affective identification.

Whether or not El Moro’s travels have in fact taken place is of little consequence; The important thing is that El Moro’s p(a)lace represents the possibility of a melancholic journey, a kind of action-dreaming that replaces Victorio’s passive dream of nostalgia for a childhood now past. In fact, El Moro’s p(a)lace invites Victorio and Selma to begin anew, to reconstruct, to learn historical lessons. Work, in Benjamin’s sense of the term, is that which allows for the expression of loss. Rather than overcoming loss, as mourning would require, Victorio and Selma will wear it on their sleeve. The figure of El Moro in his plane—suspended somewhere between the sky and the silhouette of the island, or somewhere between two coexistent and yet contradictory paradigms—comes to mind.

While El Moro belongs to the past, his character points toward the future. What is idealized no longer belongs to the past, but to a point beyond the horizon—Estévez seems to recognize that a yearning for lost ideas and the idealization of the past itself is a dangerous path, for nostalgia implies the need for restitution and redemption, an opening of the gates to the past and the rectification of errors committed long ago. Thus, the utopian palaces or that Elsewhere in

the future constitute an imagined and imaginary place where the denied dignity of non-belonging and exile is restored and the possibility of reconstruction—if only at the level of the individual—is at hand.

In “Home as an Ordering Principle in Space,” Kim Dovey argues that “home is a notion universal to our species, not as a place, house, or city, but as a principle for establishing a meaningful relationship with the environment” (qtd. in Porteous 26). In turn, John Berger agrees when he writes that, “[o]riginally home meant the center of the world not in a geographical sense, but in an ontological sense” (55). Following Berger’s logic, then, we may contend that in losing his home to the greater and progressive collapse of the city of Havana, Victorio, too, has lost his center; but his disorientation is both ontological and geographical. As Berger notes, “[w]ithout a home everything [is] fragmentation” (56). In the case of Victorio, this is, of course, also true in the literal sense, as he inhabits a city in ruins, the hostility of which we discover, as Victorio wanders through the city. Episodes, such as the aggression Victorio suffers in the ruins of what was once an insane asylum, refer the reader to what it means to live in Cuba at the end of the twentieth century. While in the ruins of the asylum Victorio is robbed and sent to jail, Victorio experiences aggression and hostility everywhere, including the ruins of the *Pequeño Liceo*, the most idyllic and utopian ruins in the text. In this last case, a pimp kills Don Fuco, and Victorio and Salma are exiled from the ruins of the theater and forced to wonder the city once more. It may be important here to note that, unlike the Judeo-Christian story of Adam and Eve, situating the “origin” and a new Cuba or, more specifically, a new Havana, in a Salma-Victorio unit is foreclosed, for Salma and Victorio are not a couple in the traditional sense. Their influence on the city will not take place on reproductive terms (that is, they will not procreate in the biological sense and “people” the city with New Cubans); instead, their influence will take

place in terms of a call toward a shared melancholic journey, toward an Elsewhere, away from the past and toward the future, in El Moro's sense.

El Moro's palaces, then, become a site of resistance. In the words of bell hooks, the distant palaces become "a place where the dignity that is denied us on the outside is restored" (43). However, something is lost beyond that which the text can represent, something to which El Moro, as brief as his time in the text may be, unrelentlessly points—that is, the relationship between the local specificity of Victorio's situation, such as Cuba's economic and political condition in the 1990s, and its link to both a global coming-to-terms with the collapse of utopian dreams, such as socialism, communism, and nationalism, but also with a human condition that places us always a moment ahead or behind, however the case may be, from paradise. It is not in fact that our much sought after paradise has been lost, as Peter Sloterdijk may remind us, but that the paradise we thought lost never really was. The irony of the situation in which Victorio finds himself lies in the fact that it is precisely in the city of Havana, and among its ruins that Victorio will discover his dignity. In fact, rather than overcoming the loss, meaning is possible by retaining the loss and, as we will see, by articulating it.

Through a lack of any real expression of interiority, El Moro becomes a kind of aphorism, in Deleuze's use of the term, that points to forces and relationships outside of the text, but that are, ultimately, suggested by the text itself. In "Nomad Thought," French philosopher Gilles Deleuze suggests that it was precisely the aphoristic nature of Nietzsche's writing that allowed it to establish links with forces and processes which had their origin outside of the text. As a kind of aphorism, El Moro not only draws our attention to a point, or points, to geographies and relationships exterior to the text, but to the boundaries between text and reality. According to Deleuze,

Such texts are traversed by a movement that comes from without, that does not begin on the page (nor the preceding pages), that is not bounded by the frame of the book; it is entirely different from the imaginary movement of representation or the abstract movement of concepts that habitually take place among words and within the mind of the reader.

Yet, the placement of the figure of the Moor next to the Cuban Victorio threatens to eradicate the differences between them as participants in the novel's unfolding plot, and as textual creations that have as their point of reference a reality that exists outside of the text. In *On the Move*, Tim Cresswell speaks of the nomad as a figure that is "raced" in ways that are often ignored or go unchallenged (101). The nomad, according to Cresswell, repeats the West's colonial strategy of representation and romanticization of the non-Western other. In addition, Cresswell contends, the notion of the nomad "allows Deleuze and Guattari to avoid the "ethical burden of representing the real, actual nomads who might eventually have something to say in response" (102); however, in Estévez's novel, the Moor is not just a Moor (not just a notion of a nomad), he is a thought-to-be-Algerian, as the text reveals, and this seemingly unimportant detail is precisely what calls attention to specific forms of movement that, while pointing to significant parallels between the Cuban and Algerian experience (as recorded in literature and history), represent very particular ways of being in the world. By suggesting that El Moro may, in fact, be Algerian, Estévez moves beyond Said's orientalist model of representation, and its associated romantic notions of the traveler and the exotic Other to the possibility of an outside-the-island and outside-the-text that are then juxtaposed to an insular notion of Cuban history and culture, and to the geographically-bound existence of the main characters in the text. In fact, the Moor is not the only marker of an outside-beyond-the-island in the text, the local meets the global in characters

such as Salma, the old Chinese man (Fung) who reads newspapers from years past, Victorio's father (Robespierre), and the numerous foreign artists who make up the illustrious history of *El Pequeño Liceo de La Habana*, the Russian princess Voljovskoi (the founder of the theater and, according to Don Fuco, a very close friend of Nabokov), and Don Fuco himself.

