

Book proposal

## ORIENTE: CUBA'S WILD EAST

**Peter Hulme**

In line with the rationale for the *American Tropics* series, this book focuses on the particular region that is Oriente, roughly the eastern third of the island of Cuba. *Oriente: Cuba's Wild East* recounts a literary history of modern Cuba that has four distinctive and interrelated characteristics. Oriented to the east of the island, it looks aslant at a Cuban national literature that has sometimes been indistinguishable from a history of Havana. Given the insurgent and revolutionary history of that eastern region, it recounts stories of rebellion, heroism, and sacrifice. Intimately related to places and sites which now belong to a national pantheon, its corpus – while including fiction and poetry – is frequently written as memoir and testimony. As a region of encounter, that corpus is itself resolutely mixed, featuring a significant proportion of writings by US journalists and novelists as well as by Cuban writers.

Word count: c. 100,000

### Contents and synopsis

If you want to know another country without going abroad, then try going to Oriente. [El que quiera conocer otro país, sin ir al extranjero, que se vaya a Oriente] (Pablo de la Torriente Brau)

Oriente, if only I could sing your song the way I want to. [Oriente, si yo pudiera cantarle como deseo] (Cheo Marquetti)

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#### Series Preface

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#### Introduction

Containing a brief account of Oriente and of its characteristics as a region; an outline of the book's approach; and an introduction to its themes and writers. [Draft of Introduction is attached]

#### 1. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes at Yara (1868) Silvestre de Balboa James J. O'Kelly

The story of modern Cuba begins just outside Bayamo as Carlos Manuel de Céspedes frees his slaves and proclaims Cuban independence, a moment constantly recalled by today's political figures such as Ricardo Alarcón and Fidel Castro. Some of Céspedes' own writing is considered here, but the main texts are the 1608 *Espejo de paciencia*, the remarkable heroic poem composed in Oriente shortly after the kidnapping of the Bishop of Havana which supplies its plot, but then lost and only rediscovered in the nineteenth century; and James J. O'Kelly's 1874 *The Mambi-Land*, recounting his experiences as a journalist sent by the *New York Herald* to find Céspedes. The topography of south-west Oriente links these books with the landing of Fidel Castro's expedition in December 1956 (as discussed in Chapter 7).

**2. José Martí at Veguitas (1895)**

**José Fornaris Ramón de Palma José María Heredia**

His last journey, across Oriente to his death, was José Martí's first to the region, and so he approached its topography and its people as both a lover and a stranger: they embodied the nation he was about to give his life for, and yet he was learning about them until the day he died. Central to this process was his encounter with an Indian woman at Veguitas. Martí's diary is the central text of this chapter, read alongside the exile writings of his most famous predecessor as a Cuban poet, José María Heredia, the work of the *indigenista* movement known in Cuba as *siboneyismo*, and alongside some of Martí's other writings, including his most famous essay, "Nuestra América" [Our America].

**3. Richard Harding Davis in Santiago (1896/1950)**

**Theodore Roosevelt John Fox Jr James Street**

US engagement in Cuba is the subject of the next three chapters. The US/Cuba relationship is undeniably central to the island's political and cultural history, a relationship which turns on the events of 1898. The first two of these chapters look at the fictionalisation of that relationship in the popular novels that preceded and followed the US invasion. This one focuses first on Richard Harding Davis and the involvement of the Pennsylvania steel industry in Oriente, fictionalised in his best-selling novel, *Soldiers of Fortune* (1896); then on the accounts of participants in that US invasion, notably Theodore Roosevelt and John Fox Jr.; and finally on a remarkable retrospective novel written in 1950 by the Mississippian writer James Street, which drew on the memories of some of the Cuban protagonists.

**4. Frederick Albion Ober in Baracoa (1897)**

**Edward Stratemeyer Mark Harrington**

While Davis, Fox, and Street were writing romances for an adult readership, a feature of the turn of the century was the flourishing of writing for adolescents, with the Spanish-American War providing prime subject matter. Two rather different forms of the genre, both tied to Oriente, are discussed here: the futuristic novel, predicting US domination of the continent and even the globe, a form pioneered by the literary entrepreneur Edward Stratemeyer, and the more informed ethnographical novel represented here by Frederick Albion Ober's *Under the Cuban Flag*.

