

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: LITERARY CARTOGRAPHIES OF SPAIN:  
MAPPING IDENTITY IN AFRICAN  
AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING.

Maria Christina Ramos, PhD, 2011.

Directed By: Associate Professor, Zita Cristina Nunes,  
English Language and Literature.

This dissertation analyzes the considerable body of twentieth-century African American travel narratives of Spain, including those by Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Frank Yerby, and Richard Wright. Building on recent scholarship that has shifted frameworks for understanding cultural processes based on history to ones based on space or geography, it explores the imaginative geographies mapped in these African American travel narratives and examines the use of Spain as a location that permits challenges to the geopolitics inherited from early modern European mappings of the world. Spain's liminal position geographically (between Europe and Africa), historically and culturally (between West and East), and politically (between liberal secularism and religious totalitarianism) provides these writers with a variety of routes through which to both revise the dominant European imaginative geographies of the world and expand theoretical discourses of the politics of location and identity.

This dissertation argues that these African American travel narratives of Spain create literary cartographies that remap our global imaginary to enable a reconsideration of racial, ethnic, and national identities and that explore the capacity of transnationalism to transcend these categories. The figure of the Moor is central to these literary cartographies as a shifting signifier of race, ethnicity, and religion, and is used to help map individual and community identity as relational rather than fixed. In these mappings, identity is envisioned within a constantly fluctuating network of flows and mapped in relation to a variety of nodes within that network. This travel writing also highlights the importance of travel as a type of wayfinding for individuals and larger societies in need of critical self-reflection, ultimately attempting to articulate novel ways of building genuine and generative relations to others around the globe.

LITERARY CARTOGRAPHIES OF SPAIN:  
MAPPING IDENTITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING.

By

Maria Christina Ramos

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Advisory Committee:  
Professor Zita Cristina Nunes, Chair  
Professor Ralph Bauer  
Professor Regina Harrison  
Professor José María Naharro-Calderón  
Professor Mary Helen Washington

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## Dedication

*To my mother, Luisa, who taught me the importance of feeling rooted,  
and to my father, Oscar, who showed me the joy of wandering.*

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## Chapter 1: “A Hunger to Understand”: Approaching African American Travel Narratives of Spain

Because maps are social, concerning people in groups, some cultural realities of civilizations need cartographic assistance to make them visible.

Vincent Virga, *Cartographia*

### Introduction

Richard Wright begins his book *Pagan Spain* (1957) with a portrait of himself sitting in a car, staring at the Pyrenees ahead of him, trying to convince himself to cross the border of southern France into Spain. He reports that over the years numerous friends, not the least among them Gertrude Stein, had recommended that he visit the country. Yet years later, when he finally travels to the border, he still hesitates to cross. Sitting in the car, “alone,” with “no commitments,” “steering wheel in [his] hands,” there is no physical or legal barrier preventing him from his journey—only a “state of mind” (3). The travelogue of Wright’s time in Spain in 1954 and 1955 opens not with a picture of physical movement, as one might expect, but with a compelling moment of contemplation. What is keeping him from entering “a Spain that beckoned as much as it repelled” (3)? Wright focuses our attention on the intellectual and emotional work his journey demands rather than the physical movement it

requires. In this moment he is forced to consider what the *idea* of Spain means to him, what it will mean for him to travel its landscape and interact with its people.

Wright explains that his hesitation does not stem from fear of Spain's totalitarian regime headed by General Francisco Franco. He had, after all, already experienced such totalitarianism in the "absolutistic racist regime in Mississippi" and during his year in Perón's Argentina (3). Indeed, one might even imagine that his travel in Spain would be freer than the experience of traveling as an African American in the U.S. at that time, particularly in the South. Wright points, instead, to another reason for why Spain is the "one country of the Western world" about which he wishes not to "exercise [his] mind":

The fate of Spain had hurt me, had haunted me; I had never been able to stifle a hunger to understand what had happened there and why. Yet I had no wish to resuscitate mocking recollections while roaming a land whose free men had been shut in concentration camps, or exiled, or slain. An uneasy question kept floating in my mind: How did one live after the death of the hope for freedom? (4)

Despite his hesitations, Wright reconciles himself to his journey and turns the car towards "the Pyrenees which, some authorities claim, mark the termination of Europe and the beginning of Africa" (4). So begins his travel narrative of Spain. Wright's travel account is more than a simple record of sites visited or a description of the customs and manners of a foreign culture. Rather, his introduction to his travel narrative about Spain suggests important personal and political consequences of travel, as well as a range of uses of the travel narrative; his difficulty with simply the prospect of travel in this passage suggests that there is more at stake in travel than we might at first assume.