In "The Mind of Winter," Edward Said defines exile as an "unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (49), explaining, however, that it is this plurality of vision that compensates, at least in part, for the dislocation that takes place at the level of the individual psychology:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is contrapuntal. (55)

Through a plurality of vision, El Moro, an Algerian living in Cuba, and an avid traveler, is aware of the simultaneous dimensions that make up the experience of loss and exile. He is not, then, referring to a comparative geography with neat, discernible boundaries, but to a mental geography that exists in the exile's distorted memory—whether this memory belongs to the past or, as in the case of distant palaces, to the future. As the ruins of Havana's urban landscape reveal, a physical loss has literally "taken place," and the individual or individuals who belonged to that space are no longer. There is nothing victorious for Victorio in a city that no longer shelters him; the city of *La Habana* is not home for Victorio, but a place of exile from which, unlike El Moro, he cannot escape. Victorio's *insislic* condition is emphasized by the appearance of Salma. The mythico-magical appeal of the moment is established in the following passage:



El aguacero está cayendo insensible, como si tal cosa. Victorio anda por las vías del ferrocarril, en equilibrio sobre los raíles. A trechos, la lluvia provoca un hermoso efecto al atravesar los espacios iluminados por las luces mortecinas de las farolas, y descubre dos columnas que sostienen una especie de arco semiderruido. Victorio ve la figura borrosa de una mujer. Te vas a enfermar, tú, asegura ella sonriente. Él se acerca y ella esboza un rápido gesto con la mano para indicar el arco y afirmar categórica Aquí no se está mal. (*Los palacios distantes* 47)

Perhaps because every arch in the rain is always evocative of promises of renewal, the arch that protects Salma from the elements is no different. Salma offers Victorio her filial love and friendship—her immediate generosity, her willingness to share the minimal shelter that the arch represents remind us that the presence of the other is always potentially a call to hospitality. Salma, too, as the origin of her name reveals, becomes a site for the intersection between the local and the transnational. Although, as she tells Victorio, her real name is Isabel, the young *jinetera* chooses Salma because of the Mexican-born actress Salma Hayak—half Arab and half Spanish, incidentally—and because of her own dreams of distant palaces; that is, her dreams of becoming a Hollywood actress.

As we soon discover, Salma becomes, along with Victorio, the guest of Don Fuco, a tragic-comic clown they have seen before performing magic tricks and pirouettes on the terraces and parks of the city. Don Fuco is described in the following manner:

Todo de Amarillo, aparece el payaso. Aparición vertiginosa. En una mano, el chambergo; con la otra, extrae rosas del sombrero. No se concibe cómo pueden salir tantas rosas del sombrero, mucho menos cómo es capaz de cubrir con flores

el féretro gris. Tampoco puede saberse si las luces crecen de intensidad o si se trata sólo de sugestión. Los presentes pegan a la pared. El anciano payaso parece la caricatura de un adolescente. (*Los palacios distantes* 88)

It is important to note that the above-quoted passage describes one of Don Fuco's many "performances" at funerals. While his fleeting presence assists the mourners in the process of mourning, Don Fuco continues to perform his melancholy, in and out of hospitals, and over and under the broken columns of his ruined city—his own melancholic journey never comes to an end. A sort of in-isle (as opposed to ex-isle), the old clown functions as a counter-narrative to El Moro, as he has never left the island:

¿Conoce otras ciudades?, pregunta Victorio. Ninguna, sólo La Habana, y voy a serle sincero me basta y me sobra. [...]¿Nunca le interesó viajar? Nunca, ¿le gustaría saber por qué?, ¡sencillo!, Dios, La Madre Naturaleza, o Ese-algo-que-no-sé-qué-es me hizo nacer en La Habana, si hubiera ido después a París o a Nueva York, y me hubiera paseado por los Champs Elisées, o por la Quinta Avenida, qué hubiera sido de mí ciudad pequeña, grosera, sin excesiva importancia, ciudad de poca historia y demasiadas ínfulas, [...]¿qué hubiera sido de mí al regresar?, (*Los palacios distantes* 99)

Melancholy is nourished by the belief that what was lost is, in fact, irreplaceable—lost forever. Don Fuco is also a melancholic, suspended between tragedy and farce, holding on to an exceptional island, to a city that for him *must* be unique. Melancholy, that rare combination of artifice, creativity, and sadness, exists on the premise that what is lost is not like anything else, and it's worth all the sallies in the world, to recall Don Quixote's own melancholic quest. For Don Fuco to continue to live within the confines of the island, he must believe that there is

nothing else out there, while for El Moro, and also for Victorio, it is precisely the opposite: it is the believe that somewhere, in some Elsewhere, a palace exists and awaits their return. Don Fuco also looks into the future and foresees a return, but his is not a coming home, but a possible coming to terms with the fact that what he thought he lost never really was.

Unlike Victorio's former home, the *Pequeño Liceo* has withstood the passing of time, and continues to exhibit traces of the past. Among the theatre's treasures—or relics, if we borrow from Walter Benjamin—one may find the wardrobe of Benny Moré, Celia Cruz, Alicia Alonso, Rita Montaner, and Barbarito Diez, to name only a few—as well as guitars, a piano, canvases, and the manuscripts of famous writers (135). In *Los palacios distantes*, the theatre seems to have the function that nature has in Shakespearian comedy; that is, it provides a time of renewal and re-imagining of the world; however, while the theater may at first shelter Victorio and Selma from the hostility of Havana in ruins, it is not a space of immunization, in Sloterdijk's terms, instead providing a false sense of security, if we consider that Don Fuco is killed in the theater. In contrast to the globes Victorio finds in one of the rooms inside the theatre, however, the theatre does not repeat events without end and the characters are not trapped in roles from which they cannot escape. Ultimately, the theater, a p(a)lace where Cuban culture has been both collected and cultivated becomes the representation of artifice itself.

In one of several conversations, Don Fuco tells Victorio,

Soy eterno, Victorio, se imagina qué horror estar vivo para siempre?, no sé si a alguien le habrá tocado semejante escarmiento. Descansa la barbilla en las manos enlazadas, recostados los codos en la mesa de maquillaje, y asegura con el hermoso timbre de tenorino A ratos me vienen recuerdos [...]y sé que he gozado en los burdeles de Bizancio y en los tugurios de Nueva Orleáns, y he sufrido bajo

Napoleón, Lenin, Mussolini, Stalin, Machado, todos son uno y el mismo, porque aunque hayamos creído que Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin, Machado murieron hace años, es mentira, no murieron, pura suposición, eso cree usted y entiendo yo, ingenuos como somos, nos negamos a entender que el Tirano es inmortal, el Tirano se reencarna cuando quiere [...]. (*Los palacios distantes* 102-103)

Don Fuco points to not only a Latin American reality—that of the eternal dictator, but also to a Maghrebi reality, the reality of postcolonialism and the postcolonial—perhaps what El Moro also meant when he said that every city is like any other is that every postcolonial city is like any other postcolonial city, repeating the trauma of colonialism and colonial relationships without end.

