

# *Letras Hispanas*

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**TITLE:** *Bautizando a los antecesores*: Religious Traditions in *Revista Exilio* (1965-1973)

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**ABSTRACT:** This essay examines the cultural and religious precursors claimed by the Cuban exile literary magazine *Exilio*. Published in New York from 1965 to 1973 and edited by Víctor Batista Falla and Raimundo Fernández Bonilla, *Exilio* drew on two traditions: the nineteenth century priest and advocate for Cuban independence Félix Varela and the mid-twentieth century literary magazine *Orígenes*. By claiming descent from these forefathers, the magazine claimed allegiance to two contrasting modes in which religious thought might be used to express an agenda for the Cuban nation. Where Varela exemplified the use of theological ideas to publicly espouse political change, *Orígenes*, and by association, the author José Lezama Lima, provided the example of a religiosity that turns inward and eschews direct participation in public debate. In the end, the *Exilio* group saw both models as valid means for constructing a religiously inflected cultural project for redeeming Cuba from the parallel space of exile.

**KEYWORDS:** Cuba, exile, literary magazine, religion, Félix Varela, *Orígenes*, José Lezama Lima.

**RESUMEN:** Este ensayo examina los precursores culturales y religiosos con los cuales se identificó la revista literaria *Exilio*. Publicada en Nueva York entre 1965 y 1973 y editada por Víctor Batista Falla y Raimundo Fernández Bonilla, la revista se inspiró en dos tradiciones: la del cura y defensor decimonónico de la independencia cubana Félix Varela y la de *Orígenes*, una revista literaria cubana de mediados del siglo veinte. Declarando su filiación con estos dos antepasados, la revista se alió con dos modos contrastantes en los cuales el pensamiento religioso se podría emplear para formular una agenda nacional cubana. Si bien Varela ejemplificó el uso de ideas teológicas para hacer un llamado público por el cambio político, *Orígenes*, y por asociación, el autor José Lezama Lima, dieron el ejemplo de una religiosidad más introvertida que rehuye la participación directa en debates públicos. A fin de cuentas, el grupo *Exilio* consideró válidos los dos modelos para la construcción de un proyecto cultural influido por la religiosidad, un proyecto con el propósito de redimir a Cuba desde el espacio paralelo del exilio.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Cuba, exilio, revista literatura, religion, Felix Varela, *Orígenes*, José Lezama Lima.

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## ***Bautizando a los antecesores:*** **Religious Traditions in *Exilio* (1965-1973)**

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In the first decade after the Revolution, Cuban exiles founded a number of literary magazines that turned out to be short lived, largely for economic reasons.<sup>1</sup> The exception to this pattern was *Exilio*, founded by Víctor Batista Falla and Raimundo Fernández Bonilla in 1965. Due in part to the financial resources of Batista Falla, the magazine lasted nine years and produced twenty-eight issues.<sup>2</sup> At its height, 1,500 copies were printed (Espinoza Domínguez, Índice 9). The magazine was an important nucleus of literary and political expression for the first wave of exiles, publishing work by authors such as Octavio Armand, Emilio Ballagas, Gastón Baquero, Lydia Cabrera, Lourdes Casal, Lorenzo García Vega, José Kozer, Lino Novás Calvo and Humberto Piñera Llera. Because of the quality of the work published and the unusually generous printings, the magazine played a crucial role in disseminating an intellectual response to the Revolution.

Though work has been done in analyzing the literary production of the first generation of exiles in the 1960s and 1970s (see, for example, Álvarez-Borland), two dimensions of the subject need to be explored further. First, the subject of the literary magazine as locus for the expression of a collective exile identity has been secondary to the study of works by individual authors, especially novels and short story collections.<sup>3</sup> Second, the role of religious belief in the positing of a cultural agenda by the first exile generation has been less noted than political and economic questions. By paying attention to how Christian belief informs the group identity and agenda of the writers published in *Exilio*, these gaps

can be filled, offering a more complete picture of the literary and cultural production of the first wave of intellectuals to leave Cuba.

Surveying *Exilio*, the reader is struck by the persistence of theological themes, whether in its visual art, literary texts, or academic essays. Catholic theology turns out to be a more important ideological foundation for defining an exile identity than political or economic critique. A broad reading of the magazine leaves a vivid impression of the importance of the Hispanic Catholic tradition to many of the exiles that left Cuba shortly after the Revolution. This foregrounding of religiosity in the creative and critical discourse of *Exilio* evidences a more general Cuban tendency; as David Ricardo Ramírez observes, “la simbiosis de lo literario y lo religioso reaparecen en el imaginario cubano con una insistencia que no deja de ser inquietante” (23).