Wright's reluctance to cross the border into Spain seems to arise from the series of difficult issues he expects to explore through his travel in Spain. His desire to understand the "fate of Spain," that is, its fall from a new republic into a dictatorship at the end of the Spanish Civil War, is a quest to understand the failure of social democracy to prevail over oppression worldwide.<sup>1</sup> This failure, among others, defies Wright's faith in humanism. His attention to the question of how people can "live after the death of the hope for freedom" reflects Wright's increasingly pessimistic attitude regarding his ability to find a place in which to live and write freely himself.<sup>2</sup> And his investigation of both of these issues through Spain illustrates Wright's belief that local phenomena can be used to represent larger global phenomena.<sup>3</sup> His journey into Spain, then, becomes a journey for understanding—understanding a personal issue (why thinking of Spain "hurt" and "haunted" him so), understanding a local issue (what accounted for "the fate of Spain" itself), and understanding a global issue (how people lived "after the death of the hope for freedom"). For Wright, travel could be a powerful enterprise, the effects of which have personal, local, and global implications.

But why was Spain the place Wright used to explore his larger questions about political oppression and the human response to it when it is clear in his introduction that he has experienced oppression in other places? And why did his journey into Spain precipitate

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<sup>1</sup> At the 1937 Second American Writer's Congress in New York, Wright made his pro-Loyalist position clear. In addition, he published a series of articles for the *Daily Worker* about the Spanish Civil War (Fabre, *Unfinished* 140-42, 148) and contributed a letter to the 1938 volume *Writers Taking Sides: Letters about the War in Spain from 419 American Authors*. Wright's position reflected the interests of the Black Left, influenced by the Communist Party, in the Spanish Civil War (Kelley 5-18).

<sup>2</sup> Fabre notes Wright's increasing dissatisfaction with even the freedom of life in exile (*Unfinished* 383).

<sup>3</sup> In an interview given three years later, Wright explains that in the U.S. Black writers are encouraged to write about "universal" topics, minimizing their experience as black Americans. Wright counters that the ghetto experience itself is universal (Hakutani 122). In *Pagan Spain*, Wright refers to oppressed groups within Spain, including Protestants, Jews, and women, as "white Negroes," revealing his perspective of being "Negro" as an experience of the oppression rather than only a specific racial designation.

the striking image of a journey into Africa at the end of his introduction? We can begin to see an answer to these questions in a letter from Wright to his agent, Paul Reynolds, in which he proposes that his book about Spain would show “how a non-western people living in Europe work out their life problems” (qtd. in Fabre 411). His proposal reveals his assumptions about both Spain’s relation to the rest of Europe and what Spain as a location could provide a writer. Spain, for Wright, provides an example of the “Other” located within the West. He realizes that, while ostensibly part of Europe, Spain’s proximity to Africa and longstanding association with the racial and cultural Otherness make it an unstable signifier of identity. For Wright, therefore, Spain can be mapped as a hybrid space, a contact zone through which one can study complex issues concerning the relationship of the West to the rest of the world by studying the Spanish people and culture. In particular, Wright suggests Spain is peculiar space that can provide fodder for investigations of various identities important to this relationship, including the nature of the racial, national, and regional identities that have traditionally defined the West as a concept in the first place.

Wright’s book is not the only travel writing that uses Spain to investigate these issues; indeed, Wright is not the only well-known African American writer to produce extensive travel writing about Spain. Claude McKay and Langston Hughes both recount their travels in Spain during the 1930s in travel memoirs and in their poetry. McKay narrates his initial trips through Spain at the start of that decade in his memoir *A Long Way from Home* (1937) and develops Spanish themes in several poems from his “Cities” cycle (c. 1934), some of which were incorporated in the memoir. Langston Hughes describes his journey to Spain in 1937 to report on the Spanish Civil War for the *Baltimore Afro-American* in a series of articles for the black press that year. He later integrated these news articles into his travel

