

# *Letras Hispanas*

## Volume 9.2, Fall 2013

**TITLE:** The Culturally Charged Iconography of Benny Moré: A Socialist Tool or the Dawn of a New Era?

**AUTHOR:** Patricia L. Swier

**AFFILIATION:** Wake Forest University

**ABSTRACT:** This investigation explores two diverse representations of the iconic figure and musical career of Benny Moré through the genres of film and theater, both of which respond to an arduous time period of transition and the strained political aspirations of the revolution following the Special Period. While Luis Sánchez' film *El Benny* reflects a reification of Castro's Cuba through the concepts of race and class, Alberto Pedro's theatrical work, *Delirio habanero*, which also embarks upon concepts of race, contemplates more profound issues related to the contradictory aspects of a political system that has endured for more than half a century. Through his unique characterization of Benny on stage, we can envision a more complex historical past that struggles to embrace cultural, economic and political fluctuations of the present, while still managing to resolve some of the more heartrending and far-reaching casualties of the revolution provoked by exile.

**KEYWORDS:** Benny Moré, race, class, exile, Cuba, film, theater

**RESUMEN:** En esta investigación exploraré dos representaciones de la figura icónica y carrera musical de Benny Moré a través de los géneros de filme y teatro, ambos respondiendo a una época dificultosa de transición ocasionada por las tensas aspiraciones políticas de la revolución tras el Período Especial. Mientras la película de Luis Sánchez, *El Benny*, refleja una reificación de los ideales revolucionarios de Castro por conceptos de raza y clase, la obra musical de Alberto Pedro *Delirio habanero*, que también se embarca en conceptos de raza, se dirige a asuntos más profundos relacionados con aspectos contradictorios de un régimen que ha durado más de medio siglo. Por su caracterización de Benny en escena, se puede visualizar un pasado histórico más complejo en que se lucha por mediar las fluctuaciones culturales, económicas y políticas del presente, mientras a la vez tratar de reconciliar algunas de las consecuencias más desgarradoras y extensivas de la revolución que resultan del exilio.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Benny Moré, raza, clase, exilio, Cuba, filme, teatro

**DATE RECEIVED:** 02/25/2013

**DATE PUBLISHED:** 09/19/2013

**BIOGRAPHY:** Patricia Lapolla Swier (Ph.D., UNC Chapel Hill) teaches Spanish at Wake Forest University. Her research is centered on questions of gender, subjectivity, and the formation of the national subject. She is the author of *Hybrid Nations*, co-editor of *Dictatorships in the Hispanic World* and has published articles in *Chasqui*, *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, *Confluencia* and *Hispanic Journal*.

# The Culturally Charged Iconography of Benny Moré: A Socialist Tool or the Dawn of a New Era?

Patricia L. Swier, Wake Forest University

Known as the Frank Sinatra of Cuba, musical icon and singer Benny Moré enjoyed a widespread popularity that to this day brings with it a culturally charged imagery of a diverse Afro-Cuban past. Referred to affectionately as “El Benny,” Moré was celebrated on the island for not emigrating after the Cuban Revolution; a fact that currently links him with the ideals of Castro’s Cuba. In this investigation I will explore the culturally charged iconography of Benny Moré that is transfigured onto the big screen of Jorge Luis Sánchez’s 2006 film *El Benny* and later on the stage of Alberto Pedro’s Cuban musical *Delirio Habanero*. Through Sánchez’s depiction of the musical career of this cultural icon, one can see a reification of Castro’s socialist ideology that takes on a different meaning when performed on stage. While the former work celebrates the utopic vision of the revolution through the iconic figure of Benny Moré, emphasizing the coordinates of race and class, the latter also embarks upon concepts of race in its exploration of one of the more insipid and long-term consequences of the revolution—the geographical, political, and ideological divide between those Cubans who supported the revolution and those who fled in exile.

Benny Moré is considered to be the greatest singer of popular music Cuba has ever produced, specializing in the genres of the son, mambo, guaracha, and bolero. Born Bartolomé Maximiliano Moré in 1919, Moré grew up in the humble surroundings of la Guinea until he made his big break in 1945,<sup>1</sup> when he accompanied the Miguel Matamoros

conjunto to Mexico. After returning to Cuba in 1953, he soon became the quintessential Afro-Cuban big-band sound of the 1950s as he combined the brash, multi-textured sounds into his music.<sup>2</sup> Beyond his musical career Benny has become a beloved cultural icon due to his humble origins, his loyalty to the Cuban people and his love for the land, all of which has provoked a sense of nationalism that has been incorporated into Sánchez’s film.

*El Benny* is a Cuban film, directed and co-written by Jorge Luis Sánchez, who is also a distant relative of Benny Moré. The film premiered in Cuba in July of 2006 and won several awards, including the “First Work” (Opera Prima) award at the New Latin American Cinema festival in Havana in December 2006. The film’s lead, Renny Arozarena, was also awarded the Boccalino prize at the Locarno International Film Festival for his outstanding performance. Largely based on the life of this musical icon, the film concentrates on a period in the early 1950s when Moré leaves the orchestra of Duany and starts his own “Banda Gigante.” Through a series of flashbacks we learn of his success in Mexico, his tribulations in Venezuela and his tenuous connection to the political events surrounding Batista’s regime in Cuba.

In their biographical accounts of the life of Moré, both Quintero J. P. Cogley and John Radavonich assert that Benny was not concerned with political affairs; yet his character depiction, as well as his association to radical revolutionaries within the film places this musical icon within a charged political context that coincides with the goals of the revolution. In fact, I see

that one of the film's principal objectives is to tell Benny's life story through an acute political lens that casts this musical celebrity as a key representation of the revolution, thereby reiterating the founding ideals of socialism in the wake of economic crisis and the political compromises executed during the Special Period.

Despite Moré's documented nominal interest in political matters, many key scenes in this semi-fictional biography establish a clear association between Benny and the tense political climate under Fulgencio Batista, thereby calling to mind the ardent sentiments of nationalism during the early years of the revolution that have been recuperated in recent years. In an early scene, a hung-over, poverty stricken, yet charismatic Benny charms his taxi driver into lending him his shoes before he rushes into *Radio Progreso* where he is scheduled to sing. As Benny's golden voice sails over the national landscape of Cuba singing "Cómo fue," the camera cuts to clips of a disgruntled lover, his soon to be wife, and two affluent political candidates who moments before petitioned Benny's singing performance at one of their campaign events. The juxtaposition of the Cuban landscape with cuts of Benny's life links this iconic figure with the hallmark of revolutionary rhetoric, which is love and commitment to the *patria*, especially during times of political strife. The most poignant scene in this montage is the cut to a young revolutionary who is seen at a building top aggressively flinging out oppositional fliers marked "Abajo el gobierno y la república." As the papers fly freely into the streets, a group of angry police officers arrive with clubs revealing the intolerant climate of the Batista era, while in the background Benny's song comes to a musical climax.