**5. Andrew Summers Rowan in Bayamo (1898/1949)**

**Elbert Hubbard Louis A. Dent Cosme de la Torriente y Peraza Walter Adolphe Roberts**

The central story here is of the "message to García" – the mission of US soldier, Andrew Summers Rowan, to the Cuban general, Calixto García, in April 1898. Beneath Elbert Hubbard's wildly popular pamphlet celebrating the deed and Rowan's own four versions, the true story is unearthed, with the help of National Archive documents and Cuban witnesses. The incident provides the climax to the only Jamaican novel about the Spanish-American War, *The Single Star*, written in 1949 by W. Adolphe Roberts.

**6. Pablo de la Torriente Brau and Josephine Herbst in Realengo 18 (1934-5)**

The revolutionary upheavals of the mid-1930s fall between the periods dominated by the strong men of the Cuban Republic's first 60 years, Gerardo Machado and Fulgencio Batista. A series of strikes paralysed the country and were violently repressed. Meanwhile, in the mountains of Oriente a peasant collective defending its land from the encroaching sugar companies became an unlikely beacon of resistance. Only two written accounts exist of Realengo 18 – by the journalist Pablo de la Torriente Brau, soon to die fighting in the Spanish Civil War, and by the US novelist and journalist,

Josephine Herbst. De la Torriente Brau has recently been rediscovered in Cuba as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century; Herbst's journalism and novels remain underappreciated.

**7. Antonio Núñez Jiménez on Pico Turquino (1945/1957/1960)**  
**Fidel Castro Herbert Matthews Robert Taber**

The guiding texts here are by the Cuban geographer, Antonio Núñez Jiménez, responsible for bringing Oriente—and other parts of Cuba—back into the national consciousness through his writings of the 1940s and 1950s, but whose geography text book was confiscated and burned by Batista's police. Particular attention is paid to writings about Pico Turquino, Cuba's highest mountain, which came to symbolise both José Martí, the national hero, and the Revolution itself. Alongside Núñez Jiménez's geographical writings are set the journalistic accounts by Herbert Matthews and Robert Taber, brought to Oriente to interview Fidel Castro in 1957.

**8. Graham Greene in Santiago de Cuba (1957)**  
**Ward Hawkins**

Although Greene's novel *Our Man in Havana* (1958) is mainly set where its title suggests, one key scene takes place in Oriente, echoing Greene's own visit in November 1957, where he met two young revolutionary leaders, who drew him into Cuban politics. This chapter tries to untangle Greene's involvement in Cuba and to offer a reading of his Cuban novel. It is set alongside one of the few contemporary US novels about the Cuban Revolution, Ward Hawkins' *Kings Will Be Tyrants*.

**9. Stephen Crane and Moazzem Begg at Guantánamo Bay (1898/2005)**  
**Harry Scovel Erik Saar James Yee**

In recent years Guantánamo Bay has become the best-known toponym in Oriente. This chapter starts in 1898 with an analysis of Stephen Crane's reports and stories based on his experience as a journalist covering the US marine landings in the bay in April 1898. It then looks at the vast array of writing to have come out the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay (GTMO) since it started housing so-called "enemy combatants". This writing includes accounts written by ex-inmates and ex-military personnel.

## Introduction

I'm going there to die  
Caramba, I'm going there to kill  
Look, negra, I'm going there to die.

Oriente, if I could only sing your song  
as

I want to,  
The land where Maceo first saw the  
light

of day, Oriente.

Today I only offer you the chimera  
Just like a simple play.

You are my encyclopedia,  
My mother supreme, Oriente,  
With poets like Maceo and Heredia.  
Caramba, negra.

[Yo me voy a morir  
Caramba, me voy a matar  
Mire, negra, me voy a morir

Oriente, si yo pudiera cantarle como deseo,  
La tierra donde Maceo alcanzó la  
luz primera, Oriente.