A series of actions and declarations in the first years of the Cuban Revolution made it clear to many who eventually emigrated that Fidel Castro considered Catholicism an ideological enemy. In his May Day speech of 1961, he accused the clergy of serving the “exploiters”: “tiene que ver con los intereses egoístas y brutales de los explotadores, tiene que ver con el imperialismo, tiene que ver con cuestiones materiales, tiene que ver con sangre, tiene que ver con oro, pero no tiene que ver nada absolutamente con Dios ni con la religión.” The assertion is clear: greed, rather than piety, was the pillar of Catholic resistance to revolutionary change. Juan Clark, writing from the exile perspective in *Religious Repression in Cuba*, notes that Catholic clergy and laity alike were vocal in resisting

what they saw as “Communist infiltration” (6-7) and that the subsequent reaction from the Revolutionary government was swift and unequivocal: Catholic literacy initiatives were cancelled; the *Comandos Rurales* were shut down for fear of Christian subversion of the Revolution’s agenda; Catholic radio and television programs were cancelled (4-9). 1961 was a definitive year: 131 members of the clergy were expelled and public religious events were prohibited (Clark 11-12). Castro justified the expulsion of the priests by tying them to Spanish fascism: “¿Podremos permitir que siga la falange española, a través de sus curas, promoviendo aquí los derramamientos de sangre y la conspiración? ¡No! ¡No estamos dispuestos a permitirlo! Y, sencillamente, ya lo saben los curas falangistas: que deben ir preparando sus maletas.” Among the first generation of exile intellectuals there were many who felt passionately that communism’s repression of religion was one of its most egregious offenses. In *Exilio*, this fact is evident. In what might come as a surprise to those who have a certain notion of the exile group’s conservatism, many of *Exilio*’s texts attack American capitalism in addition to human rights abuses in Cuba. Catholicism (or, as it is often expressed, “Christianity” generally), is the ideology that is most forcefully espoused and defended against communism. These intellectuals would dispute Castro’s argument that Catholics in the first years of the Revolution were motivated exclusively by greed.

Consonant with the inevitable focus on the past that characterizes any exile cultural project, *Exilio* forcefully asserts the importance of tradition. The editors make it clear in the early issues that they believe their new initiative should lay claim to its intellectual parentage: “En la singular sociedad de los linajes espirituales son los descendientes los que bautizan a sus antecesores” (Índice 14). With this statement, the editors make evident the Christian ideas that will inform the trajectory of the magazine, whether the texts are literary, political, or academic. *Exilio* understands

its tradition as spiritual, and the idea of baptism represents the act of claiming a relationship to that tradition. A contradictory stance is inherent in baptizing one’s own forebears: tradition undergirds the efforts of the present, but those efforts enjoy a form of agency that allows that tradition to be defined according to the urgencies of the present.

This study focuses on the two forefathers that *Exilio* claims. The differences between the two impart a dual character to both the magazine’s theological foundation and the anticommunism that is built on that foundation. On the one hand, *Exilio* claims descent from Félix Varela, the 19<sup>th</sup> century priest and advocate for Cuban independence. With this gesture, it implicitly identifies itself with the stance of public protest by which Varela conveyed his particular synthesis of theological and political thought. When operating in this mode, the magazine fits Isabel Álvarez-Borland’s observations about the first generation of writers to leave the island: “Because of the temporal proximity to the physical experience of exodus, this writing displays indignation and anger toward the traumatic events or individuals causing the exile. This is a literature with an overt political content that expresses angry feelings of betrayal reflecting the chronological proximity of the events to the writing” (6-7). In contrast, *Exilio*’s other parent is *Orígenes*, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Cuban literary magazine, and by association, its co-editor José Lezama Lima. Through this affiliation, *Exilio* adopts a posture that opposes direct political protest and instead espouses the cultivation of a hermetic aesthetic. Both precursors are useful to *Exilio* because they represent distinct moral and religious methods for defending Cuban culture against threats of tyranny and corruption.

The difference lies in methodology. Varela believed in the direct insertion of theological convictions into public political debate, whereas Lezama and the *Orígenes* project espoused turning inward toward the cultivation of artistic concerns, a gesture intended to produce a more gradual, but more

complete, renovation of the nation. On the one hand, *Orígenes* opted to distance itself from public debate and define a space of enlightened creativity that might be undisturbed by the debased ethics of the Cuban political sphere of the 1940s, imposing on itself a kind of voluntary *insilio*, while on the other hand Varela is the paradigm of the outspoken advocate who suffered exile because of his activities. Varela is the more obvious model for an exile group in New York to emulate, whereas the *origenistas* seem an odd fit. As will be seen, each chosen precursor reveals a different discursive orientation, bringing to the foreground the dual nature of the *Exilio* project, which sought solace in a space of artistic distance from the noisy arena of protest while also publishing texts that were explicitly political.

One way of expressing this contrast is to say that Varela was a paragon of *exilio*, whereas *Orígenes* exemplified a voluntary *insilio*, or separation from one's immediate cultural and political context. The self-isolation *Orígenes* chose contrasts with the remarkable degree to which, in the previous century, Varela incorporated himself into the American Catholic Church, eventually becoming Vicar General of the Diocese of New York. For *Exilio*, the experience of exile is understood in relation to Cuba, the lost *patria*, while *insilio* describes its situation within the United States intellectual sphere of the 1960s and 1970s, where leftists were insensitive to the protests of those who believed themselves to be Castro's victims. It is important to note that *Exilio* was published in New York. Away from the ideological enclave of Miami, Cuban exiles confronted the general tendency among progressive Americans to sympathize uncritically with the Cuban Revolution. In the end, whether reacting against Castro's communism or leftist American intellectuals, the experience of *exilio-insilio* conveyed by the magazine is predominantly religious. Political and economic arguments are situated in a theological context rather than being the foundational impulse for the magazine in and of themselves.