The intoxicating melody and moving lyrics of Benny's music are again fused with political themes in an upcoming scene that takes place in the home of the aforementioned taxi driver, named Olimpo. At this point in the film, Benny had gathered a group of talented musicians for his future orchestra and Olimpo had offered his countryside home as a location for band practice. A key moment in this scene is

the lively performance of the song "Soy guajiro" which conjures up images of the marginalized *campesino* in a time period when Batista protected the interests of U.S. investors on the island. Revolutionary sentiments are introduced in this scene as camera shots depict Olimpo with the same revolutionary in a back room stuffing an empty suitcase with oppositional fliers. As Benny sings this popular Cuban song, Olimpo and the revolutionary shake hands and the revolutionary is on his way. Olimpo, played by Enrique Molina Hernández, is a key character in the movie. He is the uncle of the girl with whom Benny will soon marry; as we have seen, he is Benny's taxi driver who has lent him his shoes for his big debut at *Radio Progreso*; and he is one of Benny's constant companions throughout the film. In this scene we learn that Olimpo is clearly involved in a revolutionary movement against the Batista government, a fact which suggests similar political sentiments on Benny's part by mere association.

The song choice "Soy guajiro" (I am a farmer) further evokes a widely embraced imagery of Benny as *campesino* that was showcased on the countless album covers distributed throughout Cuba leading to his rise to fame.<sup>3</sup>



Image courtesy of Calabash Music

The distinct visual imagery embedded in the figure of Benny as *campesino* in this song points to a broader collective group that captures the essence of Cuban national identity endorsed in early writings of Castro's revolutionary ideology. In his famous speech "History will absolve me," Castro appeals to this group as one of the significant motivations for change in the current government:

If Cuba is above all an agricultural State, if its population is largely rural, if the city depends on these rural areas, if the people from our countryside won our war of independence, if our nation's greatness and prosperity depend on a healthy and vigorous rural population that loves the land and knows how to work it, if this population depends on a State that protects and guides it, then how can the present state of affairs be allowed to continue? (Fidel Castro)

The nationalist sentiments expressed in the lyrics of this song express the simple life of the farmer who works long, hard hours (La guardarralla me saca/todos los días a pasear,/ tomando leche de vaca acabada de ordeñar), and is scarcely compensated (mi bolsillo es tan flaco). The song takes on a significant political tone when set in the context of the pre-revolutionary era, especially as it parallels the ensuing distribution of revolutionary pamphlets against the Batista government.

The relationship between music and revolutionary themes is a crucial factor in *El Benny*, which underpins the fundamental aspects of Socialist Cuba in a time of economic and political transition. These themes are initially presented in the opening scene of the film through the dialogue of a young aspiring political candidate and his dying grandfather in the affluent setting of their home. As this waning and very European looking elderly man lies weakly in his deathbed, he offers the following invaluable advice to his grandson: "En esta isla el baile y la música son drogas. Úselas con inteligencia" (Sánchez and Rodríguez). These key words

resonate throughout the film. However, it is not the opposition who will utilize this tool, but the filmmaker who acquiesces to the ideals of Castro's revolution stressing its utopic vision. Resistance to exile, capitalism and greed, and an adherence to Cuban patriotism are highlighted in Benny's character, and are reinforced in his musical career through the coordinates of race and class.

The historical trajectory of the ICAIC in Cuba and the active role that the film industry has had in the fomentation of political ideals may provide some insight into the political backdrop and the overt partisan content in Sánchez's cinematographic presentation. The ICAIC, or the Cuban Institute of Film Art and Industry, which was inaugurated just months after the revolutionaries came to power, has historically been a significant tool used by the government in the implementation of nation building (Fernandes 88).<sup>4</sup> The ICAIC has experienced substantial growth and recognition in its theatrical productions, providing a steady output of movies and documentaries through prosperous times when it received generous Soviet subsidies. The economic crisis of the Special Period, however, marked a shift in the prioritization of film production leading to an overall plummet in the number of films produced, causing filmmakers to seek outside foreign aid to help fund their films (Venegas).<sup>5</sup> The ICAIC gained some autonomy during this time period, however high costs of films provided that cinema be more in line with the government, which according to Suhatha Fernandes, is a means of recuperating its "hegemonic project of building nationhood through art."<sup>6</sup>

Fernandes points out that despite the influence that the government has historically held over artistic forms,

art in today's Cuba cannot be dismissed as simply the expression of official ideology, as filmmakers, rap musicians, and performance artists critique the social conditions engendered by Cuba's tenuous integration into the global economy.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the screen is a viable space for examining the relationship between art and the state as the filmmakers serve as cultural mediators between film publics and the state.<sup>8</sup> In the time period following the Special Period, filmmakers examined concepts of nationhood and nationalism in diverse ways, often times questioning and challenging political boundaries, which can be seen in the cinematic productions of *Fresa y chocolate* (1993), *Reina y rey* (1994), *La vida es silbar* (1998), and *Miel para Qshún* (2001).<sup>9</sup> The more recent production of *El Benny* (2006) can be counted among these critically acclaimed films for its themes of nationhood and its extraordinary portrayal of the mastermind and musical vitality of this Cuban icon whose music continues to have an impact on the public at large. This film, however, provides little room for questioning the status quo, as it reiterates the nationalist discourse and the importance of the revolutionary project through the themes of racism and underdevelopment.

Benny's racial heritage is a key coordinate in the film that contributes to the nationalist discourse of the revolution and its promise of the elimination of racism. Radanovich claims that Benny's "own racial combination perfectly embodies the two great cultures that created something so uniquely Cuban" (2). A product of a white Spaniard on his father's side and a heritage of African slaves from his mother's side, Benny provides a telling example of the rich heritage of Cuba. Benny's humble beginnings and his dedication to his Afro-Cuban roots are well known throughout Cuba and are made evident in the film in his frequent visits to his hometown Lajas, a town founded at the turn of the twentieth century by former slaves of Kongo origin, later joined by those of Yoruba ancestry (Díaz Ayala 229). Here he is seen "conviviendo" with his family and friends for whom he holds the highest regard. Within this intimate setting, Sánchez provides an interesting parallel to the opening scene of the elderly grandfather with his grandson. In this scene a grandfather also

offers his grandson valuable advice regarding success and happiness, but this time it is within the humble abode of an Afro-Cuban family; a setting that carries with it clear indications of an oppressed and colonial past, as well as a conflictive present under the pervasive control of U.S. investors and government officials. During this familial conversation, the camera shifts first to Benny standing in front of an altar dedicated to Santería, and then follows Benny's eyes glimpsing a weatherworn photo of a family war hero of the Spanish American war in the background. Moré was related to Colonel Simeón Armenteros who fought with General Maceo during the war of independence from Spain (Radanovich 8).