Hoy te ofrezco la quimera  
Como una simple comedia:  
Eres tu mi enciclopedia  
Por ser la madre completa, Oriente,  
Con poetas como Maceo y Heredia,  
Caramba, negra.]<sup>1</sup>

(Cheo Marquetti, "Oriente" [c. 1941])

In Cuba the term Oriente, which just means 'east' in Spanish, has long been applied to the easternmost part of the island, roughly a quarter of the country's total area. It's not uncommon for one of the four main compass points to be turned into a regional designation, usually with a very particular set of resonances: in the USA, the west; in Italy, the south; in England, the north. The resonances of these norths and souths and easts and wests are obviously very specific to the countries concerned. Cuba's Oriente shares some characteristics with Italy's south or England's north: an under-developed economy, a

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<sup>1</sup> Where English translations are available, I have used them, sometimes making small silent amendments. Where no acknowledgement is made, translations are mine. All original quotations are contained in the Appendix of original language quotations, although I have sometimes also quoted from the original in the main text, where this seemed necessary or appropriate, as with poetry and song.

mountainous terrain, distant from centres of power, a history of social and political unrest. For all these reasons its population has often been looked down upon by Cuba's various elites. At the same time, however, the region has exercised a magnetic pull on the imaginations of those elsewhere in the country and outside the country—not unlike that exercised by the US west. Cheo Marquetti's wonderful song suggests the fascination of Cuba's Oriente, encapsulated in that combination of Maceo and Heredia: Antonio Maceo, the Bronze Titan, Cuba's greatest military hero, who was killed in 1896 during Cuba's wars of independence, and José María Heredia, the tragic Romantic poet, dead at 35, both men born in Oriente, both exiled from it for many years. Oriente is celebrated in the song as an encyclopedia, a source of knowledge; and as a mother, a source of nourishment. And, perhaps above all, as a source of revolution: where all Cuba's main insurrectionary movements have found their home over the last 150 years. Hence the opening lines of the chorus, with its fusion of resignation and bravado: "I am going there to die, I am going there to kill."

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The region of Oriente includes the country's second city, Santiago de Cuba, as well as the significant provincial towns of Baracoa, Guantánamo, Bayamo, Manzanillo, and Holguín [fig. 1/1]. The standard geographical study of Cuba (which will feature prominently in Chapter 7) divides Oriente into seven physical subregions: the Sierra Maestra, the basins of Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, the Central Valley, the Sierra of Nipe, the Cauto-Alto Cedro plain, and Baracoa.<sup>2</sup> These two sierras are the largest mountain ranges in Cuba. Oriente also contains the US Naval Station at Guantánamo Bay (known via its military abbreviation as GTMO). As an island Cuba has a natural unity and no land borders except with this US Naval Station, which the USA does not claim as its territory, even if its disputed lease on the land has no time limit.<sup>3</sup>

In the early sixteenth century Cuba was invaded from the east: its first Spanish city was Baracoa, on the eastern tip of the island, its early capital was Santiago de Cuba. Fairly quickly, however, Havana, on the northwest coast, took over as the most significant city because of the importance of its harbour and its easier links to Mexico, where real riches were soon found. From 1550 Havana was developed as one of key cities of the Spanish Empire in America (known as "the key to the Indies" [la llave de las Indias]), to the relative neglect of the eastern half of the island, which became known simply as Oriente.<sup>4</sup> Even during the development of the sugar and tobacco plantations during the nineteenth century, the mountainous sierras of the east ensured little economic

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<sup>2</sup> Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *Geografía de Cuba*, Havana: Editorial Lex, 1954, pp. 283-315. Oriente may be considered a bioregion in Kirkpatrick Sale's sense of the word: see his *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> In 1956 the revolutionary 26 July Movement noted the "geographic logic" to Cuba's independence ("Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement" [Issued November 1956 as *Manifiesto programa del Movimiento 26 de Julio*, trans. by editors], in Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdés, ed., *Cuba in Revolution*, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972., pp. 113-140, at 118.

<sup>4</sup> From an eighteenth-century perspective, Havana belongs to the region now thought of as the Gulf of Mexico, which does not include Oriente: see Robert S. Weddle, *Changing Tides: Twilight and Dawn in the Spanish Sea, 1763-1803*, College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995.

development here. Havana remained the capital city of Cuba after notional independence in 1898 and after the Cuban Revolution in 1959; and consequently therefore has remained the centre of Cuban political and social life. England offers a possible comparison, with an area roughly the same as Cuba's and a not dissimilar shape (though less elongated), and with a capital city situated on a coast towards one end of the country. The rough equivalent to Oriente, on the opposite coast and at the opposite end of the country, would be something like the region we think of as the northwest: north of Manchester, west of the Yorkshire moors, and imagining Scotland as having sunk into the Atlantic. Whitehaven would be promoted to second city, the equivalent of Santiago de Cuba in terms of distance from the capital. But Havana dominates Cuba even more than London dominates England since just under a quarter of the whole population of Cuba lives there, as opposed to about a sixth of England's population in London.<sup>5</sup>