## Varela's Model of Exile Protest

In its first editorial, *Exilio* makes it clear that it is not a *belles lettres* magazine. Instead, its editors claim allegiance to the medieval definition of the liberal arts, specifically to the Thomist opposition of liberal learning to utilitarian pursuits (Índice 13). *Exilio's* allegiance to this notion of the liberal arts is rich with implications. Most evidently, the scope of contributions to the journal is to include non-literary texts, such as historical or political critiques and academic studies. This discursive range parallels the variety of scientific, theological and political texts Varela published, and contrasts with the noted anti-academic tenor of *Orígenes*. In this context, *Exilio* enjoys a certain degree of discursive freedom to deploy its counterpoint to the Cuban Revolution. In the liberal arts, the magazine also finds a kind of liberty that derives from its interest in non-utilitarian concerns (utilitarian thought being understood as a form of servitude to practicality), which lends a philosophical depth to its discursive freedom. Rafael Rojas asserts that with Varela the history of Cuban thought experienced "El triunfo de la razón moral sobre la razón instrumental" (*Isla* 44). Rojas reminds us that, paradoxically, this triumph prefigures the utopian discursive strategies of the Revolution (*Isla* 44). Varela, like José Martí, is claimed by both the Revolution and its opponents, and in the case of *Exilio*, the imprint of his assertions about reason and belief is clearly visible. With its reference to Aquinas, the magazine clearly states its allegiance to a Catholic vision of the liberal arts rooted in the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages. As a result, the forms of reason deployed in the pages of *Exilio* are to be clearly bound by theological limits.

Though Aquinas is the founder of an important intellectual method, Varela is placed at the heart of this vision of the liberal arts because he is more pertinent to the Cuban exile situation. His thinking, for the editors of *Exilio*, is the most effective support for the kind of freedom they espouse: a freedom from the imagined tyranny of secularism.

Thus, its critiques of the Revolution often rely on theological and moral arguments, rather than ideas about free markets or representative democracy. In fact, Marxism and capitalism are presented as the two faces of Janus in the journal's editorial of summer, 1969 (Índice 22). This stance is consonant with Varela's legacy. Rafael Rojas reminds us that Varela portrayed "la Patria, el Estado, la Cultura y la Política como instituciones enemistadas con el Mercado, el Dinero, la Ciudad y el Capitalismo" (*Isla* 35).

Varela provided examples for the framing of *Exilio* in his use of periodical publications to advocate for political and theological ideals and in his employment of the argumentative procedures of academic discourse. Varela chose exile in the U.S. in 1823. He moved from New York to Philadelphia in 1824 and founded *El habanero*, the first Spanish-language newspaper in the U.S., which ran for two years and featured essays on political, theological, moral and scientific themes. In 1825, he returned to New York, where he became an influential public theologian. He continued to publish and edit; his opinions on theological and civic themes appeared in Catholic and non-religious papers and magazines, and he edited the *Young Catholic Magazine* and *Catholic Expositor and Literary Magazine* for short periods. In 1837 he was named Vicar General of New York.<sup>4</sup>

Though Varela espoused the idea of individual rights in the face of despotism, this idea was grounded in theology. Varela believed true freedom was to be found through the practice of Christian virtue. In his analysis of Varela's thought, Cintio Vitier notes the influence of the *Encyclopedistes*, the concept of natural rights and the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (18), though it is also crucial to note that Varela despised the secularism and absolutism of the French Revolution. Christian piety was a necessary condition for civic virtue, and this civic virtue was to provide the foundation on which Cuban independence was to be constructed. According to Varela, impiety corrodes the links of faith and trust that hold individuals

in relation to one another. Civic-mindedness diminishes as mutual suspicion grows. Under these conditions, the *socius* becomes vulnerable to domination from without. In his *Cartas a Elipidio*, Varela connects "impiety" to despotism, implicitly understood as Spanish tyranny, though the French Revolution also comes to serve as an example: "Sirve (. . .) el despotismo de la impiedad para hacer nulo el poder de las leyes, que son sus enemigas" (35-6). The despot himself is slave to impiety, which instills in him an insatiable appetite for domination: "Esta cruel opresión experimenta el déspota, sus desenfrenadas pasiones le arrastran por todas partes, y como fiera maltratada se ceba en cuantas víctimas encuentra en su malhadada carrera" (35). Varela advocated independence from Spain not only as a triumph over despotism, but also as a sacred victory over impiety.

The kind of revolution imagined by Varela was to be holy rather than secular, dominated by a logic of emancipation rooted in theology rather than on Enlightenment ideals. In an article in *El habanero* titled "Estado eclesiástico en la isla de Cuba," he declared: "Sólo es verdaderamente libre el pueblo que es verdaderamente religioso (. . .) ¡Tan lejos está la verdadera religión de ser base de la tiranía!" (67). The French Revolution is an error to be avoided, an example of the triumph of impiety over order and prosperity (*Cartas* 31-2). For Varela the excision of Christian theology from government precipitates the degradation of social relations, and any revolution constructed on secular principles will inevitably, as in the French example, hasten the advent of a new tyranny. It is with the French case in mind that Varela asserts: "el más cruel de los despotismos es el que se ejerce bajo la máscara de la libertad" (39).