Julianne Burton asserts that two central themes that run through all of Cuban cinema are history and underdevelopment, both of which have had an impact on the form as well as the content of revolutionary Cuban cinema. Burton claims that underdevelopment, which stems from the economic and technological heritage of colonial dependency, "has its more stubborn manifestations in individual and collective psychology, ideology, and culture." And history can be understood as "a complex of formative influences which elucidates the present and informs the future" (Burton). These shots of Benny in his hometown with the imagery of the celebrated war hero in the background accentuate the objectives of the revolution and its resistance to colonialism, especially during an era of a strong U.S. presence on the island. Racial pride is a key aspect of this scenario as it emphasizes an oppressed past shared by the Afro-Cuban population, as well as celebrating the significant role that Afro-Cubans had in the wars of Independence, and in a broader spectrum, in the origins and formation of Cuban national identity.

The film also taps into revolutionary rhetoric and ideals through Benny's beloved character and the parallels that he holds with the political notions of the "new man,"



which is a concept that Che Guevara communicated in many of his writings and letters. In his speech from Algiers, Che outlines the characteristics of the revolutionary man of Cuba, which places camaraderie, nation and individuality over the capitalist ideals of progress and material gain. In this treatise Guevara calls for “the development of a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values” (202). Che’s prior involvement in the literacy program in Cuba and his positions as Finance Minister, as well as President of the National Bank propelled his aversion towards capitalism, unfair wealth distribution and racist tendencies towards white upper classes. A primary goal of Guevara’s thus became to reform “individual consciousness” and values to produce better workers and citizens.<sup>10</sup> In his view, Cuba’s “new man” would be able to overcome the “egotism” and “selfishness” that he determined to be uniquely characteristic of individuals in capitalist societies.<sup>11</sup>

Ana Serra sees the concept of the “new man” in Cuba as a discursive practice employed in the forging of a national consciousness, one that evolves over time and responds to former and current political conflicts and practices:

In addition to a strong emphasis on ‘the people’ and a communitarian attitude, the institutional discourse of the Revolution had to appeal to the radical transformation of every individual to conform to the demands of a Marxist revolution.<sup>12</sup>

Certain aspects of Benny’s character mirror the visualization of the “new man,” which are underscored in the film as they coincide with the utopic projection of the revolutionary project and serve as a firm reminder of the importance of patriotism and loyalty.

In addition to his rebellious spirit, Benny displayed a sense of camaraderie with his band members to whom he refers as “*Mi tribu*,” as well as a genuine dedication to the Cuban people (Cogley 34-35). These ideas are emphasized in the film, and become par-

ticularly apparent through his relationship with the more materialist and money driven protagonist, Monchy. In one scene, Monchy squabbles with the political aspirants in order to elicit a higher price for the Band’s services to perform during the electoral campaigns. After much discussion, Benny agrees to take less money than previously bargained for provided that his fans could enter for half the price. Benny’s commitment to the Cuban people, his love for the land and his resistance to conformity echo the fundamental philosophies of the revolution. His generosity, loyalty, and simple ways of approaching life are accentuated in the film and are set against the backdrop of the decadent setting of the cabaret scene, which was one of the more pernicious drawbacks of the pervasive and longstanding presence of U.S. investors on the island.

The socio-economic and political context of Cuba in the shadow of U.S. domination in the 1950s was one of the driving forces behind the revolution. Louis A. Pérez proclaims that U.S. control and presence on the island were so pervasive during this time period that a good part of the development of the narrative of Cuba was transacted through the North American value system (Pérez 431). While there are no clear indications of anti-imperialist sentiments and U.S. presence in the film, the specter of U.S. hegemony makes itself known to the more astute viewer aware of U.S.-Cuban relations. The Spanish-American War, which marked the onset of U.S. dominance, was followed by economic opportunism, Americanization of the island and a gradual effacement of Cuban identity. The Platt Amendment, the rising and persistent presence of U.S. investors in the sugar industry and the political machinations of U.S. supported dictators, such as Gerardo Machado y Morales and Fulgencio Batista led to in an overall threat to nationalist sentiment and rising tensions on the island. During this time period many Cubans suffered from racial discrimination and unemployment under a chaotic political climate, while a thriving

tourist industry fueled by mafia funded cabarets, such as the “Tropicana” yielded what Hollywood star Ava Gardner referred to as a “Playground for Americans.”<sup>13</sup> This hot vacation spot for Americans maintained its lure through its associations with “sensuality, excess, and abandon” as it also provided a fertile atmosphere for the golden age of music when a surplus of Cuban musicians (the majority of which were uneducated, illiterate and black or mulato), made their debut in the music industry.<sup>14</sup>

The vice stricken Benny is situated between these two opposing worlds, which are interestingly qualified with racial and gendered markers in the film. On the one hand, the Cuban singer is shown falling in love with and courting his second wife, Aida, played by the young and beautiful Afro-Cuban actress Limara Meneses; and on the other hand he is victim to the fast life style of the cabaret scene and engages in many mischievous acts related to drugs, drinking and sex. Sánchez spares no room for doubt as he places Benny between two contrasting women: one who he will marry, the other with whom he enjoys a three minute quickie in the bathroom stalls. Aida, young, black and innocent, is clearly representative of a future Cuban identity following the ideals of the revolution, as she is symbolic of racial pride and hope. The scenes dedicated to this character are set in an idealist 1950s context of purity and innocence. On the contrary, the blond, fair skinned Maggie is employed as a cabaret singer in a seedy mafia induced bar. This considerably older actress, Isabel Cristina Santos Téllez, differs from the young bride to be as she is depicted as a pawn of mafia thugs and is motivated by fame and financial gain. Traditional racist sentiments are reversed in this film through contrasting gendered types and reflect more clearly Castro’s antiracist agenda initiated when he came to power.<sup>15</sup>

*Delirio habanero* is a musical work that also expounds upon themes of race and class in its portrayal of the turbulent years of the 1950s when the decadent exposure to US

economics was instrumental in an explosion of musical artists and genres that continue to make their mark in the musical arena.<sup>16</sup> This award-winning musical, written by Alberto Pedro and directed by Raúl Martín, is performed by Teatro de la Luna, and features Laura De La Uz (la Reina), Amaryllis Núñez (Varilla) and Mario Guerra (El Bárbaro). Like the aforementioned film, *Delirio Habanero* is the recipient of many awards including Premio Avellaneda de puesta en escena: Raúl Martín (2006), Premio Villanueva de la Crítica (Mejores Puestas del Año): Raúl Martín (2007), and Premio Adolfo Llauradó: Yordanka Ariosa (2009).<sup>17</sup>

Distinct from the former movie, the musical incorporates themes of the past, present and future in its presentation of a divided nation, as it highlights the underlying theme of exile that ensued due to the dysfunctional relationship between Castro and the U.S. within the frigid climate of the Cold War. Once again the iconic figure of Benny is employed to reveal the attributes of the new man as he is celebrated for his reluctance to exile following the onset of the revolution, his camaraderie with the Cuban people, and the nationalist sentiment expressed in his music. Yet in this work alcoholism, poverty and confusion prevail, revealing a harsher more palpable reality of the devastating consequences of the US embargo and the recent exodus of the USSR, during an era of economic crisis known as the Special Period.