Along with Don Fuco, Salma and Victorio become a community of refugee-dreamers and ruin-dwellers that ultimately choose to use their imaginative power not only to create a place for themselves among the ruins, but to transform the ruins themselves into (excusing the contradiction) *future* childhood dreams, into *palacios distantes* or distant palaces. A new utopia, then, replaces the old utopia of revolution, but the hero is not the bearded prophet descending from his home in the mountain—it is neither Abdel Kader nor Fidel Castro—but a marginal entity who represents the opposite of the values upheld by the revolution: Victorio is apolitical and homosexual. The irony of a homosexual founding a new utopia, a new city, is emphasized by Victorio’s name. He transforms what is seen as “backward” or “crooked” into victory, echoing the revolution’s most popular maxim: *convertir el revés en victoria* [to convert what is backward into victory], a phrase that reverberates through every single page in the novel, demonstrating one more time that the past is recyclable, and always a feature of the present.

It is interesting to note the connection between Havana and the ruins of the old theatre, *Pequeño Liceo de La Habana*. It is Victorio himself who suggests a connection between the two:

[...] ha llegado a pensar que existen dos sitios diversos que son, al propio tiempo, el mismo e idéntico: La Habana y las ruinas del teatro. [...] Podría afirmarse que La Habana deriva de los restos del teatro. (*Los palacios distantes* 95)

Describing the condition of Victorio's home before he is evacuated, Estévez tells us that "la mansión ha sido dividida en exiguos cuartos, y por tanto ya no debe llamársele palacio, sino solar, conventillo, fansterio, corral, casa de vecindad, cuartería" (*Los palacios distantes* 18). "The mansion has been divided into meager rooms, and therefore should no longer be called a palace, but rather an apartment building, a tenement, a row house, a warren, a slum" (*Distant Palaces* 4). Except for a few surviving possessions, the "palace" is certainly not what it used to be—it is unrecognizable and, thus, provides a sharp contrast to the *Pequeño liceo de la Habana*, among the ruins of which Cuba's cultural treasures have become relics. Walking around the ruined theatre, Victorio comes to the following conclusion:

[ha] andado por las ruinas de aquel teatro pequeño y exquisito. [...] y ha concluido que, como la mayoría de las paradojas, ésta de la diversidad entre ciudad y ruinas del teatro es sólo paradoja en apariencia. No existe tal contrasentido. En la verdad más íntima de la realidad, ¿no son las cosas así, confusas e ininteligibles? Podría afirmarse que La Habana deriva de los restos del teatro. (*Los palacios distantes* 95)

Ultimately, Estévez postulates the possibility of a different future, one based on an improvised community, where the wonder of childhood is once again a regenerative power, and where the

shock of the whimsical and the unexpected among the ruins is the antidote for a city cursed by the stupor of eternal sleep. *La Habana* is given a second a chance, as a very small troupe of citizens (Salma and Victorio) dare to create a place for themselves, to re-imagine the ruins as a landscape of creative, of utopian possibility:

Luego vieron la ciudad que emergía de las sombras como otra sombra o como una reliquia. Crees que nos necesite?, preguntó ella sin dejar de reír y señalando hacia la lejanía de edificios ruinosos y azoteas maltrechas. [...] Ahora nos toca a nosotros, respondió convencido. Y, en efecto, a sus pies, dormida aún bajo la lluvia, se hubiera dicho que La Habana era la única ciudad del mundo preparada para acogerlos. También parecía la única superviviente de cuatro siglos de fracasos, plagas y derrumbes. (*Los palacios distantes* 272)

Ruins, in Estévez's novel, are the image of loss and absence, of the revolution's unfulfilled promises and the decayed opulence of former capital; but they are also the promise of new beginnings, the foundation of the larger theater that is the city itself. Among the ruins, Salma and Victorio are left to perform a loss that only then, through its very enactment on the city's stage, is imbued with meaning and dignity. Victorio is a mendicant seeking hospitality in a city that, as he himself confesses, has forgotten the value of those who roam free. Ultimately, Victorio and Salma "succeed" because freedom and imagination are once again called upon to walk the urban landscape. When Salma and Victorio take over what was Don Fuco's role as the clown of the city, we may assume that that they are working with a different logic entirely. The "happy" ending is only possible after the ruins themselves, what has proven to be an inhospitable place in their urban environment, become the catalyst for a new utopia—Yes!, Estévez says, but we must re-imagine our garden. The novel comes to an end, but the site of distant palaces, distant places,

does not fade. El Moro or El Morro (Havana's lighthouse), however we choose to call him, still looks out beyond the silhouette of the island, beyond its vast confines toward other islands (other exiles). In the next section, I follow El Moro's gesture away from the geographical markings of the island of Cuba to yet (in some sense) another island, this time the city of Paris.

#### 4.5 The Island of Paris

My purpose in this section is to support the argument that affective identification in this chapter is related to the experience of exile and loss. It is to this end that I offer a reading of Jesús Díaz's *El pianista árabe*. Published in *Revista Encuentro* (2001), in the section entitled "Cuentos de Encuentro" ("Tales of Encounter"), Jesús Díaz's *El pianista árabe* (The Arab Pianist) takes place in the city of Paris, more specifically, in yet another island, the original L'île de la Cité, and near the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris. *El pianista árabe* tells the story of an Arab pianist who turns out to be Patrocinio Mendoza, a Cuban pianist who—according to the details he reveals to the narrator—passes for an Arab to collect insurance money after an accident almost takes his life. The hoax is discovered when the narrator's friend, a Peruvian living in Paris for the past twelve years—"the best critic of Avant-garde music in Paris"—takes the narrator to listen to the unknown musical genius named Hassan Ibn Hassan, "a postmodern pianist who knew the secret to Arab music, jazz, bossa nova, hip hop and reggae." The story begins when "El Peruano," the narrator tells us, "lo guió por una calleja lateral y llegó hasta una escalinata que conducía a una gruta" (119) [The Peruvian guided me through an adjacent street, stopping in front of a staircase that led to a cavern] (My translation).