Varela's ideas set off sympathetic echoes in the pages of *Exilio*. Indeed, the first number is introduced by an editorial statement that opens with praise for him, stating that the journal's mission was to continue his tradition: "Nosotros, en coincidencia de circunstancias y proyecto, nos honramos en seguir su ejemplo" (Índice 13). The impiety Varela

decries in 1835 resonates with the *Exilio* group's abhorrence of the atheism of the 1959 Revolution. For Varela the despotism that is fed by this impiety is most dangerous when it promises freedom; in claiming Varela as a forefather, *Exilio* implicitly applies this critique to communism.

A text that clearly evidences *Exilio*'s connection to Varela's legacy is Julián Orbón's open letter to Ernesto Cardenal in the fall 1972 issue. In it, Orbón criticizes the theological principles the leftist Nicaraguan priest-poet expresses in his recently published memoir *En Cuba*. In the anecdote he relates how the Cuban poet Cintio Vitier told him that at the Cabaña fortress in Havana many "idealistic young men" died by firing squad believing they were martyrs, whereas they were simply the tools of the CIA and Batista (Índice 57). Orbón tells Cardenal that he hopes he prayed for the men: "Pero quiero creer que usted rezó por ellos, rezó por esos jóvenes que murieron gritando 'Viva Cristo Rey,' de la misma manera que ha rezado por el comandante Ernesto Guevara (Índice 57). His open letter challenges Cardenal on religious grounds rather than engaging in political argument. What is even more illustrative of the theological basis of his polemic is the fact that Orbón positions himself as a critic of capitalism: "para esa prensa [capitalista] su muerte era sensación, noticia, es decir, dinero" (Índice 56). As we have seen, this critique of capitalism, surprising as it is coming from the Cuban exile sphere, underscores another allegiance with Varela, who saw it as endangering the integrity of society.

Another example of the kind of direct intervention in public debates that Varela employed can be found in the editorial statement introducing the second issue of *Exilio*. Here, the editors adopt a stance of explicit political commentary regarding the civil unrest in the Dominican Republic, without including any discussion of literary or artistic themes. In the text, Batista and Fernández Bonilla

blame Juan Bosch for the coup that removed him from power in 1963: "su extraña conducta, proclive a la subversión comunista, alentó el golpe militar que derribó su mandato" (Índice 15) and justify the repressive actions of the Dominican military by repeatedly evoking the perceived threat of Soviet communism, which is referred to as "la embestida marxista" (Índice 16). Though the discussion explicitly concerns events in the Dominican Republic, recent Cuban history is never far from the minds of the authors: "Bosch ya se hallaba convocando a las milicias, organizando militarmente a las masas, armándolas. En ese momento, la similitud de estos hechos con el caso cubano debió de haber influido en la mentalidad de los altos jefes militares y de los dirigentes de los grandes intereses. Éstos, pues, se vieron compelidos a actuar" (Índice 15). While justifying Dominican military repression, Batista and Fernández Bonilla also relive the trauma of the Cuban Revolution and lament that Castro's accumulation of power in the early years was not forcefully resisted by the same sectors of society that were successful in overthrowing Bosch.

In addition to their practice of direct participation in public debate, the editors and contributors to *Exilio* make use of academic strategies of discourse, just as Varela did in *El habanero*. This orientation supports the outward focus of the magazine, given academic writing's interest in clarity of exposition and public dissemination of information. This quality contrasts with the other face of the journal, which turns inward toward aesthetic contemplation and hermeticism. Academic texts in *Exilio* span the disciplines of history, sociology, economics, political science, linguistics and literature. The spring 1970 issue is dedicated entirely to papers delivered at the inaugural conference of the Instituto de Estudios Cubanos in Washington, D.C. the year before. In her prologue, founder Maria Cristina Herrera describes the efforts to bring together a group of exile scholars as "este

empeño de reflexión cubanocrisiana” (11), making explicit the religious motivations behind the academic endeavor. She notes that the event took place during Easter week and included representatives from both academia and the Church (12). The continuation of Varela’s legacy is evident in this particular conjugation of the public, the academic and the theological.

## Inner Landscapes

A vivid illustration of the duality of *Exilio* can be found in the fact that the editorial in the second number engages in unadorned political critique, while the third issue begins with these words: “La revista *EXILIO* no entraña militancia ni sectarismo político alguno. Antes, más bien se debe al irreducible compromiso con la verdad, sin el cual ninguna obra intelectual legítima es posible; compromiso este que precede y alimenta toda sana acción política (Índice 19). This contradiction illustrates the tension in *Exilio* between the value it places on the clear public statement of ideals and the cultivation of the inner self through aesthetic creation and contemplation.