In her investigation of “The Cuban Postrevolution,” Hernández Salván addresses the diverse groups of writers that emerged after the collapse of the Berlin wall, when the Cuban government was forced to make concessions that compromised the basic premise of socialism, such as the implementation of a diversified economic structure, including opening the island up to tourism. This critic points out that during this time period a prominent group of writers emerged that supported the revolution and advocated the trait of sacrifice during the transitional years. Other writers, however, began to question

“the political nature of allegory and its utopic subtext as a national discourse in line with the cultural politics of the government” (90). Their poetics evolved towards a “writing of the disaster,” which is a theory introduced by Maurice Blanchot that points to the limits of language and the aporia that such a predicament imposed (Hernández Salván 90).<sup>18</sup> One critic observes one of the more illuminating aspects of Blanchot’s theory, which is the *mise en abyme* in language in the act of writing, so that that the semiotic movement beyond is also a movement within.<sup>19</sup> In *Delirio habanero*, (1994), Pedro creates an atmosphere of “delirium” in order to address a complex and contradictory socio-historic reality that transcends concepts of space and time, and by doing so he challenges an authoritative discourse that clings to the vestiges of a utopian future at the very moment in which it yields to global machinations in order to survive. Through the atmosphere of delirium, which is achieved in the work through the inebriated status of El Bárbaro (A beloved nickname given to Benny), Moré’s well-known practice of Santería, and the rhetorical device of drag, Pedro engages with more complex national issues related to racism, exile and poverty.



Laura de la Uz, Amarilys Núñez, and Mario Guerra. Image Courtesy of Linda Howe and the Cuban Project ([www.facebook.com/wfucubaproject](http://www.facebook.com/wfucubaproject))

Two ways in which an aura of delirium is achieved in this musical is through the inebriated status of “El Bárbaro del Ritmo,” who consumes copious amounts of “ron,” as well as his possessed status of being a member of the living dead: “soy un muerto-vivo” (Pedro 16). Throughout the work, El Bárbaro slips into possessed outbursts engaging in Santería type rituals as he yells out: “¡Lilón, Mulense, Palito, Malanga, Chano Pozo!” (Pedro 17). It is well known that Benny was a firm follower of Santería; however, here El Bárbaro is possessed by the spirits of *orisha*, who in this work are replaced by former musical icons of the past. Through this playful use of intertextuality, the musical pokes fun at the iconic status of this musical figure, and points to the intermingling of the past in the present, which at times has harrowing and detrimental consequences.

Pedro also employs elements of drag in his portrayal of a multi-perspective approximation of the Special Period that both illuminates and questions the more poignant aspects of revolutionary discourse.<sup>22</sup> Lorraine Carroll refers to the expression rhetorical drag to reflect upon “the practices of authorial impersonation and its cultural effects.”<sup>23</sup> With this phrase she refers to “the performance of female-gendered subjectivities by men to ‘sell’ a particular historical view.” Carroll contends that within the concepts of gender, there exists an authoritative version of history which is widely accepted and another story of the marginalized which is less visible. In these terms we could look at Pedro’s work as a type of cultural drag in that the characters take on the well-known, now exaggerated personas of cultural icons and in their appropriation of their identities they are able to retell their story, as they wiggle loose from traditional and authorial perceptions of the personalities in their iconic status.

The primary temporal setting of the musical takes place during the tumultuous years of the Special Period, when Cuba was forced to face a transitory period of economic



hardship and acquiesce to capitalist ideals in order to sustain the socialist regime that had survived for over three decades. In order to maintain a unified state and to preserve the idealistic vision of the revolution, government officials continued to promote a nationalist allegory of utopian projection while “still articulating revolutionary values that urged Cubans to sacrifice themselves on behalf of socialism” (Hernández Salván 95). One of the persistent themes in this discourse is a loyalty to the government and to patria that calls for sacrifice in a time of national crisis. The opposing factor of this political ideal therefore is the exiled individual who is portrayed as a traitor and abandons his/her roots as well as the Cuban people.<sup>25</sup> Through the element of drag, Pedro highlights authoritarian discourse as he simultaneously exposes its contradictions.

The rhetorical device of drag is also instrumental in revealing diverse perspectives of the Cuban-American experience, and addressing traditional constructions of exile as a means of patriotic abandonment that lie at the heart of Cuban nationalist discourse. Drag becomes apparent in the characters’ appropriation of their assigned identities, thereby calling attention to the artificiality or fictional characterization of them. Pedro’s stage instructions for Varilla are very explicit and point to a literal donning of the identity of the barman: “Entra Varilla con su maleta y a la luz de una vela. Abre la maleta y de ella saca el traje de barman que luego se pone” (Pedro 1). The instructions for El Bárbaro are equally explicit as he is directed to take on characteristic poses of the musical icon: “Realiza poses características de Benny Moré” (Pedro 2). Throughout the work, we see exaggerated gestures and representations of Benny’s character and life achievements, which are enforced by the exclusive use of nicknames “El Bárbaro,” thereby belying the veracity of a true monolithic version of identity. Throughout the work *El Bárbaro*, clad in his guajiro hat, his zoot suit and cane, assumes the lovable guise of this iconic musical persona, as he is inevitably driven to drink and com-

pelled to direct an imaginary band.

Mario Guerra’s comical interpretation of this character helps to create a caricature-like representation which will in turn open up the script to a myriad of meanings. Guerra enters onto the stage belting out Benny’s trademark song “Lajas de mi Corazón.” The musical choice for his opening scene is indicative of the nationalist sentiment indicated by the song, calling to mind Benny’s fierce loyalty to his hometown. The attributes of benevolence and camaraderie highlighted in the film are also outlined in this work, but are seen within a constructed caricature like depiction and also take on divergent dimensions.

In the film, Benny’s generous and loyal character is set against the money hungry Monchy, resulting in the separation of the two at the films’ end. In this work, *El Bárbaro*’s nationalist motives are showcased through his opposition to two other characters on stage—the racist Varilla and the perfidious character “la Reina.” Varilla, who was a well-known charismatic barman of the *Bodeguita del Medio* in the 1950s is portrayed for his sell-out status and his acquiescence to U.S. standards. His preference for the name assigned to his bar—“Varilla’s bar”—reveals his affinity towards the U.S. clientele and his proclivity for the foreign over the local, and material gain over national loyalties. Another indication of his failure to support his own people is seen in his racist behavior towards his black clientele who is either refused entrance, or in the case of those exceptions like “El Bárbaro” or “la Reina,” made to enter through the back door, with a password. Interestingly, this male character played by the female actress Amaryllis Núñez (who literally performs this role in drag), takes on a daring role of revealing the harsh sense of racism that plagued the island in the 1950s, and was equally as injurious in the United States.