memoir *I Wonder as I Wander* (1956).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Spain's Civil War becomes the subject of some of Hughes's most provocative poetry of the 1930s. In addition to these non-fiction examples of African American travel writing about Spain, Frank Yerby made Spain and Spanish figures the subject of his popular fiction, which he referred to as "costume novels." His 1965 novel *An Odor of Sanctity*, subtitled *A Novel of Medieval Moorish Spain*, is centered on the epic journey of its hero, a Christian Goth named Alaric, through the Iberian peninsula during the tumultuous years of Arab-Berber dominance in the South. The novel highlights the political and social exchange of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish cultures present during the medieval period in the Iberian peninsula. These authors are joined by figures such as Arthur Schomburg, Nella Larsen, Chester Himes, and Dorothy Peterson, who left documents of their travel and—in the case of Himes, Peterson, and Yerby—their expatriation to Spain. The existence of this archive of texts prompts the question that sparked this dissertation: what made Spain a compelling site for exploration by a number of major African American figures during the first six decades of the twentieth-century?

This dissertation examines how Spain is constructed in twentieth-century African American travel writing to serve the writers' political and theoretical purposes. While the authors' motivations for travel to Spain and the genres in which they construct their accounts of travel may vary, there are recurring tactics of representation and a series of issues that frequently manifest themselves in their writing about Spain. This study will not examine the historical accuracy of the representations of Spain in this travel writing about Spain; that is, it will not attempt to judge the veracity of these representations of Spain as "objective"

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, large parts of his chapters on Spain in his memoir are word for word transcriptions of his news articles, which were written as reflective essays.

accounts of the places and history represented (though this could be an interesting project, yielding interesting results regarding problems of translation as there are many problematic renderings of Spanish culture throughout). Instead, I am interested in seeing what a close reading of the patterns of the representations of Spain created by African Americans reveals about the ways in which travel and travel writing have been useful for a group that was politically marginalized at home. Within these travel narratives, Spain is mapped in diverse ways in relation to other spaces, including the U.S., Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. It is represented as a liminal zone between these various geographic spaces and is used to disrupt clear distinctions between them, that is, between East and West, North and South. The effect of this disruption is an undoing of an inherited “imaginative geography” that associates these geographic categories and national spaces with specific cultural identities.<sup>5</sup> Despite betraying at times these writers’ own culturally bound Western perspectives, these texts create counter-narratives that not only challenge Anglo-American representations of Spain but also engage in cultural criticism of the U.S. and the West more generally.

In the alternative literary maps these travel narratives provide, the revised mapping of space mirrors a necessary remapping of identities correlated with those spaces. In other words, the writers use the opportunity of reconfiguring geographic spaces to rethink racial, ethnic, and national identities and the capacity of transnationalism to transcend these categories. The use of Spain as a space through which to remap the globe aids in this revision. Spain’s position as a liminal space opens it up for representations that suit various writers’ purposes; they use Spain as a space onto which they can project ideas about the identities we have inherited and also identities they can imagine as Spain is represented

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<sup>5</sup>Here I am drawing from Edward Said’s notion of imaginative geography as the process through which cultural meanings and values are assigned to particular material spaces and the ways in which these meanings reflect the relations between the creators of such spaces and their subjects (54-5).

differently. The figure of the Moor, associated with Spain's medieval history, is especially useful as a figure that enables such thinking about the nature and uses of these identities. Like Spain, the Moor becomes a shifting signifier in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion, and is particularly useful for considering the kinds of new relations and alliances that might be possible as group identities are reimagined.

In the rest of this chapter I will provide a context for this dissertation, elaborating on key concepts and threads of scholarship that have shaped my approach to analyzing African American travel writing about Spain and discussing my conclusions from this analysis. It begins with a rationale for studying this particular set of travel narratives and an introduction to travel studies, including the definitions of travel and travel writing being used throughout. It explains both recent methods of reading travel writing and the importance of studying this literature. This section also includes a short survey of common representations of Spain in travel literature, focusing on the Anglo and Anglo-American representations that the African American narratives in this study are revising. The next section of the chapter provides background for my specific geographic approach to these narratives, including a discussion of this literature as a type of literary cartography, an overview of postmodern cultural critiques of mapping, and an introduction to contemporary counter-cartographic methods that can be applied to African diasporic studies. The chapter then offers a brief discussion of the history of the figure of the Moor, a central figure in the African American travel narratives studied here. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the following chapters of the dissertation.