It may be true that the political critique found in its texts does not hew perfectly to the dogmas of many anti-communist groups in its critical comments about capitalism and U.S. imperialism. Nonetheless, to disavow “militance” would seem to contradict the editorial that was published just months before. The editors assert that an allegiance to “truth,” rather than ideological loyalty, should guide political action. This idea is the linchpin that holds together the outward and inward stances of *Exilio*: though participation in public debate is essential, one must first discern the truth, a process that requires what Batista and Fernández Bonilla call “una visión más honda de la vida que, en consecuencia, desbord[a] toda actividad militante y programática,

aunque teniendo a ésta en singular consideración” (Índice 19). The nature of this “deeper vision” is to be found in the work of the writers and artists who collaborated in publishing *Orígenes* in the two preceding decades. The terms in which *Exilio* claims the earlier magazine as precursor illustrate its claimed relationship to that precursor:

*ORÍGENES*, replegada en profunda confrontación metafísica, tradujo en frustración y hostilidad el vacío que la ciñó. De ahí su desapego ante lo social, y un hermetismo un tanto excesivo, que impidió la debida divulgación de su obra. Pero es la generación cubana que con más rigor ha fijado, por vía del conocimiento poético, las bases para una reflexión ontológica propia. Nosotros nos consideramos continuadores de su obra, que se ha adentrado diamantinamente en nuestra sustancia nacional. (Índice 19-20)

*Orígenes* is associated with depth, introspection and hermeticism. These traits are responsible for a turning away from social or political commentary and tend toward the isolation of its cultural project from the broader cultural discourse. As Rafael Rojas notes in reference to the *Orígenes* project, “To constitute oneself in the secret space of culture implied a gravitation to the margins of the State, the Academy, and public opinion (“Poetics” 181). Nonetheless, the editors of *Exilio* forcefully state that the inward orientation of their precursors is of a transcendental philosophical value that in the end makes possible a more effective insertion into the public realm. A generation must first understand itself before it purports to advance a public agenda. *Exilio*’s understanding of the kind of introspection and hermeticism that should be practiced is heavily influenced by theological ideas. As we will see, the fusion of aesthetics and theology expounded in *Exilio* is tied to a particular concept of freedom that

is deployed in contradistinction to the ideology of the Revolution.

*Orígenes* and the cultural project associated with the magazine cannot be characterized as uniform, though a dominant philosophical thread runs through it. As Ben Heller argues, “one cannot deny that a certain aesthetic came to be associated with the magazine as a result of the pieces selected for publication (and, perhaps more importantly, pieces *not* selected) and also as a consequence of certain metapoetic texts published by Lezama and [Cintio] Vitier, the two *Orígenes* writers most articulate at that time concerning issues of aesthetics” (79). This “certain aesthetic,” though it does not account for the inclusion of works by atheist or agnostic writers like Virgilio Piñera or Lorenzo García Vega, is suffused with theological thought. It is clearly the intellectual tradition to which *Exilio* refers. Cintio Vitier argues that *catolicidad* is “el punto clave, aunque no exclusivo, para entender a *Orígenes*” (71). Lezama, who not only co-edited the magazine but also asserted himself as its leading voice, both on its pages and in the social interactions of the group, is the most important author to examine if one wishes to understand what *Exilio* admired in *Orígenes*.

For Lezama, religion was not to be understood according to its immediate expedience in public affairs. Interested neither in proselytizing nor in using theology as a political tool, Lezama saw the heart of Christianity to be the affinity between Creation and creation, between God’s invention of the world and the artist’s joyful re-enactment of that act. Since God created the universe through the Word, the poet recreates the world through words. Though humanity is fallen, it can be redeemed through literature and other arts. In “Pascal y la poesía,” Lezama declares: “Hay inclusive como la obligación de devolver la naturaleza perdida. De fabricar naturaleza, no de recibirla como algo dado. ‘Como la verdadera naturaleza se ha perdido—dice Pascal—, todo puede ser naturaleza’” (4). As Gustavo Pellón explains, “Nature for Lezama evokes Genesis, the garden of Eden, the fall of

Adam and Eve. Poetry (or life; for Lezama it is one and the same) has as its goal the recuperation of that nature lost through original sin” (48). Without poetry, the world is dark, suffused with a vague sense of menace due to its fallen state: “He aquí que el hombre está rodeado de una inmensa condenación inanimada” (“Conocimiento” 37). The role of the poet is to use the latitude granted by God through free will to restore Creation to its state of sanctity. An implicit theme in Lezama’s thought is freedom, a concept understood in both theological and artistic terms. In his appreciation of Claudel, Lezama observes: “Cuando nos dice: que mi verso no tenga nada de esclavo, como el águila marina que se lanza sobre un gran pez, queda: el hombre como ente orgulloso, desnudo y reclamador del conocimiento de Dios” (“Conocimiento” 39). Poetry is a forceful assertion of freedom made in the confidence that God’s grace elevates artistic creation. In “Las imágenes posibles,” Lezama declares that metaphor is “el reino de la absoluta libertad” (304).

For Lezama, the primary vehicle for the recreation of Creation is metaphor. In all arts, but most intensely in literature, metaphor unites opposites such as concrete-abstract, history-eternity, and real-unreal in much the same way Christ instantiates the unity of body and spirit. In “Las imágenes posibles,” Lezama asserts that the poetic image is composed of “body” and “being” (301). The *origenista* Fina García Marruz asserts: “el misterio que más lo conmovió [a Lezama] fue sin duda el que tenía que conmover más a un poeta: el del Verbo hecho carne” (12). In posing the connection between theology and literature in this way, Lezama advocates a religiosity that turns inward and dwells in the hermetic space of artistic creation. This inwardness is not meant to be a solipsistic end in itself, though. Instead, it is a step in a progression that envisions art as regenerating the nation by renewing the inner life of each individual, whether he or she is a producer or consumer of art, or both. In the spring, 1949 issue of *Orígenes*, the editorial statement “La otra desintegración” begins with an assertion of this

notion of the inward renewing the outward: "Cerca del índice crítico que señala la falta de imaginación estatal, que no es en definitiva sino la ausencia de una proyección o impulsión por zonas más espléndidas, es necesario ir ya entregando las formas superadoras de esa desintegración. Si ese señalamiento es esencialmente crítico, su remedio tendrá que brotar de creación y de imagen" (60). In this declaration, artistic creation is understood as providing the forms by which a new construction of the nation can be achieved, and these forms are derived from the creativity of the artist.