Celia Cruz, characterized in this work as “la Reina,” is also depicted as a caricature of herself. Laura de la Uz enters the scene bigger than life wearing oversized sunglasses, a bright red turban, and a red parasol in order

to hide herself from her fans, the Cuban people. Playing the relentless role of superstar, she refuses to acknowledge her public and remains “incognito” during her stay (Pedro 13). Despite her anonymity she cannot resist bragging about her travels as a superstar, especially her debut in “Madison Square Garden” (Pedro 16). The comical overture achieved by de la Uz’s enunciation of this word is one of the comical highlights of the work, yet at the same time it is indicative of Cruz’ perceived unpatriotic status and her alliance with the United States.<sup>26</sup>

The musical clearly plays with concepts of exile outlined in revolutionary discourse since Castro’s rise to power. Shortly after Castro’s installation to power in 1959 he cast vitriolic jabs at the exiles, calling them *gusanos* (“worms”), *escoria* (“trash”), and more recently “the Miami Mafia.”<sup>27</sup> In Unit XIV, “Caminos distintos,” one can sense traces of this aspect of revolutionary discourse in the dialogue between Varilla and la Reina, as the latter is characterized as a traitor. Through a hyperbolic representation of contrasting characters, Pedro establishes the opposing factions on stage as he highlights an acute sense of antagonism constructed through political rhetoric.

VARILLA: Por eso te fuiste al extranjero. Porque tú sabes bien que te fuiste. Sin embargo, El Bárbaro se quedó en Cuba. ¿Y por qué se quedó?

LA REINA: Porque no se fue

VARILLA: (En tono discursivo) Porque no quiso abandonar su tierra. (Pedro 34)

The antithetical meaning communicated in the verbs “te fuiste” and “se quedó” serves as a political marker of a revolutionary discourse designed to promote patriotic duties and to keep citizens at home. The further employment of the word “abandonar” points to clear derogatory actions of those who abandon the revolutionary cause and are portrayed as traitors. In this sense, the iconographic status of both Benny and Celia

Cruz transcends their musical accomplishments as they become representative of the opposing factors of Cuban history since the revolution—those who stayed and those who left.<sup>28</sup> Pedro appropriates the politically constructed opposition represented in the iconographic status of Moré and his counterpart Cruz in order to challenge the contradictory status of race, class and exile emphasized in revolutionary discourse.

The cast of the three actors wearing layer upon layer of identities allows them to move freely between the diverse coordinates of time and space spanning the time periods of Cuba’s heyday of the big band era of the 50s, the prohibition period of the post revolution, and finally the Special Period, which marked the exodus of the USSR and a period of devastating economic crisis on the island. Through the elements of drag and the ambience of delirium produced by alcohol, spiritual possession and the indeterminate coordinates of time and space, the play peels back layer upon layer of economic hardship, anguish suffered from the separation of families and friends caused by exile, while exposing some of the shortcomings of the revolution that ironically still ring on in its idealist and persistent grandiloquence.

One of the many accomplishments of the revolution is its insistence on equality and its goal to eliminate racism through the socialist project. In her book *Afro-cuban Identity in Post-Revolutionary Novel and Film: Inclusion, Loss, and Cultural Resistance*, Andrea E. Morris asserts that in a nation historically plagued by racism, the revolutionary government was the first to seriously address the socioeconomic disparity among Cubans, as many “dark-skinned” Cubans were disproportionately found among the poor (xi). The controversial theme of racism is not only present in the musical work, but it is dealt with in a blatant manner, a fact that made it quite unbearable for many US spectators to endure. The charismatic Varilla, who is intent on opening his new bar urges Benny to enter from the back door. In Unit III, titled “Dolor

y perdón,” Varilla spews out a list of injurious racist comments that reflect the strong presence of racism of the 1950s:

Allá afuera siempre hay negros, los mismos negros de siempre, parados en la misma esquina, hablando siempre lo mismo, jugando dominó y sin trabajar, metiéndose en todo, Bárbaro, tú lo sabes. (Pedro 2)

The multi-dimensionality of the work allows the spectator to approach this theme from diverse perspectives, two of which I will address here.

First of all, one can see racism as an affliction that increased due to U.S. presence and the succeeding “whitening” of the island. While racism is a universal phenomenon and was widespread in Cuba prior to U.S. arrival, it took on diverse nuances with the strong presence of the U.S. due to the economic hold that U.S. investors had on the island that culminated in the 1950s, especially within the U.S. preferred hotspot of the cabaret setting. Varilla is clearly affected by this fact as he displays a distinct sense of racism that he will implement in the launching of his bar. In addition to his strong racial slurs, Varilla dreams of opening a bar in which he would employ a black doorman, dressed in red with white gloves to greet the guests and open doors:

¡Y un portero negro, negro bien, un portero negro, bien negro y vestido de rojo, con unos guantes largos y blancos bien, que reciba a todos con una sonrisa y les abra las puertas de los automóviles. (Pedro 11)

Varilla’s ideals of a thriving night club is reminiscent of the social climate in Cuba in the cabaret scene, as it also conjures up racist imagery of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben on consumer products that beleaguered commercialized products on the northern shores.

El Bárbaro’s reaction to Varilla’s project reflects the nationalist construction of this bigger than life figure, as he relays an anti-

racist oratory while attempting to alter Varilla’s racist project: “Y que entre el pueblo. Un blanco en esa mesa, un chino en la otra, un negro en aquella, un mulato, un gitano, un albino...” (Pedro 6). El Bárbaro adamantly defends his compatriots and uses his fame and popularity to defend their rights: “Pues aquí tiene que ser distinto. O entra todo el mundo o me voy a tocar con mi banda al parque [...]. Yo sí no entiendo de racismo. Vengo de abajo y la gente de abajo no tiene color” (Pedro 7). His proclamation of a lack of racism at the lower classes emulates the revolutionary sentiments of another cultural icon, José Martí, who also claimed that there is no hatred of races because “No hay razas” in “Nuestra América”. More’s and Martí’s sentiments coincide very nicely in this scene while also emphasizing one of the more admirable trajectories of the revolution—the elimination of racism.

A second reading of this scene calls to mind present issues of racism that have yet to be resolved in Cuba. Pedro at once exploits the sentiments of race that were aggravated by the invasive presence of the United States in the 1950s, in order to address current issues of racism made possible through the timelessness of the work. Morris affirms that improvements in the lives of Afro Cubans after the revolution are undeniable, especially in the areas of education, health care, employment and housing (xiii). Later developments, however, have proven that racism was not actually eliminated, just improved and pushed underground (Glassman). Despite Fidel’s claim to an end of racism in 1962 following the abolishment of racist laws, critics note that Cuba still suffers from racial discrimination which is an issue that is currently being addressed by different members of Cuban society.

In fact, one of the impediments of the development of Afro-Cuban identity in the post-revolutionary era, as pointed out by Morris, stems from Castro’s resolution of the racist problem at the onset of the revolution. This denial of racial difference, argues Morris, left

no space in which to articulate a contestable discourse or to explore the unique experiences of Cuban men and women of African descent (xiv-xv). Racial inequality has further been problematized as a result of the Special Period and the shift towards the tourist industry, which is an industry that yields racial disparities in employment opportunities.<sup>29</sup>

In a recent conference in Washington D.C. titled "Questions of Racial Identity, Racism and anti-Racist Policies in Cuba Today" (2011), Cuban citizens of different racial and ethnic backgrounds speak out on the issue of racism.<sup>30</sup> The film *Raza*, produced by the Cuban Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Jr. opened the conference, and openly addressed prevalent issues concerning racism that have been overlooked by the Cuban government.<sup>31</sup> Some of the many problems addressed in this film are the nonexistence of blacks in hotel management, the disproportionate police persecution of blacks on Havana streets, the lack of black TV shows and the absence of teaching on black culture and history in schools, and the effect of all this on black self-esteem.<sup>32</sup> Pedro, who was a member of the Afro Cuban community, incorporates the timelessness of delirium to address critical issues of racism and the government's limitations in the resolution of these matters. In this way he challenges the utopic vision of authoritative discourse that thrives on an anti-racist politics in its persistence of the socialist cause.