Inevitably Havana has also therefore dominated the literary and cultural life of Cuba, as capital cities tend to do. Cuban writers have always gravitated to Havana: most Cuban books and journals have been published in Havana and most of the country's cultural institutions are located there. But of course some Cuban writers have been born in Oriente and have continued to write about it either *in situ* or after leaving, others have travelled to it and written about it, and Oriente and its component parts have had symbolic and mythic and ideological qualities attached to it. Likewise, travellers to Cuba have tended to visit Havana first and Oriente afterwards, if at all; except those drawn to Oriente for particular reasons, often to do with the revolutionary wars during the second half of the nineteenth century or during the 1950s.

For most of the colonial period and until the 1860s there were three administrative departments in Cuba: Occidental, Central, and Oriental (with three quarters of the population living in the Occidental.) An 1829 division was into provinces, with these divided into districts: Santiago de Cuba was a province with three districts. For reasons of better governance and security, just before the outbreak of the Ten Years' War (the first war of independence) in 1878, the island was reorganised into two departments, Occidental (with 23 jurisdictions) and Oriental (with 8), with the Río Jobabo as the dividing line.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently [*exactly when?*] six provinces were established, the easternmost being originally called Santiago de Cuba (until 1905) and then Oriente (until 1976). The latest administrative reorganisation has 15 provinces, the five easternmost—corresponding to the previous province of Oriente—being Las Tunas, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, Holguín, and Guantánamo. As a result, the word "Oriente" no longer appears on Cuban maps. Freed from such administrative inscription, Oriente can resume its long career as the designation of a *place*, in the full idiomatic meaning of that word, resonant for every speaker

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Alan R.H. Baker and Mark Billinge, ed., *Geographies of England: The North-South Divide, Material and Imagined*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> 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. II)*, Havana: Editora Política, 1996, p. 8.

of the Cuban language.<sup>7</sup> Because of its terrain and its distance from Havana, Oriente—whatever its administrative remit at any particular time—has often been regarded as emblematic of<sup>8</sup> backwardness as opposed to modernity. But the values attached to this dialectic can sometimes be reversed: like elsewhere in the world, when the city, civilisation, and modernity become emblematic of colonialism, decadence, and corruption, then its opposites become sources of purity and renewal, a rôle they have increasingly played in Cuba over the last 150 years. Because of the revolutionary initiatives begun in its undeveloped and mountainous parts in 1878, and 1895, and in 1956, Oriente has become identified with revolutionary purity and renewal, an identification not hindered by the region being the birthplace of many of the revolutionary protagonists, most recently Fidel and Raúl Castro. Something of the region's significance within Cuba is captured in Armando Hart's characterisation of Oriente as "deepest Cuba" [la Cuba profunda]."<sup>9</sup>

Literary geographies such as this one, which focus on one region within a nation state, obviously have a particular and quite complicated relationship to nationalism and to the idea of a national literature. In its older sense *natio* can suggest a local community and a set of rooted relationships: in that sense the writing studied here could be properly called *national*.<sup>10</sup> If, however, national is taken to apply to the nation-state, then any focus on a particular region is non-national by definition, usually non-metropolitan and therefore sometimes by extension anti-national, even though such a literary geography can also highlight the process of national redefinition in which a particular region becomes identified with or is allowed to stand for the nation as a whole. England can again offer a comparison: at certain moments the sense of authenticity associated with writers from the northwest such as Wordsworth and the Brontë sisters can be valued more highly than seemingly more 'national' writers and can be seen as representing 'Englishness'. The key rhetorical figure here is metonymy. The default position is that the capital city represents the nation's interests. However, 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,

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<sup>7</sup> As so often, resonance goes along with some vagueness: the western boundary of Oriente has varied throughout history, whether or not the term has marked an administrative area. Sometimes Oriente would encompass some or all of what is now the province of Camagüey, sometimes not.

<sup>8</sup> Some significant terms will be left in Spanish. They are listed and explained in the Glossary.

<sup>9</sup> Armando Hart, "Prólogo" to Pedro Álvarez Tabío, *Celia: Ensayo para una biografía*, Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> See Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form", in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 44-70, at p. 45.