From the beginning, the zero point that the location of the story in L'île de la Cité represents, also becomes a kind of Aleph, that point through which, according to Argentinian

writer, Jorge Luis Borges, all other points intersect: a place of unexpected encounters, a staircase that collapses multiple times and places into one unsolicited event. In addition, the mythico-magical possibility that the appearance of the cavern represents alerts us that something (at the very least) unusual is about to take place.

The friends descend the staircase and, once sitting in the audience, the narrator is immediately overwhelmed by the feeling that he has seen the pianist somewhere before, a sensation that overtakes him numerous times during the night's performance. After several comparisons that I will soon discuss, the narrator finally comes to terms with the fact that he has never seen the Arab pianist before, admitting that he reminded him of an old acquaintance, the young Patrocinio Mendoza, a Cuban pianist whom he has not seen since the latter left Cuba ten years earlier. The narrator, however, only comes to this conclusion after taking into consideration what seem to be obvious racial differences between his Mendoza and the Arab pianist, a detail that recalls the role of the Moor in nineteenth-century Cuban literature and political discourse (discussed in Chapter 1) as a racial category of Black:

Yo no había vuelto a ver a Patrocinio Mendoza desde que salí de Cuba diez años atrás, y aunque su parecido con Hassan Ibn Hassan era en verdad extraordinario también lo eran las diferencias entre ambos. Lo del parecido era curiosísimo porque Patrocinio era mulato y Hassan árabe; sin embargo, las orejas pequeñas, de soplillo, y los ojos negros, profundos y brillantes. Pero Patrocinio Mendoza era más joven, más alto, más fuerte y además tocaba de un modo totalmente distinto al de Hassan. (120)

Already convinced that his confusion was due to nostalgia, the narrator abandons the idea of a true resemblance between the two musicians; however, nearing the end of the performance, as he



thanks his Peruvian friend for the invitation, he once again changes his mind, when the Arab pianist “attacks” *El manisero*<sup>1</sup> (The Peanut Vendor)—daring to include *La chambelona* and *El alacrán*<sup>1</sup> in the mix—leaving no doubt in the narrator’s mind that the Arab is in fact a Cuban in disguise. The following passage is the case in point:

[...] en eso Hassan atacó “El manisero” y me concentré en escucharlo, a ver cómo iba a entristecer aquel pregón que yo conocía de memoria. Lo hizo desde el principio, quebrando y ralentizando el ritmo, y entonces cantó dulcemente, “Maníiiii”. Me ganó la nostalgia, y estuve envuelto en ella hasta que caí en la cuenta de que el pianista árabe había pronunciado con toda claridad aquella palabra. Un timbre de alarma sonó en mi cabeza. (120)

The sound of alarm that goes off in the narrator’s head allows him to remember that dozens and dozens of foreigners had recorded versions of “El manicero”; none, however, had sung it, and even the few who had dared, had done so in a way that was (at the very least) interesting. In addition, it is the clarity with which the word “maní” is pronounced that makes the narrator question the musical origins of the performer, once again suggesting that language is a possible common denominator in postcolonial relationships. Furthermore, it is precisely that way of *entristecer* or saddening “El manicero” *à la Arabe* that reveals not only the possibility of a shared state of melancholy, but a common musical history, as well as mutual exiles. Let’s briefly consider that the sounds of Moorish Spain came to North Africa when Spain expelled Muslims and Sephardic Jews in 1492 and later again when the *moriscos* were expelled in 1609 by King Philip III. The same sounds also came to Cuba during the conquest, fusing with the music later brought to the island by African slaves. According to Natalio Galán, in *Cuba y sus sones*, “La fuente de la música popular cubana lo fue la popular española renacentista con sus

tradiciones mozárabes, frescas todavía cuando el descubrimiento” (17) [The source of popular Cuban music was popular renaissance Spanish music, with its Moorish traditions, which were still fresh during the discovery]. The melancholic journey in this story, then, does not constitute the crossings and meanderings of Victorio and Salma through the ruined city of Havana in search of El Moro’s promised palace, but through a musical landscape. The cultural relics and the transnational crossings kept in Don Fuco’s ruined theater are here guarded in the narrator’s as well as Mendoza’s memory, and they include an opera buffa by Mozart (*Così fan tutte*) for saxophone, a jazz piece by Dizzy Gillespie (*Night in Tunisia*<sup>1</sup>), as well as *Caravan*<sup>1</sup>, composed by Tizol, a Puerto-Rican born composer known for the incorporation of North African rhythms into his compositions. Indeed, although often considered Latin Jazz, meaning Afro-Cuban jazz, *Caravan* is a melody that uses modes particular to North Africa and Southern Spain.

Beyond the scope of the present project is a detailed account of how Cuban music influenced the world of jazz, but suffice it to say that music is perhaps the best way of accounting for cultural contact and exchange, for as opposed to a selective amnesia, music is gifted with a hyper memory, the ability of which is to remember the past while constantly moving toward the future—this is particularly true of Cuban music, jazz, but also of Andalucian music. What is of interest here is the ways in which music in this story reveals affective connections and cultural exchanges that may otherwise go unnoticed. The musical exchange in the story speaks of the collaboration of Cuban and Maghrebi musicians in France, but also in Spain, in cities like Madrid and Barcelona where Cuban and North African immigrants, Moroccans, in particular, share the cultural and political panorama. The implied Arab/Cuban collaboration of Hassan Ibn Hassan and Patrocinio Mendoza may recall, among others, the duet

of the late Cuban-All-Star artist, Compay Segundo and the King of Rai, Algerian-born Cheb Khaled (“*Saludo a Changó*” from *Compay Segundo Duets*, released in 2002).

If Ibn Hassan is, in fact, a disguise, as we will soon find out, it is a “disguise” that recalls the *piratas musulmanes* that attack the *güajiros*<sup>1</sup> of La Casa Grande in the 1700s, in Cirilo Villaverde’s *Excursión a Vueltabajo*. In Cirilo’s story, as I discussed in Chapter 1, the *güajiros* remark that were it not for the fact that they knew their attackers to be Muslim pirates, their otherwise flawless Castilian accent and *criollo*<sup>1</sup> features would not have given them away. This episode in nineteenth-century Cuban literature, which itself echoes an earlier example in Don Quixote’s “The Captive’s Tale” (and to which I dedicated a few lines in Chapter 1), in this case underscores a common colonial past between Cubans and Arabs, allowing for the possibility of an affective identification between both elements involved. In Díaz’s story, those elements, which include cultural influences and adaptations, are manifested through the musical exchange that takes place, itself conditioned by exile and loss for, as Ibn Hassan will later reveal to the narrator, the “hoax” was not originally a hoax, but a case of mistaken identities:

[...] Había sido de pinga, dijo, porque la ambulancia metía una luz anaranjada así, como del otro mundo, que iba y venía, iba y venía mientras el ambulanciero informaba por radio que había un Mercedes hecho mierda y árabe muerto. ¡Y el árabe era él, cojones, él mismítico! ¡Patrocinio Mendoza, el hijo de Mercedita!  
(121-122)

The case of mistaken identities the above passage illustrates becomes a possibility through a shared colonial past and its incumbent postcolonial realities. The ambulance driver confuses Patrocinio Mendoza for an Arab, not only because of possible confluent genealogies, but because of political and economic conditions in common that have led one and the other to become exiles

in Paris. According to the 1980s statistics, about 25% of the total population of inner Paris, and 14% of the metropolitan area, were foreigners, the majority of whom came from Algeria. Likewise, between 1994-1995, according to an article published in *Times*, more than 80% of foreign nationals (about 75,000 Algerian citizens) left Algeria—the great majority of them of them seeking exile in cities like Paris. The dead “Arab,” presumably a “*sans papier*” [paperless], perhaps one of the many North African immigrants without legal status, is also a Cuban who is equally “dead” or, at the very least, without value to the French system. Indeed, the economic situation and rising disenchantment with Cuba’s revolutionary project, along with the Cuban government’s changing policies toward Cuban immigration, have led thousands of Cubans to leave the island in search of a better life, a great number of them ending up in Paris, along with other Latin Americans who, for varied reasons, may also call the French capital home.

## **Conclusions**

Melancholy, then, as it relates to “home-bound” exile in Estévez’s novel and Patrocinio Mendoza/Hassan Ibn Hassan’s exile in Paris, becomes a means of not only dealing with loss but of learning to be Cuban through an identification with loss and exile that goes beyond the Cuban experience itself. In other words, whether home or abroad, the exiles (Victorio, Salma, Don Fuco and Patrocinio Mendoza) in the works in question are connected through a series of cultural, colonial and postcolonial, political and symbolic ties to the exile and loss that the figure of the Moor (El Moro and Hassan Ibn Hassan) represent. The “dead” bodies in the works (Don Fuco’s and Patrocinio Mendoza’s, as well as the body of the dead Arab on the street and that of el Negro Piedad<sup>1</sup>) are all bodies in exile—postcolonial bodies that transcend their local troubles to join other postcolonial bodies through the experience of ruins and loss—because, as the Arab

proverb that introduces the chapter tells us, *une petite maison en ruine vaut mieux qu'un palais en commun.*

## Conclusion

### Cuba and Beyond

In this dissertation, I have proposed that a consideration of the orientalist-identification paradigm affords new ways of understanding the relationship between Latin America and the Arab world. I have argued that given Cuba's long history as a colony of Spain and Spain's more nuanced relationship with the Arab world, Cuba has enjoyed a relationship to the Arab world that is unique in its defiance of East-West division. As such, Cuba proves to be a particularly interesting (both complex and contradictory) case of representational practices surrounding the figure of the Moor, in its various guises. As the case studies that organize this dissertation have shown, there are, in Cuban cultural production, other practices that exist alongside and complement the strictly hegemonic model of representation advanced by Said's theory of Orientalism. While on the one hand, the figure of the Moor is constructed in oppositional terms (Said's orientalist model), and as a negative and inferior inversion of "lo cubano," on the other, it is the result of what I have called an affective identification, the recognition of and connection with the other as a complimentary equal. In Chapter 1, I showed how Cirilo Villaverde's deployment of the Black Legend mode of representation in *Excursión a Vueltabajo* served several purposes: first, it supported a clear distinction between Cuban interests and Spanish interests; second, it aligned annexationist interest on the island with North American interests; and third, it deflected the negative impact of the Black Legend on North America perception of the island. Similarly, in Chapter 2, I discussed the representation of the Moor and Arab figures in José Martí's literary works and political discourse, pausing to unearth the important detail of the Arabic elements in *Ismaelillo*. In this chapter, I argued that changing attitudes toward slavery, as well as national and transnational historical components—including Arab immigration on the

demographic arena and French Romanticism in the cultural sphere—contributed to Martí’s representation of the Moor and Arab figure within an identification paradigm. To the extent that the main characteristics of Cuban notions of modernity, progress, and above all civilization resulted, as Cuba scholars claim, from contact with the United States, I argued that Martí’s interests in North Africa proposed the anticolonial movements of the Arab and Berber North as a possible alternative model to follow. In this chapter, I also showed the ways in which Gregorio Ortega’s “Las noches de Nueva Orleans” (2004) articulates a post-Martí paradigm that includes the figure of the Moor in the national picture, while responding to and correcting Villaverde’s orientalist vision.

Using the discussion on the orientalist-identification dynamic in nineteenth century Cuba as framework, in Chapter 3, I argued that the general interest in North Africa before the twentieth century, as well as the role of the Moor in Cuban literature and nationalist discourse (discussed in previous chapters) contributed to the ways in which Algeria and Algerians are represented in Cuban print and television in the 1950s and 1960s. To make my point, I gave pride of place to two specific cases, the first, Serguera’s strictly orientalist representation of Algeria and Algerians in *Che Guevara, la clave Africana: Memorias de un embajador de Cuba en Argelia* (1997); the second, the use of the identification paradigm in Delia Fiallo’s *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*, a soap opera about the Algerian War (1954-1962), broadcast in Cuba in 1962. Having understood the ways in which the orientalist-identification dynamic works in post-revolution Cuba, in the fourth and final chapter, I relied on Sigmund Freud’s theories of loss, Melanie Klein’s reinterpretation of Freud’s work, as well as the work of Walter Benjamin (although on a lesser scale) to speak about an identification with the Moor in Abilito Estévez’s *Los palacios distantes* (2002) and the

Arab figure in Jesús Díaz's short story "El pianista árabe" (2001) that has to do with the experience of exile and loss at the turn of the twenty-first century.