Exile is another sensitive yet prominent theme expressed in the political rhetoric of the Cuban government that is addressed in this work from a dual perspective. As we have seen, Varilla's caustic comments towards la Reina's desertion of her roots reveal conflictive reactions towards those who abandoned the revolutionary cause and fled to the U.S. The time period following the initiation of Castro's government in 1959 has been marked by massive exile, which has had detrimental repercussions on Cubans on both sides of the spectrum. The separa-

tion of families, feelings of abandonment, and overall loss of communication between both parties are difficulties that tug at nationalist strings and produce a sense of estrangement between Cubans in Cuba and those abroad.<sup>33</sup> El Bárbaro's declaration to Varilla concerning Cruz that they just do not understand each other—"No nos comprendemos ya" (Pedro 17)—reveals the lack of communication and understanding between both parties and points to more pressing issues concerning exile.<sup>34</sup>

Exile is approached in an innovative way in this work, especially as it relates to the extreme poverty during the economic crisis of the Special Period. The musical addresses this period through the starkness of the stage setting that at times is festured with intermittent visits by rodents, causing la Reina to shriek and climb up onto the piano. Furthermore, the costumes that the actors wear are not the luxurious clothes of musical stars and bar owners, but rags, thereby exposing the reality of the Special Period and the economic privations suffered by Cubans residing there. Cruz complains of sore feet and not being able to buy shoes for five years: "Hace cinco años que tengo estos mismos zapatos" (Pedro 27), while El Bárbaro crawls on the floor desperately searching for cigarette butts. The comical display of these hardships on stage relays real realities in Cuba following the exodus of the USSR. The performance of the exiled Cruz suffering alongside the character depicting Benny reveals a moment of commiseration and mutual understanding that was lacking in U.S. foreign policy during the time period and took on conflictive measures following the tightening of the U.S. embargo.

The lingering resentment towards la Reina in the work mirrors the nationalist propaganda of the Cuban government, yet it also addresses the persistent and callous approach of U.S. foreign policy regarding the embargo, especially during the time period surrounding the Special Period. Michael Erisman and John M. Kirk point out that the U.S. embargo

against Cuba has been not only one of the world's longest, but it has also ranked as one of the most severe in the world (17). While trade relations between the two nations improved considerably in the 1990s, the United States opted to tighten the embargo through the Cuban Democracy Act (also known as the Torricelli law) and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, (the Helms-Burton law), both of which discouraged other nations of engaging in trade with Cuba (Erisman and Kirk 17). The performance of the economic tragedy of the Special Period on stage coupled with the frustrated sentiments expressed towards Cruz serve as a vivid reminder of an apathetic U.S. foreign policy and U.S. officials who turned their backs on the suffering of their neighbors who resided just ninety miles from U.S. shores.

Castro's socialist project and his persistence to defy a U.S. centered geopolitical capitalism is also a topic of concern in this musical. While this work is not overtly political, Pedro employs elements of intertextuality in reference to the contradictory status of the revolution and the oftentimes obsessive limits to which one will go in order to remain intact. In Unit XXIV, titled "Obsesiones," la Reina alludes to the classical and internationally acclaimed ballerina, Isadora Duncan, lauding her ability to dance freely: "¡Odio la política! En la vida real lo que yo quisiera es andar descalza... Descalza y libre como Isadora Duncan" (Pedro 14). Duncan was a self-proclaimed communist who bucked traditional mores and opted for a freer and open style of dance. Her signature garment was a red scarf that she waved onstage in Boston in support of her political philosophy.<sup>35</sup> While Duncan is known for liberation and her resistance to conformity, her tragic death provides alternate interpretations of the "obsession" of adhering to one ideology. Isadora Duncan was choked by her scarf while getting out of a street car, dragging her tragically to an untimely death.<sup>36</sup> While the ideals of Castro's revolution are certainly noble and revolu-

tionary, the dangers of adhering so tightly to a politics of resistance in the face of adversity can be seen in the symbolic model of Duncan and the ironic circumstances of her untimely death.

The imposition of identities, or drag, also opens the work up to more diverse and universal interpretations, while still addressing the hardships of local issues. Before El Bárbaro and la Reina come together on stage for the first time, the former continually questions the veracity of his identity, especially in the ways in which it is constructed against the more famous and well-known "la Reina." In Unit XIII, titled "Lucha de egos" he uses Varilla as a sounding board to verify the authenticity of his identity: "EL BÁRBARO: ¡Yo sí soy yo! ¡Soy yo! / VARILLA: ¡Y ella también es ella!" (Pedro 9). This type of dialogue, which repeats throughout the work, reveals the fragility of fixed identities and provokes sentiments of existentialist angst during a time period of economic suffering devoid of meaning.

This theme is further developed in a monologue given by El Bárbaro in Unit XVIII titled "Epílogo del hechizo," when he addresses the possessed spirits that reside within him. The presence of past singers within this musical icon represents the continuation of the past in the present, which in this case is represented within a complex and problematic socio-historic context: "Yo y los cinco que vienen conmigo y están aquí por dentro y a la distancia" (Pedro 26). Instead of being a source of support and comfort, the spirits of the past confound El Bárbaro's sense of sanity, creating a disturbing and unmanageable present. During his monologue the "Wild man of salsa" pauses momentarily and screams out, "¡Ojalá que yo estuviera loco" [if only I were crazy], thereby selecting an altered state of consciousness that might release him from the enigmatic reality in which he resides (Pedro 26).

Hernández Salván points out that much of Cuban cultural production about the 1990s focuses on the issue of temporality on the



island and the prospects for the future (82). Many prominent critics, such as Antonio José Ponte, Rafael Rojas, and José Quiroga argue that contemporary Cuba cannot let go of a past that it tries in vain to recuperate, a practice that Quiroga refers to as a “process of memorialization” (Hernández Salván 83). Quiroga argues that while the 1960s Cuban government sets for itself the task of creating a collective national memory that would be different from the history of the Republic while also being teleologically informed, in the 1990s this process became a project of memorialization that “celebrated and critiqued the past in order to gain some time in the present” (Quiroga 4). Guerra’s interpretation of this dilemma points to the timelessness of the Cuban experience during the Special Period when Cubans were urged to ingest the utopic discourse of the past while confronting the severe conflicts of the present.