Baraguá, Dos Ríos, and Moncada, all of which are in Oriente and all of which will appear later in this story. Less tangibly, the very countryside can be seen as resonant of the nation, in this case of *cubanidad* [Cubanness]: the vegetation and fauna, the environment and the country people—especially from Oriente—are sometimes seen as more authentically Cuban than the city-dwellers, and particularly than the residents of Havana—the *habaneros*. Cuba’s national musical form, the *son*, is regarded as coming from Oriente, and the term used to describe its refrain—*son montuno*—captures one of the essences of the region.<sup>11</sup> In general terms, this is a Romantic topos, which finds its anti-colonial form during independence struggles. In the Cuban case, the sheer ruggedness of the Sierra Maestra also becomes symbolic of the struggles that took place there. In particular, Cuba’s highest mountain, Pico Turquino, comes to stand for national achievement, a topos discussed in Chapter 7.

The symbolic distinction between Oriente and western Cuba can be related to other distinctions often used in discussing Cuban history, although it is never identical to them. ‘Spanish’ Cuba is sometimes distinguished from ‘Cuban’ Cuba, *Cuba grande* from *Cuba pequeña*, *el monte* or *la loma* [mountains] from *el llano* [the plain], and—during the late 1950s—*la sierra* from *el llano*. In addition, Fernando Ortiz’s famous counterpoint sets ‘sugar’ against ‘tobacco’.<sup>12</sup> There are some overlaps here, especially between Oriente and *la sierra*. However, these other distinctions all tend to be socio-economic or ideological rather than strictly geographical. The Revolutionary division in the late 1950s set the *sierra oriental* against the city of Santiago as well as that of Havana; and though sugar was for a long time associated with Havana and its hinterland, the main tobacco-growing area was in the west of the country, with sugar increasingly dominating the economy of Oriente during the twentieth century. So there are no exact matches.

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The writing of Oriente has a long history. It begins with the chapters in Bartolomé de Las Casas’s *Historia de Indias*, written in the 1520s (though not published till 1875). Las Casas was a chaplain on Pánfilo de Narvaez’s *entrada* into Cuba and it was the witnessing of an unprovoked Spanish massacre of native Cubans at Caonao which first pricked Las Casas’s conscience. As he later wrote: “I saw that day atrocities more terrible than any living man has ever seen nor even thought to see” [Allí vide tan grandes crueldades que nunca los vivos tal vieron ni pensaron ver].<sup>13</sup> In a cave near Caonao there survives from this period an Indian drawing of a Spanish horseman, probably the first

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<sup>11</sup> According to one of the earliest soneros, Miguel Matamoros: “El son no se sabe de dónde es. Es del campo de Oriente, de monte adentro ...” (quoted in James Robbins, “The Cuban *Son* as Form, Genre, and Symbol”, *Latin American Music Review*, 11, no. 2 (1990), 182-200, at 183). Certainly *oriental* in origin. the *son* was, according to one account, taken to Havana around 1909 by soldiers returning to the capital. Some of the resonances of the term *montuno* are discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>12</sup> Fernando Ortiz Fernández, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* [1940], trans. Harriet de Onís, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, trans. Nigel Griffin, London: Penguin, 1992, p. 29; *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, ed. André Saint-Lu, Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1987, p. 93. His original account of the massacre is in *Historia de las Indias* [1559], ed. Agustín Millares Carlo, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981, vol. II, pp. 536-538.

depiction by a Native American of a European.<sup>14</sup> If, as has been suggested, the literature of anti-imperialism begins with Las Casas, then it begins with his revulsion at this senseless massacre, a description still being censored in the nineteenth century by the Spanish Royal Academy of History and only published after a campaign by the Cuban historian and patriot, José Antonio Saco, himself born in Oriente.<sup>15</sup> The current endpoint of writing about Oriente is of course the words and images generated from and about the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station, acting as a US concentration camp for their so-called ‘enemy combatants’ in the so-called ‘war on terror’ (and discussed in Chapter 9).

The recognition of Oriente from within Cuba is not without ambiguity. Pablo de la Torriente Brau’s sentence which forms the other epigraph to this book, and which is taken from his compelling account of his visit to Realengo 18 (studied in Chapter 6) – “If you want to know another country without going abroad, then try going to Oriente” [El que quiera conocer otro país, sin ir al extranjero, que se vaya a Oriente] – was certainly intended as a salute to the part of the island in which he had spent his formative years. Yet the phrase “another country” inevitably poses questions. If Oriente is “another country”, is it not, then, Cuba? What would that imply? Since Oriente is not “abroad”, then perhaps there are two countries, each equally Cuba, but fundamentally different from each other? The reader addressed by the remark – written for a national magazine, though one produced in Havana – must grammatically live anywhere in Cuba except Oriente. Could the sentence then in theory be reversed: addressed to an *oriental* who is told that if he wants to know another country without going abroad, he should travel west to the Cuban provinces outside Oriente? Then again, in its context de la Torriente Brau’s sentence doesn’t really apply to Oriente in general. He isn’t thinking of the cities of Holguín or Bayamo, but of the Sierra Maestra, one of the island’s very special places.