As an interpretive framework, the paradigm offered in this dissertation sheds new light on some of the canonical works of Latin American literature, including texts like Jorge Amado's *Gabriela, cravo e canela* (1958) and Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981), as well as puts forward the possibility of new critical engagements with the topic of modernity and nation-building in Latin America, among other areas of study. Ultimately, the manifest Moorish presence in Cuban culture speaks to the Moor's relevance in the Cuban imagination and, more specifically, in some rhetorical, economic, and political formulations that accompany the various manifestations of Cuban nationalism. As such, the particular cultural and political circumstances that gave rise to connections between Cuba and the Arab world, most significantly those exemplified by the composite pairs "Ismaelillo-árabe" in the nineteenth century, in José Martí's *Ismaelillo*, and Cuba-Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s, also suggest the possibility of, on the one hand, researchable historical connections and, on the other, comparative literary studies. As an interpretive framework, then, the orientalism-identification paradigm also proposes new scholarship in the areas of American Studies, Cuban Studies, and Maghrebi Studies, among others. Martí could have chosen to call his "Musa traviesa" a number of names, among them his son's birth name, José Francisco; however, he chose to call him Ismaelillo, and that—in the history of Latin American letters and Arab-Latin American relations—must make all the difference.

In order to suggest possible directions for comparative research, I have included appendices A and B. In Appendix A, "Palestinians from Oriente: Osama Qashoo's *Soy Palestino* (2008)," I briefly discuss the conditions in the eastern region of Cuba that have given rise to the



term *palestino*, a derogatory term used to describe individuals from Oriente who migrate to Havana. The discussion includes a consideration of Palestinian filmmaker's Osama Qashoo's *Soy Palestino*, a documentary about Qashoo's own experience as a Palestinian in Cuba and his encounter with Luisito, a Cuban *palestino*.

Appendix B, "The Covered Women of Lima and Hassan Ibn Hassan/Patrocínio Mendoza," focuses on *las tapadas limeñas*, the covered women of Lima. The discussion takes the Peruvian figure in Jesús Díaz's "El pianista árabe" as its point of departure. Here, I discuss the ways in which women in nineteenth-century Perú made use of the *saya y manto* (skirt and shawl) in ways that resonate with the tropes of mistaken identity and Arab figure as disguise in Hispanic-American literature, as well as with the representation and use of the veil in contemporary Arab and Francophone literatures.

In both cases, the identification-orientalist dynamic becomes a useful lens through which we may understand how and why Latin America and the Arab World—in spite of often divergent paths—seem to always find each other.

## APPENDIX A

### **Palestinians from Oriente: Osama Qashoo's *Soy Palestino* (2008)**

Recently, affected by the economic conditions befallen the island, particularly in the last decades, Havana has been impacted by a migration flow from the east. The impact of this migratory wave on the already strained economic conditions and crowded urban spaces of Havana—along with the generally recent (the last two decades) negative association of Cuba's eastern region to a “backward” and “inferior” East—has given rise to the term *Palestino* (Palestinian). The term is derogatory Havana slang used to describe *Oriental*s<sup>1</sup> who migrate to Havana in search of a better life. As Cuban scholar Amalia Cabezas humorously points out in “Palestinos: Crackdown on Internal Migration,” the irony would not be lost on late Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1979). As Cabezas contends,

Discursively, *palestinos* represent that Oriental “other” in need of management, regulation, and ultimately exclusion from the new economy of tourism and the social and cultural fabric of the rapidly transforming socialist nation. (75)

In order to understand how the racial discrimination of *orientales* has played a role in the construction of a Palestinian identity in Cuba, I consider how, in spite of its historical importance, the eastern provinces continue to be the backyard to Havana, plagued by continually higher poverty and unemployment, and deficient in areas such as sanitation, water, and health. This region, as Cabezas reminds us, is home to the most marginal segments of the Cuban population, which includes a predominantly rural and Black population.

The migration of Cubans to the United States since the early 60s has largely involved a White majority of individuals from Havana and its surrounding provinces. The financial support in the form of remittances to family and friends in Havana and the surrounding provinces from

this sector in exile has largely benefited the Western sector. In the recent decades, the remittances have also served to continue the clear cultural and economic distinctions, and the antagonism that has, to some degree, always characterized the relationship between east and west on the island. The 1990s, a period of unprecedented economic hardship known as The Special Period in Times of Peace<sup>1</sup> forced the already poor easterners to try their luck in the west. The harsh economic reality of the time, overcrowding, and racial prejudice all contributed to the creation of a term that recalls Cuba's orientalism in the nineteenth century, but also the island's continued identification with the East. To make my point, I would like to briefly call attention to Palestinian filmmaker Osama Qashoo's 65-minute documentary *Soy palestino*, a broadcast by the Al Jazeera English Witness series in 2008.

During a tourist trip to Cuba, Qashoo is surprised to find that Cubans react with amusement when he introduces himself as a Palestinian. Curious about the responses he encounters, he asks people on the street for an answer. Ultimately, he discovers from Luisito, a Cuban Palestino and homeless street musician in Havana, that *palestino* is a term used to describe people who, like him, migrate to Havana from the rural east. While for Habaneros a *palestino* constitutes an individual of rural background, unadapted and inadapted to city life (a threat and added burden to the already fragile economy of Havana and its overpopulated sectors), for *orientales*, as one individual states in the documentary, the association comes from a sense of mutual displacement and subjugation, but also from a sense of rebellion and the refusal to ever give up. Cuban Palestinians, perhaps much like their Palestinian counterparts, are refugees who live in shantytowns. Their illegal immigration to the city places them at risk for deportation to their point of origin in Oriente, a place that many, like Luisito haven't visited in years.

One of the most moving scenes in the film shows Luisito flying a Palestinian flag on the makeshift music cart he pushes around Havana. The scene constitutes yet another moment of identification, one that also includes the film director himself, who decides to take Luisito to visit his family in Oriente. Much like Luisito, Qashoo hasn't returned to Palestine in years. The voyage home for these two Palestinians would be unthinkable were it not for those ties that bind one human being in distress to another human being in distress.

## APPENDIX B

### The Covered Women of Lima

and Hassan Ibn Hassan/Patrocinio Mendoza

In order to suggest one of the possible directions that my future research may take, I find it worthwhile to mention the presence of a Peruvian in Jesús Díaz's *El pianist árabe* (discussed in Chapter 4), as it is he who leads the narrator to the Cuban/Arab pianist. The appearance of the Peruvian friend, a critic of Avant-garde music in Paris, as the narrator tells us, speaks to a long history of Latin American writers and intellectuals in Paris, as well as to the cultural collaboration and exchange between Latin America and Paris, but also to Peru's own "encounters" with the figure of the Moor, one of the most interesting and suggestive of which is *la tapada limeña*, the covered women of Lima who graced the Peruvian capital in the eighteenth century. The style, known as *saya y manto* (shawl and skirt), had been in use as early as 1560. At this point, I would like to briefly discuss the importance of this figure to both the specific concerns of this chapter and the general scope of the project.