Following the model of writing of disaster, the musical moves towards an anticipation of doom, brought on by the meaningless of language and a loss of hope for the future. Yet, Pedro offers his spectators an emotional and hopeful scene that has produced more than one emotional response in the audience. Towards the end of the work, *El Bárbaro* and *la Reina* unite in a musical duo as they sing a well-known bolero, “No me vayas a engañar.” The choice of genre of the bolero and the lyrics of this particular song are instrumental in the importance of consolidating national identity calling for the need for reconciliation between the two parties. The bolero provokes national sentiments as it is an art form that evolved from the Cuban genre known as *Trova* originating in Santiago de Cuba in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The lyrics are also telling as they call for a relationship of truth and justice between the two parties: “No me vayas a engañar/ di la verdad, di lo justo” (Pedro 36). Their mutual affection expressed

as they sing in unison: “o mejor yo te gusto y quizás” (Pedro 36) also calls for a hopeful future of harmony and affection between the two.



Laura de la Uz and Mario Guerra  
Image Courtesy of Linda Howe and the Cuban Project  
([www.facebook.com/wfucubproject](http://www.facebook.com/wfucubproject))

This Unit titled, “*Conciliación en tiempo de bolero*,” points to a mythical time period within the musical genre of the bolero to showcase a unification and reconciliation of those who stayed and those who left. In this brief duo, the persistent sentiment of division adamantly endorsed by revolutionary discourse has momentarily collapsed on stage.

Critical reception of Cuban Art in the United States continues to be an area described as “belated” and “sporadic” since the inception of the revolution, a fact that has been heightened by the U.S. imposition of economic and cultural blockades (Burton).

Notwithstanding, concerted efforts by several institutions, including the Tricontinental Film Center, the Center for Cuban Studies and the WFU Cuba Project have been made in order to foster a cross-cultural dialogue between nations. *Delirio habanero* forms part of the latter, founded and directed by Linda S. Howe as a student-driven initiative to form cultural bridges between Cuba and the U.S. This musical made its U.S. debut in Winston-Salem's The Stevens Center in 2011, after which time, the theater troupe, Teatro de la Luna, would travel up and down the east coast in their presentation of some of the more complex challenges of the Cuban experience through the enigmatic and vital character of Benny Moré. While this iconic figure graced the big screen of Cuban film reiterating the coordinates of the revolution, the myriad of meanings that emanate from the personage of El Benny in *Delirio habanero* breaks loose from the vestiges of socialist discourse. Through the unique characterization of Benny on stage and his interaction with the other characters, we can envision a more multifaceted historical past that struggles to embrace the economic and political fluctuations of the present, while striving to resolve some of the more heartrending and far-reaching shortcomings of the revolution—a ruptured national body through exile and a deep-rooted yearning for reconciliation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Cogley Quintero points out that a common misperception of Benny's birthplace is la Guinea, when in fact he was born in el barrio de Pueblo Nuevo. His mother moved to la Guinea a few years later, which is where Benny will spend his childhood (3).

<sup>2</sup>Spencer Harrington, "Benny Moré."

<sup>3</sup>The term *guajiro* originally refers to the Amerindians imported as the first slaves in Cuba, but later came to represent the descendants of Spanish settlers, the Taino Indians, and the freed or escaped African slaves all of whom settled in Cuba's eastern Hill country (Sweeney 46). Images of the *guajiro*'s are their straw hats, chestnut horses, machetes and the setting sun over the cane fields (Sweeney 47).

<sup>4</sup>Despite the political parameters of this industry and its ideological war against imperialism, critics comment on the depth and creativity exercised by film producers whose productions are anything but predictable or automatic (Burton).

<sup>5</sup>In a recent interview, Sánchez speaks of his difficulty of producing *El Benny* due in part to the overt shift in funds offered to the film industry by the government, forcing him to look outside the nation for funding: "No pocos (productores) me hicieron perder el tiempo, creándome falsas expectativas." The Cuban film producer attests that only the ICAIC played a part: "acompañándome en mi soledad" (Santana).

<sup>6</sup>Fernandes, 88, 2003. In her later investigation, Fernandes explains how the Cuban Revolution has maintained its legitimacy during the Special Period by actively or partially incorporating critical perspectives expressed through the arts. Rather than exercising power through repression, she sees that state power is shaped by dynamic interactions between social forces, which the state in turn also shapes and constitutes (Fernandes, 2006).

<sup>7</sup>Qtd. in Tania Triana, "Negotiating Culture in Cuba's Special Period," 260.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 262.

<sup>9</sup>Saavadera, 116.

<sup>10</sup>Petras and Veltmeyer, 234.

<sup>11</sup>Kellner, 62.

<sup>12</sup>*The "New Man" in Cuba*, 1.

<sup>13</sup>Qtd. in Pérez 193.

<sup>14</sup>Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba*, 36.

<sup>15</sup>Elisabeth Newhouse, "Questions of Racial Identity, Racism and anti-Racist Policies in Cuba Today."

<sup>16</sup>The U.S. debut of this performance forms part of a larger project known as the Wake Forest University Cuba Project, initiated and directed by Wake Forest University Professor Linda Howe, who over the course of the last four years (2009-present) has brought Cuban artists, writers and entertainers to the United States in order to promote greater cross cultural awareness between the two countries.

<sup>17</sup>Each actor additionally received the *Premio de actuación*.

<sup>18</sup>Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*.

<sup>19</sup>Edouard Morot-Sir, *L'écriture du désastre* by Maurice Blanchot."

<sup>20</sup>Photos taken from <http://www.teatrodela-luna.cult.cu/>

<sup>21</sup>Practitioners of Santería believe in a supreme being, Olofi whose intermediaries with humanity are *orishas*. The *orishas* can interact with men by taking possession of acolytes during the Bembe ceremonies (Sweeny 17).

<sup>22</sup>Lorrayne Carroll's *Rhetorical Drag: Gender Impersonation, Captivity and the Writing of History*.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>25</sup>"Cuban Exiles in America."

<sup>26</sup>On August 21, 2012 *Diario de Cuba* reported that the music of the late Celia Cruz would continue to be banned in Cuba ("Celia Cruz still banned in Cuba but International media remains silent," <http://cubanexilequarter.blogspot.com/2012/08/celia-cruz-still-banned-in-cuba-but.html>)

<sup>27</sup>See "Cuban Exiles in America."

<sup>28</sup>Saavadera attests to the political nature of exiles: "Exile represents a sense of loss of nation but also of identity, for leaving one's country also represents leaving behind part of the essence of who we are" (Saavadera 122).

<sup>29</sup>Naomi Glassman asserts that the new source of income has resulted in fewer private business opportunities for Afro-Cubans as Afro-Cubans hold only five percent of jobs in the tourist sector. Remittances are also a source of racial disparity as the majority of Cubans who emigrated after the Revolution were white or lighter-skinned mestizo (Glassman).

<sup>30</sup>CIP Conference "Questions of Racial Identity, Racism and Anti-Racist Policies in Cuba Today." Washington D.C., June 2, 2011.