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A Cuban literary history written from a national perspective would inevitably give great weight to Havana. Many of Cuba’s canonical novels are set there, from Cirilo Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdés* (1882) to José Lezama Lima’s *Paradiso* (1966), and many of the country’s best-known writers were born there, or lived there for significant parts of their working lives: Francisco Arango, Félix Varela, Felipe Poey, Joaquín Lorenzo Luaces, Manuel Sanguily, Dulce María Loynaz, Eliseo Diego, Alejo Carpentier, Roberto Fernández Retamar, Miguel Barnet, Nancy Morejón, Leonardo Padura Fuentes. Aspiring writers from Oriente have, following a familiar pattern, often made their way to the capital to find fame and fortune, sometimes becoming part of a metropolitan elite, sometimes not, sometimes writing seamlessly about Havana, sometimes investing their descriptions with the provincial outsider’s mixture of awed admiration and

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<sup>14</sup> A picture by the Tuscarora / Algonquin artist Simon Brascoupé (stencil and acrylic, 1990) offers a graphic interpretation of this drawing, capturing the overwhelming impression of horse, body, and armour as a single threatening figure.

<sup>15</sup> See Margarita Zamora, “Avatares del intelectual: Las Casas en Cuba”, in *Cuba: contrapuntos de cultura, historia y sociedad*, ed. Francisco A. Scarano and Margarita Zamora, San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2007, pp. 41-58, at 42.

horrified condemnation. Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres Tristes Tigres* (1967) provides a good example of an *oriental* (from Gibara) fascinated but *disoriented* by the metropolis.<sup>16</sup> As a result none of these writers feature significantly in the story told here, which has a different emphasis from the national story, inevitably the one any country wants to tell to itself, at least in the official histories.

Literary history is always written from a particular perspective, usually implicit. If national literary histories stand in the capital city, where most writers work and where the publishing industry is based, histories of Caribbean, US, or Latin American literature have to adopt an Apollonian vantage point high enough to survey and compare the riches below them. The analytic position of *place* is much more humble: it's a stone, a pebble on a beach, sitting for centuries as the world passes by. Patterns of arrival and departure slowly swim into perception. Continuities and change are marked on a singular landscape. It's the peasant view. The current work, written by an outsider to the area as a whole, let alone to the region being studied, deliberately adopts this modest viewpoint, one determinedly situated at ground level. The English term might be worm's eye view, but since *gusano* has an unfortunate connotation in the Cuban context, the perspective adopted here is that of the *jutía*, the native Cuban rodent that has witnessed all activity in Oriente since before the arrival of the first humans. What the *jutía* lacks in intelligence, it makes up for in persistence and ubiquity, so it offers a fine role model for the literary geographer.

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Attention to place is not new in literary studies. The work of Raymond Williams, especially his book *The Country and the City*, is one indispensable reference point.<sup>17</sup> Its rich and sophisticated analysis of the politics of place in the formation of English cultural identity continues to offer a fine role model. Attention to place also draws on recent work within cultural geography and environmental literary studies, and, in particular, on the work of Edward Casey in the history of philosophy, who has done a great deal to reintroduce the idea of place—as opposed to that of space—to contemporary thinking. Casey's basic argument is that, after Aristotle, the idea of place was slowly assimilated to that of space, a tendency which reached a climax in seventeenth-century physics with the "mathematization of nature", as Edmund Husserl termed it, after which place came to be seen as the mere modification of space. Interestingly, Casey links this demotion of place with the era "in which the domination of

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<sup>16</sup> John Patrick O'Leary actually uses the word 'disoriented', although without the regional import ("From the Capital of the Nineteenth Century to the Paris of the Caribbean: Vertigo and Modernity in *Tres Tristes Tigres*", *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 13: 2 (2004), 261-280, at 263). Roberto González Echeverría notes the deep provincial resentment animating the novel: "Todos los tigres son, como su creador, unos arribistas, llegados del campo, del interior, de clases necesitadas, de raza mixta, que logran en la Habana integrarse a una especie de tierra de nadie social en el ambiente de la farándula" ("Oye mi son: El canon cubano", in Anke Birkenmaier and Roberto González Echeverría, eds., *Cuba: Un Siglo de Literatura (1902-2002)*, Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2004, pp. 19-36, at 31.