In the end, Lezama's vision makes itself available to the framers of *Exilio* as a way to advocate for Christianity as a means for rescuing the Cuban nation, even if the effort must be made from the parallel space of exile. The undertaking follows a different path, one that turns inward. Furthermore, the temporal implications are different from Varela's model. Lezama and *Orígenes* assert the futurity of an artistic-religious redemption of the nation: "crear la tradición por futuridad, una imagen que busca su encarnación, su realización en el tiempo histórico, en la metáfora que participa" ("Desintegración" 61). First, religiosity must go through the process of fusing itself with artistic creation, then work upward through the moral and psychological structures of the individual, transforming them gradually. Only after this process is complete can a true and lasting vindication of the Cuban nation be realized. This gradualism contrasts profoundly with the urgency of Varela's publicly minded approach, which, as has been seen, also has clear parallels in *Exilio*.

The most substantive tribute to *Orígenes* can be found in the first issue of *Exilio*. Raimundo Fernández Bonilla's essay "El poeta fuera de su paisaje se pierde" presents an extensive meditation, inspired by one of Lezama's aphorisms, on the metaphysical bases of literary creation. The length of the text and its early appearance in *Exilio* signal that it

was meant to declare a set of ideas that might frame the journal's project of defining an exile identity. As an indebtedness to Lezama and *Orígenes* can be sensed both in the essay's assertions about figurative language and in its use thereof, the text serves to support the thesis that a continuation of *origenismo* is one of the journal's fundamental strains, in counterbalance to its homage to Varela.

One of its fundamental assertions is that metaphor manifests the union of sensible reality with the realm of spirit (21). Landscape (*paisaje*) serves as an example of metaphor *par excellence*. Landscapes are "comarcas del espíritu" (17), spaces where the language of the soul is woven (in creation) and unwoven (in interpretation). Fernández Bonilla theorizes that *paisaje* is nature uplifted and redeemed as it is aestheticized through human perception and thought (18), a concept clearly in line with Lezama's fusion of theology and poetics. Landscape is an example of the union of the concrete and the abstract, the natural and the spiritual—"La apasionada unión de espíritu y materia" (21). It manifests the spiritual order that suffuses all that exists in the cosmos (25).

Fernández Bonilla's merging of theology and aesthetics is oriented inward. He uses appropriately metaphorical language to evoke this idea: "el fulgor del arma áurea irradia sólo en dirección interna. El oro se oculta metal adentro como hundido para siempre en un mar secreto. Su aspecto externo permanece a oscuras tal la piel nocturna de la pantera bicorne" (17). These metaphors accomplish two ends. First, they celebrate the mysterious and hidden nature of Lezama's poetic language. Second, they recreate the experience of that mystery in their own densely woven verbal texture. Like Lezama's, Fernández Bonilla's language is marked by a kind of deliberate catachresis, the thick layering of metaphor on metaphor; the "weapon" of metaphor is itself a fusion of figurative energies, as it takes on the qualities of light, the sea, and the panther. Metaphoricity is linked to interiority; it is a

joining of energies through a process of digging down into the core of reality. Interiority, for its part, is privileged in its connection to light, while exteriority is cloaked in darkness.

A pivotal moment in Fernández Bonilla's essay comes when he links the inward to the outward. In a startling turn, he moves from describing the equilibrium of material and spirit accessible through aesthetic contemplation to theorizing that the absence of this balance makes societies vulnerable to dictatorship (25). Both solipsistic contemplation and unreflective public action are corrosive to the public good. Consonant with the program of *Orígenes*, Fernández Bonilla argues that inward cultivation of the aesthetic and spiritual selves works against the decay of the outward *polis*. The cultivation of art, though a hermetically personal act, should not, in the end, be escapist. It is a subterranean current that, under the right conditions, surfaces and becomes active in the social realm. Fernández Bonilla asserts this fact negatively, tying the degradation of the aesthetic self to societal degradation under Castro's dictatorship. A purely introspective mode would be a form of imprisonment; the artistic idea of landscape makes possible the individual's escape from solipsism: "[la] salida del hombre de su pura subjetividad" (26). It becomes clear that for Fernández Bonilla *Orígenes* offers a means for achieving freedom. Consonant with the *Orígenes* project, Fernández Bonilla asserts in *Exilio* that a fusion of theology and poetics generates a force that can only uplift a national culture after it does its work within the mind and soul of the individual. In the end, like Varela believed, the nation is to be redeemed through faith, but in this *origenista* mode, faith operates eccentrically, hermetically, and gradually, through the medium of aesthetics.