Although the little research done to confirm the origins of the style blame it on "el Perú afrancesado del siglo XVIII," the images of these women, captured by the Peruvian artist, Toño Fierro, suggest the image of the traditional Muslim woman (see Figures 25-27).



*Figure 25. Tapada y escribano, Toño Fierro*  
Sin fecha / Acuarela sobre papel / 35 x 26 /  
Colección Banco central de Reserva del Perú



*Figure 26. Dos tapadas*1858 / Acuarela sobre papel/29.8x23.0  
Colección Museo de arte de Lima  
Toño Fierro



*Figure 27. Detail from "El Mercado principal de Lima"*  
Mauricio Rugendas 1848

In much the same way as Patrocinio Mendoza covers his true identity under a “manto árabe” or “Arab shawl,” so did these women cover their true identity under their clothing style, which concealed them completely, exposing only one eye. Describing *las tapadas*, Andalusian poet, Esteban de Terralla y Landa wrote, in *Lima por dentro y fuera* (1798),

Jamás a muger tapada  
Bayas a echarla requiebros,  
Que puede ser una negra  
O algun horrible esqueleto. (158)  
Never grace a covered woman  
With embellished undertone,  
For it could well be a Negress  
Or a grimly skeleton. (My translation)

Also speaking of the *tapadas*, feminist writer Flora Tristan, an example of Latin American-French relations tells us, in *Peregrinations of a Pariah* (1837),

One must, however, call attention to the extent to which the dress of the Lima women favors and assists their intelligence in acquiring the great liberty and dominating influence that they enjoy. If they should ever abandon their costume [...] they could no longer enjoy that incessant activity that their incognito favors and would be prey to boredom and without means of compensating for the loss of esteem generally suffered by beings accessible only to sensual pleasures. The *saya*, as I have said, is the national costume. All the women wear it, no matter their rank; it is respected and it is part of the country’s customs, like the veil of Moslem women in the Orient. (*The Women of Lima*, 197)



Of remarkable importance in the passage above is what Flora Tristan identifies as the advantages of going covered or “under” cover, as Patrocinio Mendoza chooses to do. As the preceding chapters have shown, the representation of the Moor in Cuban literature and political discourse within an identification paradigm has served to speak of Cuba’s own specific concerns at various times in history. While in Chapter 2, Martí finds in the figure of the Moor a way to incite Cubans to take arms against a colonial oppressor, in expressions such as, “Let us be Moors!”, in Chapter 3, *Bohemia* articles use the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) to address concerns about life under then president Fulgencio Batista, thus avoiding the limitations of censorship under Batista’s regime in the years preceding the 1959 Cuban Revolution. The advantages that the *saya y manto* represent for the Peruvian woman are, at least in theory, very similar to the advantages that becoming an Arab represent for Patrocinio Mendoza in Diaz’s story.

Once the accident takes place, Patrocinio Mendoza is advised by his French lawyer to also include in the list of personal injuries, irreparable damage to his hands—for Patrocinio Mendoza, this meant an end to his days as a musician. The only solution was to “kill” Patrocinio the musician and resuscitate the old Cuban literary tradition of using an Arab as disguise. As an Arab in Paris, Patrocinio Mendoza may come and go as he pleases, *passing* as just another Arab in the City of Lights, playing in *boîtes* around town and calling to life (if only clandestinely) his Cuban hands from time to time, in order to play a *manisero* or a *montuno*, depending on his mood. Much like the *saya y manto* allowed Peruvian women to go about the city with little concern for time or reputation, so does Hassan Ibn Hassan allow Patrocinio Mendoza to be more of himself—even if that self must relinquish all expected means of national affiliations and become another.

The use of the saya y manto by Peruvian women in the nineteenth century suggests to me a broader discussion that includes, among other things, the various critical engagements surrounding the use of the veil and its representation in Arab and Francophone literatures, as well as a consideration of the practice of “passing” in African-American literature.

APPENDIX C

**Entrevista a Delia Fiallo (I)**

**Julio 6, 2010**

**Coral Gables, Florida**

**1. ¿Bajo petición de quién escribió la novela y cómo surgió la idea para la novela?**

En realidad, yo escogía temas libremente—la lucha de la resistencia francesa, la india—liberación de dominación inglesa. Argelia era un país muy interesante en ese momento—era de los franceses.

País interesante—de los franceses.

**2. ¿En qué año la escribió?**

Empecé en 1962...la estaba escribiendo en la marcha. El autor le da más valor a la historia si la va adaptando al público. La historia va evolucionando mucho así.

**3. ¿Ha estado Ud. En Argelia? No, nunca.**

**4. ¿Utilizó alguna fuente en particular para escribir la novela?**

Leí mucho. Era tema de tipo político...creé una historia de fantasía dentro de un marco histórico.

**5. ¿Cómo surgen los personajes?**

Me documenté mucho con personajes de la época y creé una serie de personajes falsos. Con la novela en el aire me sorprendió la liberación de Argelia. Había que estar al tanto y escuchar la voz de los Estados Unidos de América para enterarse de lo que pasaba. Mientras filmábamos, De Gaulle propuso la liberación de Argelia... así que se filmó exactamente el hecho de ser libre en Argelia.

**6. ¿Hubo otras versiones no aprobadas? No, no.**

**7. ¿Cómo fue recibida la novela por las instituciones políticas?**

*Bajo el cielo de Argelia* es una novela histórica...o sea, una novela de fantasía dentro de un marco histórico. Yo quería expresar la ansiedad de un pueblo en la lucha por su libertad. Es una novela que reivindica a los franceses también. Al final, cuando llega la paz de Argelia, los soldados franceses plantan sus armas y se niegan a fusilar. También hay un francés a quien cogen detenido, que llega a comprender las razones de los argelinos y se une a ellos.

**8. ¿Ud. se acuerda de la llegada de Ben Bella a Cuba?**

Claro que sí. La recepción a Ben Bella fue magnífica... filas en la calle a su paso. El entusiasmo del pueblo cubano por este señor fue algo inusitado—más popular por la novela que por su persona política.

**9. ¿Ud. también escribió *México indómito*?**

Sí, de la época de Maximiliano y Juárez. Esa fue una de las novelas que se quedaron en Cuba. Cuando salí de Cuba, traté de sacar las novelas que pudieran resultar más comerciales.

**10. ¿Y *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* se quedó en Cuba también?**

No, esa se quedó, pero después en Venezuela alguien la sacó de Cuba y quería 12,000 dólares por ella y yo se la compré. La demás se las vendí a Televisa. Ellos me pidieron una lista de lo escrito en mi vida—y muchas de las novelas se quedaron en Cuba. Si alguna vez salen de Cuba, Televisa tiene prioridad.