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, London: publisher, 1973; and cf. Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward, ed., *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

native peoples was accomplished by their deplacialization: the systematic destruction of regional landscapes that served as the concrete settings for local culture".<sup>18</sup> In general terms, then, the renewed attention to what Casey calls "vernacularity of place"<sup>19</sup> can be seen as a postcolonial move, appropriate for the study of an area such as the American Tropics. Geographical analysis can no more be divorced from history than vice versa: after all, the founder of cultural geography, Carl Ortwin Sauer, wrote one of the best histories of Spanish settlement in the Caribbean, *The Early Spanish Main* (1966).

So, the American Tropics is the *area* and Oriente the *region*. Within the region there are particular *places* of attention. These might be natural features, such as Pico Turquino, which have taken on symbolic significance, and they might be otherwise trivial features, such as the small beach where José Martí landed, in 1895. Other landing places accrue significance over time, such as Fishermans Point on Guantánamo Bay, where Columbus probably landed on his second voyage, where Stephen Crane landed with US marines in 1898, and where all personnel, prisoners, and visitors to GTMO now land.

To write a literary history based on place is to suggest a different kind of attention to writing. If place determines, then subject matter is paramount in deciding inclusion. The nationality and language of the writers involved will, as always, be crucial dimensions of the writing, but they will never give a reason for exclusion: attention to place never asks to see a passport. Therefore, in the story that follows, as much attention is given to writers from outside Cuba who have written about Oriente as to Cuban writers themselves. Travel writing—broadly understood—certainly offers a rich seam which has been inadequately explored in literary histories: James J. O'Kelly and Moazzem Begg offer two—oddly similar—examples here of outsiders imprisoned in Oriente who left vivid accounts of their Cuban experiences.

Attention to place always needs consideration alongside attention to trajectory. The American Tropics area has been characterised by an extraordinary range of voluntary and involuntary movements at least over the last five centuries. Beyond the variety of individual trajectories there are distinct patterns: from provincial city to metropolis—in the Cuban case that very resonant road from Havana to Santiago; but also those leading from Cap Haïtien in neighbouring Haiti to Santiago or from Baracoa to Boston, trajectories of exile or of commerce which always have cultural implications and consequences. A different kind of literary geography would follow those trajectories more closely. The *jutía* just observes the coming and going, but always pays attention to the whence and the whither: where exactly do writers come from, how do they get to Oriente, and where do they go to publish their work are often significant questions.

Equally as important as the resonance of place to the literary geography of Oriente are the trope associated with its places, of which the most prominent is that of hiding. Bartolomé de Las Casas provides the first version of this

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<sup>18</sup> Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. xii. See also his *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993; and *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Casey, *The Fate of Place*, p. 77.

archetypal trope of writing about Oriente, when discussing the largely futile Indian attempts to combat Spanish aggression:

It helped the Indians that the province was full of hills and mountains, where horses couldn't be used. After the Indians had attacked with a great cry and been wounded by Spanish swords and worse by the arquebuses, and caught up by the horses, their only remedy was to flee into the hills where they could scatter and hide.<sup>20</sup> [Guarecióles mucho a los indios ser toda la provincia montes y por allí sierras, donde no podían servirse de los caballos, y porque luego que los indios hacen una vez cara con una gran grita y son de los españoles lastimados con las espadas y peor cuando de los arcabuces, y alcanzados de los caballos, su remedio no está sino en huir y desparcirse por los montes donde se pueden esconder.]

Las Casas is describing the Indians being hunted by Spaniards at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Escaped slaves established *palenques* in these same mountains in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Cubans fighting for independence were hunted here by Spanish troops in the 1870s and the 1890s; Fidel Castro's *guerrilleros* by Batista's soldiers in the 1950s. The earlier occasions are almost always drawn on by the later writers (who are usually the hunted) in their descriptions. Many Cuban heroes met violent deaths in Oriente, not least Céspedes, Martí, and Maceo. But many, equally, were sought out not just by their enemies but by writers who wanted to hear their words. Herbert Matthews's *New York Times* interview with Fidel Castro in February 1957 is perhaps the most famous instance, but far from the only one.