This *origenista* face of *Exilio* can also be seen in the winter 1973 issue that paid homage to the poet Eugenio Florit, who published a number of poems and translations in *Orígenes*. Florit is praised in terms that reflect a privileging of interiority. His poetry is described as "esbelta, gallarda, de cristal biselado y espiritualizada geometría" (3). The text

evokes Florit's aesthetic delicacy with a wealth of detail. Religious references are prominent and, glaringly, political argument is absent—no reference is made to Florit's objections to the Castro regime. In fact, the absence of political commentary in Florit's poetic work is praised as "elegancia" (3-4). Instead of dwelling on social themes, he is seen as a poet whose work aims at deeper questions ("va derecho al espíritu") (4). Florit's religiosity circulates inward and intermixes with his exquisite aesthetic perceptions, rather than flowing outward toward activism or proselytization. The editors close their short piece by tying Florit to Juan Ramón Jiménez, forming another point of contact with *Orígenes*, given that the Spanish poet deeply influenced Lezama and other *origenistas*. They also form an opposition to the Mexican poet Enrique González Martínez's famous anti-*modernista* injunction "túércele el cuello al cisne," and by doing so contest the idea that social or political content should prevail over aesthetic form: "Es absurdo retorcerte el cuello, cisne intelectual" (5). With the image of the swan, the authors evoke the idea of "singing inwardly" ("canta[r] para dentro") (5). Here, the inward is associated with the upward, suggesting that private aesthetic contemplation is linked to transcendence and salvation. In the end, Florit is celebrated for the same qualities that are associated with Lezama and *Orígenes*, qualities diametrically opposed in form to Varela's religiosity.

## Insilio neoyorquino

In its homage to *Orígenes*, *Exilio* must have felt a deep kinship with its forerunner. Whereas the *origenistas* were aware that they were operating from a space of internal exile in relation to Cuban officialdom and their society as a whole, *Exilio* was conscious of the fact that both its religiosity and its political stances were bound to lead to isolation from U.S. intellectual circles in the 1960s and 1970s. It is useful to remember how sympathetic the New Left in the U.S. was toward Castro. Excitement about the cause began

during the war, as young Americans travelled to Cuba to join the rebels (Gosse 60). The Fair Play for Cuba Committee was formed by two American journalists and a businessman in 1960, publishing its famous advertisement "What's Really Happening in Cuba" in the *New York Times* (Gosse 60). The same year, C. Wright Mills, an immensely influential public intellectual, sold 400,000 copies of his pro-Revolutionary polemic *Listen, Yankee!* and Amiri Baraka published "Cuba Libre" in *Evergreen Review* (Gosse 60-1). 1959 was co-incidentally the birth year of the New Left in the U.S., a movement which "surrounded the Cuban Revolution with a mystique of youthful promise and applauded its invention of a new form of political and economic society," as Richard Welch notes (130-31). Though enthusiasm waned after the Cuban Missile Crisis, there were factions of the left in the United States that continued to look to Cuba with admiration throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

This situation had obvious negative effects on the public perception of the first Cuban exile generation. José Ignacio Rasco complains in the spring 1970 issue of *Exilio*: "el exilio comunista carece de prestigio" (41). The sarcasm inherent in his use of the term "prestige" asserts that the Cuban exile is being seen in superficial terms. Carlos Luis, who published a number of texts in *Exilio* and joined the editorial board midway through its run, complains that many American leftist academics dismissed the ideas of Cuban exiles out of hand (53). In the first issue of *Exilio*, Gabriel de la Vega worries about "la lamentable caída que estamos sufriendo en el espectro de la opinión pública. ¿Por qué se empieza a pensar que, después de todo, las cosas en Cuba no andan tan mal?" (16). Espinosa Domínguez argues that the American intellectual left ignored the writings of Cuban exiles for dogmatic reasons, a phenomenon that paralleled the exilic situation of the group, rejected by Cuban intellectuals for the same justifications: "Contra esta literatura han conspirado el aislamiento, la indiferencia, las trampas de la incomunicación,

la práctica ruin de las exclusiones, borrones y bloqueo impuesta durante décadas por las autoridades y organismos culturales de la isla y la negación de una izquierda con hábitos sectarios, intolerantes y dogmáticos" (*Peregrino* 344). Espinosa refers to this dilemma as "doble exilio" (*Peregrino* 344), a phrase that combines the sense of being exiled from Cuba with the sense of inner exile or *insilio* within the uncomprehending intellectual environment of the U.S. Cultural disjuncture combined with political incompatibility. Víctor Batista explains:

No participaba en ese mundo [...] de la contracultura. Luther King estaba muy de moda en ese momento. Los Beatles... yo estaba ahí recién llegado cuando los Beatles aterrizan primero en Nueva York y hacen un concierto apoteósico. A mí todo eso me parecía una cosa ajena. Tampoco era mi generación. Ya yo tenía 28 años cuando todo esto, y ellos eran casi diez años más jóvenes que yo. Hubiera podido introducirme en eso como hicieron tantos cubanos. Pero yo no estaba para nada interesado en ese mundo. (Díaz 72)

In addition to the generational dissonance between American youth movements and Cuban exile intellectuals who were adults when they arrived in the U.S., Batista gives evidence of the role of religion in his generation's discomfort with the counterculture in his sarcastic use of the adjective "apoteósico" in relation to the Beatles. The implicit objection is to the elevation of popular culture to the level of the sacred, threatening the displacement of traditional faith. Psychiatrist René de la Huerta gives evidence of the cultural and political gap between the exile community and American leftists in "Presente y futuro del hippie," published in *Exilio* in 1973, a late date for Cuban exiles to begin familiarizing themselves with a social type that had existed for nearly a decade. This lapse of time gives further evidence of cultural isolation.