**11. ¿Qué me podría decir de Nueva Generación?**

Bueno, Nueva Generación era una revista que publicaba, reunía a músicos, escultores, pintores y pertenecía a una organización que se llamaba Nuestro Tiempo, que duró unos tres años. Reunía a toda la gente joven que tenía tendencias creativas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Fernando Retamar, Nilo Rodríguez, Juan Blanco, Sila Sánchez, la escultora. Su manifiesto no incluía la ideología política, ahí cabía todo el mundo. José María Mijares, el padrino de mi hijo, también. Teníamos un local donde se hacían musicales, conciertos, exhibiciones de pintura. El local que dejó la emisora 1010, que era comunista...se quedó vacío, y lo cogimos nosotros, lo limpiamos y lo pintamos. Al cabo del tiempo nos dimos cuentas que nos habían manejado y en una reunión memorable se planteó el asunto—se produjo discusión respecto a eso. Yo dije, nosotros nos vamos.

**12. ¿Cuánto tiempo trabajó en Venezuela?**

Yo estuve trabajando en Venezuela por muchos años...20 años en **Venevisión** y después en **Radio Caracas**. Nosotros fuimos los que hicimos el género de la telenovela—se elegí el reparto y la música. La telenovela era género muy controversial—los artistas se avergonzaban de trabajar en telenovelas, pero finalmente con la fuerza de los géneros populares se impuso. Los sentimientos al fin son el común denominador del ser humano. Fueron muchas las novelas...*Topacio*, *Kassandra*, *Peregrina*, *Sin pena ni gloria*, *Lucecita*, *El ángel perverso*...Para Cuba fue *Esmeralda*. *Luz María*, una novela de época, se filmó en Perú. *Cristal*, primer programa de la televisión en España.

**Bueno, Delia, muchísimas gracias por hablar conmigo y por su generosidad. Nunca me imaginé encontrar una telenovela cubana llamada *Bajo el cielo de Argelia* y mucho menos escrita por Delia Fiallo.**

## **Entrevista a Delia Fiallo (II)**

**Julio 9, 2010**

**Coral Gables, Florida**

- 1. ¿Qué otra cosa, además del momento histórico que se estaba viviendo en Cuba a principios de los 60s, pudo haber influido en el tema de *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*?**

Realmente fue la situación política. Yo trataba de reflejar la situación de un pueblo oprimido luchando por su libertad. Claro, contribuyó el ambiente exótico de un país casi desconocido, la curiosidad por sus costumbres, sus formas de vestir, su música.

- 2. ¿En este momento, se acuerda por qué escogió la municipalidad de Biskara o Biskra como el lugar de la acción en vez de, por ejemplo, la Casbah, un lugar muchísimamente más exótico que Biskara y quizás más cercano a la acción?**

La capital hubiera sido algo muy comprometido a una realidad mucho más palpable. Miré en el mapa que convenía, cerca de la montaña o quizás la sonoridad del nombre.

- 3. ¿Dónde fue filmada la telenovela y quienes fueron sus actores principales?**

La novela fue filmada en Cuba en la CMQ. Ada Bejar y Alberto Gonzales Rubio, el mariscal Roland. Melcar Roland jugó Etien. La televisión estaba en sus inicios y estábamos muy limitados, así que todo era cartón piedra. Un número de sets limitado además. La historia tenía que ceñirse a los sets, que habían cada día en ese local. La televisión de ese momento tuvo mucho mérito; no era como ahora, que tenían todos los recursos disponibles.

- 4. ¿Qué me puede decir de la música y el vestuario?**

La música fue escogida de temas que eran de música argelina legítima. Y el vestuario de acuerdo con los personajes, de acuerdo con la época. Las francesas vestían con su época. Se trabajaba con mucho, mucho amor y mucha mística.

5. **No he tenido la oportunidad de leer la novela, pero sí he podido estudiar la sinopsis que Ud. me obsequió. Me pregunto si en algún momento aparecen palabras árabes o francesas en el guión.**

Algunas. Busqué palabras francesas y son fáciles. En árabe, por ejemplo, *wislaya*. La novela contribuyó mucho a la causa argelina, porque la novela sí iba a la masa. La telenovela es un género masivo que va al pueblo. Entraba en su casa. Un personaje del gobierno revolucionario de Cuba, cuando Ben Bella fue y tuvo una acogida popular muy grande, el pueblo lo conocía mejor por la telenovela, que por la información que salía en los periódicos de la época. La multitud en la calle iba aclamándolo.

6. **¿En cuántos capítulos se organizó la novela y cuánto tiempo duró en el aire?**

La novela tenía como 88 capítulos y duró tres meses, o algo así.

7. **¿En algún momento habla de la religión?**

Me imagino que en algún momento debo haber hablado de la religión, como estaba tratando de reflejar un mundo, me imagino que sí.

8. **¿Qué más me podría contar Ud. de *Bajo el cielo de Argelia*?**

Yo principalmente quería enseñar que los pueblos no son el gobierno. Los pueblos permanecen, mientras que los gobiernos van y vienen. Yo quería minimizar el odio y quería reflejar el momento histórico en Cuba, o sea el pueblo oprimido de Cuba. El pueblo oprimido contra la revolución de los Castros.

9. **Yo pienso que el melodrama es, de alguna forma, cura para una melancolía en estado crónico; Es decir, melancolía en el sentido de Freud, en el que algo o alguien (así sea padre, madre, ideal, patria) se ha perdido. ¿Qué piensa Ud. que el público ha perdido y recupera a través del melodrama?**

Recupera la ilusión, claro. El melodrama tiende a buscar, a mostrar caminos a los distintos conflictos de tipo humano que existen en las familias, y buscas una solución feliz.

10. **¿Cuál diría Ud. es la esencia básica del melodrama?**

El sentimiento. Las emociones son el común denominador del género humano y son los instrumentos de trabajo de un escritor de telenovela. El amor, la ambición, los celos, existen desde el primer hombre sobre la tierra y existirán hasta el último hombre. y existirán y esta es la fuerza de penetración que tiene el género que llega a todos por igual, no importa el tiempo, la edad, la cultura, porque los sentimientos son comunes para todos.

**11. ¿Considera que el melodrama debe de alguna manera cambiarse y ajustarse o lo políticamente correcto?**

Esto siempre tiene una actualidad porque es una historia. Y yo siempre fui muy fiel a la realidad histórica de ese momento. Aparte de eso tiene una historia de amor que también siempre interesa.

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