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The scholarship on Cuban history and literature is immense and impressive. A great deal has been written by Cubans, from inside and outside Cuba; but much also by non-Cubans specialising on Cuba. This book is written neither by a Cuban nor by a non-Cuban specialist on Cuba. Though drawing extensively on Cuban scholarship its focus is on Oriente as a place to which people from outside have been attracted for a whole variety of reasons; a ground where Cubans and non-Cubans, *orientales* and non-*orientales*<sup>21</sup> have often met, and where both have given accounts of their meetings. It therefore takes Oriente precisely as a meeting ground within the American continent, rather than as one region of the national territory of Cuba.

The book gives detailed consideration to around twenty pieces of writing, which vary from historical novels to political speeches, from books of geography to investigative journalism, from song lyrics to pieces of travel writing. On the assumption that all regions have their own historical rhythm, it makes no attempt to divide time into equal sections but slows down when reaching particular moments or periods, especially 1895 to 1898 and 1956 to 1959. 1868 is taken as the beginning year, for reasons explained in Chapter 1, but history is always important in Cuba, so backward looks will be frequent, for

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<sup>20</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias* [1559], ed. Agustín Millares Carlo, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981, II, pp. 522-23.

<sup>21</sup> I leave the word *oriental* italicised to indicate its specifically Cuban reference.

example to Cuba's first literary work, written in 1608, or to conceptions of the pre-Columbian period, which featured strongly in the development of Cuban writing in the nineteenth century, headed by *oriental* writers such as José Fornarís and Juan Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo (Chapter 2). The revolutionary tradition will inevitably be important and *oriental* political writers from Carlos Manuel de Céspedes to Fidel Castro will feature (Chapter 1), though more for their characterisations of Oriente than for their revolutionary politics as such—though part of my argument will be that the two are not entirely separable. That revolutionary tradition has also brought to Oriente visiting writers and activists from elsewhere in Cuba—José Martí, Pablo de la Torriente Brau, and Antonio Núñez Jiménez (Chapters 2, 6, and 7), and from elsewhere in Latin America—Che Guevara (Chapter 7); and visiting reporters from the USA—James J. O'Kelly, Josephine Herbst, and Herbert Matthews (Chapters 1, 6 and 7). Around the Spanish-America War of 1898 clusters a group of US writers: Richard Harding Davis, Stephen Crane, and John Fox Jr. all acted as newspaper correspondents but all also wrote fiction set in Oriente which reflected on the US-Cuba relationship at one of its turning points (Chapters 3, 4, and 9). Chapter 5 unearths in some detail one of the most remarkable stories of 1898, the visit to Oriente made by a US agent carrying a message to the insurgent leader, Calixto García, an incident which reappears in fictional form in a novel written for the fiftieth anniversary of the war, offering an unusual reflection from outside Cuba but from within the American Tropics (Jamaica), reflecting the changed priorities of post-Second World War politics. Chapter 8 features the only significant English novelist to have written about Oriente: Graham Greene visited Santiago in November 1957, a visit refracted in his 1958 novel, *Our Man in Havana*. Finally Chapter 9 takes some measure of the extraordinary amount of writing coming out of the US prison camp on Guantánamo Bay—but does so in conjunction with a reading of Stephen Crane's reports and stories from the original US capture of that site in 1898.

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ed. (with Francis Barker and Margaret Iversen) *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, CUP: Cambridge, 1998, 314pp.

'Voice from the margins?: Walter Mignolo's *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*', *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 8, no. 2, 1999, 219-33.

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- 'Undeveloped estates: Dominica and the landscape of the new imperialism', in *Landscape and Empire*, ed. Glenn Hooper, London: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 111-126..
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- 'The seeds of revolt: George Lamming and *The Tempest*', in *The Locations of George Lamming*, ed. Bill Schwarz, London: Macmillan, 2007, pp. 112-131.
- 'Meditation on yellow: trade and indigeneity in the Caribbean', in *Economies of Representation, 1790-2000: Colonialism and Commerce*, ed. Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert, London: Ashgate, 2007, pp. 3-26.
- "*Under the Cuban Flag: Notions of indigeneity at the end of the nineteenth century*", in *Displacements and Transformations in Caribbean Cultures*, ed. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008, pp. 49-76.

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