De la Huerta pathologizes hippies in his essay, arriving at the following conclusion, which forms the nucleus of his objection: "Para mí, todo ese canto de sirena de la paz y el altruismo me resultó demasiado familiar para que pudiera resistir a la tentación de hacer un paralelo con el comunismo" (134). Communism is not the only ideology de la Huerta deplores in the hippie; feminism comes under attack as well (136). Perhaps surprisingly, anti-capitalism feeds his objection: he criticizes the manic pace of American capitalism for the breakdown of the codified gender roles that undergird the traditional family (135). In the end, De la Huerta's conservatism is religious rather than capitalist; at the end of the text he declares with triumphant irony that some hippies have become Christians: "algunos grupos han encontrado a Cristo y lo pregonan a voces, bastante histéricamente, pero no sin cierta autenticidad" (137). In his comment one feels both his hostility and his pleasure in witnessing this surprising transformation. There is no question that texts like this illustrate a painfully wide breach between the ideas of the first generation of Cuban exiles and the cultural landscape of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. José Ignacio Rasco argues that this breach is due in part to a conscious resistance to "transculturation," one he feels is justified given the cultural and psychic threats faced by exiles: "la misma resistencia a integrarse totalmente a otras sociedades es un arma legítima de defensa, una resistencia rebelde que pone su esperanza en el regreso" (48). This resistance is supported by the memory of the *Orígenes* group's confident assertion that a cultural project can survive isolation from its immediate milieu if it holds firm to the faith that its efforts will produce a "tradición por futuridad" that prophesies future renewal. The role of art and literature is not to change with the seasons of societal tendency, but rather to cultivate deeper inner resources.

## A Chosen People

In the spring 1970 issue of *Exilio*, theologian José Ramón Villalón equates the Cuban and Babylonian exiles: "Las bases ideológicas y los presupuestos psico-sociológicos para considerarse un 'pueblo elegido' existen en el caso cubano como en el judío [. . .] ambos exilios tienen un significado religioso" (284). Villalón feels quite keenly the specialness of the Cuban exile; just as Christians see the Babylonian exile as a necessary chapter in an overarching plan for salvation, Villalón asserts that the intellectual labors of *Exilio* and the Instituto de Estudios Cubanos are of prophetic importance: "se impone un estudio del sentido religioso de nuestra situación histórica para hacer de ella un punto de pivote en el gran cambio hacia el que se encamina la historia universal" (285). Like the Jews, Cuban exiles are chosen by God to help bring about a global change in democratic and spiritual consciousness. These statements offer a glimpse into the spiritual intensity with which exile was felt by many of the Cuban intellectuals who left in the first decade after 1959. The global significance claimed by Villalón is echoed in the magazine's first editorial: "La crisis por la que atraviesa el pueblo cubano tiene carácter universal" (Índice 13). Villalón's statements also broach the idea of the utility of exile, the good that can come from the suffering of displacement—a crucial question for *Exilio*. The editors posit, hopefully, that if Cuban exiles can accept and understand the paradox of "[el] hallazgo dentro de la pérdida," of a deeper discovery that can be made about self and nation, they can open the door to the "authentic destiny" ("destinos más auténticos") of the *patria* (Índice 13).

This destiny is to be realized through two activities: "actividad política" and "actividad contemplativa" (Índice 14), each of which is suffused with religious meaning. The

political and the contemplative correspond to the two precursors, Varela and *Orígenes*. Underlying *Exilio's* gestures at claiming support for its agenda in figures from the past is a reverence for tradition instilled by a prevailing current of Catholic thought. The contrasts between the religious and political thought of the framers of *Orígenes* and of Félix Varela reveal an oscillation between distinct modes of advocacy for a Catholic reaction to the Revolution, but do not negate the fundamental theological consistency of the project. As the editors claim in their inaugural editorial, paradoxes of this type are to be understood positively: "la paradoja, lejos de acotar el absurdo o la desesperación, es signo de creación, del advenimiento del espíritu" (Índice 14). In these terms the reader can understand the counterpoint Varela-*Orígenes* as something that might prophesy national redemption.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Carlos Espinosa Domínguez identifies the following exile magazines in the first decade after the Revolution: *Protesta* (1962), *Cultura y verdad* (1963), *Cuadernos Desterrados* (1964), *Nueva Generación* (1964), *Cuadernos del hombre libre* (1966), *Resumen* (1966), *Punto Cardinal* (1968), *Revista Cubana* (1968) and *La Nueva Sangre* (1968) (Índice 9).

<sup>2</sup>Born in 1933, Víctor Batista Falla left Cuba in 1960. Family wealth from land and banking in Cuba allowed him to publish and finance *Exilio* and *Escandalar* (1980-85). Since 1998 he has run Editorial Colibrí from Madrid (Díaz 71).

<sup>3</sup>Important exceptions are Carlos Espinosa Domínguez's *Peregrino en comarca ajena* and *Índice de la revista Exilio (1965-1973)*, works to which this essay is indebted.

<sup>4</sup>A concise chronology of Varela's life can be found in Navia, 208-236.

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