<sup>31</sup>RAZA. Presented at the CIP Conference "Questions of Racial Identity, Racism and Anti-Racist Policies in Cuba Today." Washington D.C., June 2, 2011.

<sup>32</sup>See Elizabeth Newhouse, "Questions of Racial Identity, Racism and anti-Racist Policies in Cuba Today."

<sup>33</sup>In her book *Havana Usa: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*, María Cristina García outlines the three waves of exiles following the installation of Castro's government in 1959. The first wave between 1959-62 was comprised of the more affluent anti-communist groups who were followed by their relatives in 1967-73; the Mariel migration of 1980 makes up the second wave, the majority of who were young working class men who had left their families behind; and finally the third wave, which generated the "rafter crisis" occurred in the 1990s (*Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*).

<sup>34</sup>Hernández Salván argues that during the Special Period, the revolutionary rhetoric sharpened its invective towards exiles, while strongly urging a sense of martyrdom from the Cuban people in the face of the current economic crisis. While many writers advocated a sense of martyrdom in the face of national crisis, they also urged their readers to forgive those who had deserted them.

<sup>35</sup>Turner, 79.

<sup>36</sup>Debra Craine and Judith Mackrell, *The Oxford Dictionary of Dance*, 152.

## Works Cited

- El Benny*. Screenplay by Jorge Luis Sánchez and Abrahán Rodríguez. Dir. Jorge Luis Sánchez. Coral Capital Entertainment. Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industrias Cinematográficos (ICAIC) 2006. Film.
- Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster: (l'écriture Du Désastre)*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986. Print.
- Burton, Julianne. "Part I: Revolutionary Cuban Cinema." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*. 12.19 (2005): 17-20. Print.
- Carroll, Lorrayne. *Rhetorical Drag: Gender Impersonation, Captivity, and the Writing of History*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 2007. Print.
- Castro, Fidel. "History Will Absolve Me." 1953. In *Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, Cuba*. 1975, translated by Pedro Álvarez Tabío & Andrew Paul Booth. Print.
- Chomsky, Aviva, Barry Carr, and Pamela M. Smorkaloff. *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Cogley, Quintero J. P. *Así era Beny Moré: El Bárbaro del Ritmo*. Panama: s.n, 2001. Print.
- Corvalán, Pellé E. M, Víctor Favián, and David Nicle. *Raza*. Chicago, Ill: Chiapas Media Project-Promedios, 2009. Film.
- Craine, Debra and Judith Mackrell. *The Oxford Dictionary of Dance*. Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- "Cuban Exiles in America." UNC TV: People & Events. *American Experience*. 21 Dec. 2004. Web. 19 Mar. 2012. Print.
- Díaz, Ayala Cristóbal. *Música cubana del areyto a la nueva trova*. San Juan, P.R: Editorial Cubanacán, 1981. Print.
- Delirio habanero*. By Alberto Pedro. Dir. Raúl Martín. Perf. Teatro de la Luna. Stevens Center, Winston-Salem, NC 6 Oct. 2011. Performance.

- Erisman, H M, and John M. Kirk. *Redefining Cuban Foreign Policy: The Impact of the "Special Period"*. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2006. Print.
- Fernandes, Suhatha. *Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.
- . "Reinventing the Revolution: Artistic Public Spheres and the State in Contemporary Cuba." Diss. U. of Chicago, 2003. Print.
- García, María Cristina. *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996. Print.
- Glassman, Naomi. "Revolutionary Racism in Cuba." *Coha Research Associate*. 21 Jun 2011. 19 Aug. 2012. Web.
- Guevara, Ernesto, and David Deutschmann. "Socialism and Man in Cuba." *Che Guevara Reader: Writings by Ernesto Che Guevara on Guerrilla Strategy, Politics & Revolution*. Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1997. 197-214. Print.
- Harrington, Spencer. "Beny Moré Biography." *Billboard.com*. 15 May 2012. Web.
- Hemlock, Doreen. "Jorge Luis Sánchez and Making Films in Cuba" *Havana Journal*. 10 Dec. 2006. 27 Mar 2012. Web.
- Hernández Salván, Marta. "Out of History: The Cuban Postrevolution." *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 64.1 (2011): 81-96. Print.
- Kellner, Douglas. *Ernesto "Che" Guevara*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989. Print.
- LeoGrande, M. William. "Cranky Neighbors: 150 Years of U.S.-Cuban Relations." *Latin American Research Review* 45.2 (2010): 217-27. Print.
- Moore, Robin. "Afrocubanismo and Son." *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Eds. Chomsky, Carr, and Smorkaloff. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- . *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2006. Print.
- Morot-Sir, Edouard. Rev. of *L'écriture du désastre* by Maurice Blanchot. *World Literature Today* 55.4 (1981): 642. Print.
- Morris, Andrea E. *Afro-cuban Identity in Post-Revolutionary Novel and Film: Inclusion, Loss, and Cultural Resistance*. Lanham: Bucknell UP, 2011. Print.
- Newhouse, Elizabeth. "Questions of Racial Identity, Racism and anti-Racist Policies in Cuba Today." *Center for International Policy: Conference Report*. June 2, 2011. 13 Mar 2012. Web.
- Pérez, Louis A. Jr. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999. Print.
- Petras, James and Henry Veltmeyer. *Beyond Neoliberalism: A World to Win*. Ashgate Place Publishing, 2012. Print.
- Quiroga, José. *Cuban Palimpsests*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005.
- Radanovich, John. *Wildman of Rhythm: The Life & Music of Benny Moré*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2009. Print.
- Rubio, Raúl. "Political Aesthetics in Contemporary Cuban Filmmaking: Fernando Pérez's *Madagascar* and *La vida es silbar*." 13 *Ciberletras* (2005). Web.
- Saavedra, María Cristina. "Nation and Migration: Emigration and Exile in Two Cuban Films of the Special Period." *Atenea* 25.2 (2005): 109-24. Print.
- Santana, Joaquín G. "Entrevista exclusiva con el cineasta cubano Jorge Luis Sánchez." *Radio Habana Cuba*. 27 April 2007. 23 Mar 2013. Web.
- Serra, Ana. *The "New Man" in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2007. Print.
- Sweeney, Philip. *The Rough Guide to Cuban Music*. London: Rough Guides, 2001. Print.
- Sweig, Julia. "Fidel's Final Victory." *Foreign Affairs* 86.1 (2007): 39-56. Print.
- Triana, Tania. "Negotiating Culture in Cuba's Special Period." Rev. of *Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures*, by Sujatha Fernandes. *Acontracorriente*. 5.1 (2007): 259-65. Print.
- Turner, Erin H. *More than Petticoats: Remarkable California Women*. Helena, Mont: TwoDot, 1999. Print.
- Venegas, Cristina. "Cuban Filmmaking: Assessing Challenges and Opportunities." *Commissioned Reports, Cuban Research Institute*. 27 Mar 2013. Web.
- Wilson, Marisa. "The Revolutionary (Re-)valorization of 'Peasant' Production and Implications for Small Scale Farming in Present Day Cuba." *History in Action*. 1.1 (2010): 1-6. Web.