*Approaching African American Travel Writing: Travel Studies and Representations of Spain*

My focus on African American travel writing responds to the recent calls for “worlding” American Studies—that is, looking at American literature as imbedded within a larger global context.<sup>6</sup> In “Reworlding America: The Globalization of American Studies,” John Muthyala provides a useful description of three models of criticism that have been evolving to do this kind of work.<sup>7</sup> The first is a dialectical model that attempts to investigate patterns of cultural exchange between various locales, paying attention to the “trajectorial confluences” between them (99).<sup>8</sup> The second model addresses and complicates the concept of modernity, creating a more expansive vision of *modernities* that have existed in various locales, examining the ways each is necessarily defined and shaped by others around it.<sup>9</sup> And the third addresses the concept of “border consciousness” formed in what Mary Louise Pratt calls “contact zones” where geographically and historically separated peoples engage in the process of articulating self-hood in light of cultural hybridity. All three models for “worlding” American studies suggest that place is central to the construction of identity and are concerned with the transformative value of movement, whether it is the movement of ideas (traveling theory)<sup>10</sup> or of people (traveling bodies). One’s very identity can be transformed through movement. Travel is a good example of deliberate engagement with

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<sup>6</sup> Questioning the nation as the privileged paradigm through which to view literature is not new in literary criticism, as is evidenced by the long critical history of diasporic studies. However, the wider call to “world” American Literary Studies as a discipline has increased over the last few decades. See Carolyn Porter’s “What We Know that We Don’t Know: Remapping American Literary Studies” and the 2006 special issue of *American Literary History* subtitled “Hemispheric American Studies,” edited by Levander and Levine.

<sup>7</sup> Though Muthyala refers primarily to pan-American studies, these classifications provide a useful heuristic for the current theoretical work that attempts to challenge national categories and investigate transnational frames.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Mullen’s *Langston Hughes in the Hispanic World and Haiti* (1977), Jackson’s *Black Writers and Latin America: Cross-Cultural Affinities* (1998), and Raphael-Hernandez’s edited collection *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence* (2004).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) and Doyle and Winkiel’s edited collection *Geomodernisms: race, modernism, modernity* (2005).

<sup>10</sup> See Clifford for more on the concept of traveling theory (“Notes”).

this phenomenon. One must, therefore, consider what happens as a person does travel, as that person deliberately enters into contact zones around the world.

In this study I am building upon foundational work in line with the last two models Muthyala describes. Most obviously I am drawing on recent developments in the scholarship on travel literature as well as from recent discussions of modernity(ies) and transnationalism in African diasporic studies. In addition, I am drawing on recent literature that discusses cartography from a cultural studies perspective, particularly the metaphor of the map for literary works that represent diverse spaces. The works under consideration in this study offer a particularly productive set of texts through which to bring these threads together because they map Spain as a place that elicits questions about both traditional distinctions between East and West and the national boundaries that are reinforced by Western conceptions of global relations. Pulling these theoretical perspectives together can aid us in examining the global perspectives in this neglected selection of travel writing.

In approaching these travel narratives about Spain, I am particularly interested in examining the effects of travel on African American writers and the uses to which they can put travel writing. Two anthologies of the late twentieth century, one of African American travel writing and one of Black Atlantic travel writing, show the breadth of African American travel literature and exemplify the attention it has begun to receive over the past few decades. Alasdair Pettinger's collection, *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic* (1998), focuses on the circulation of African diasporic writers within the Black Atlantic. He argues that his collection challenges traditional notions of travel writing "in which the works of relatively privileged Europeans and North Americans are taken as the norm" (Pettinger xii). Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl Fish's *A Stranger in the Village: Two*

*Centuries of African-American Travel Writing* (1998) gathers selections from a variety of authors, ranging from early missionaries and intellectuals to twentieth-century authors and activists in an effort to “rethink old or limited definitions of African American agency and narrative voice” (xiv). The editors attempt to foreground the “significance of mobility and its relationship to subjectivity” which surfaces in the travel narrative (Griffin and Fish xiv).

I will extend the discussions of African American travel writing raised in these anthologies by examining the complex relationships among travel, subjectivity, and diverse uses of travel writing within twentieth-century African American travel writing about Spain. I am adding to a conversation that often limits the scope of scholarship on African American travel narratives. Both of the recent anthologies, for example, reflect the typical scholarly preoccupation with several sites of travel frequented by African American intellectuals over the last two centuries, including locations in Western Africa, Latin America, France, and the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> By focusing on Spain as a subject of African American travel writing, however, I will broaden the discussion of African American travel to include an often ignored location that inspired a significant body of travel writing by major African American writers. Spain might, at first, seem an unlikely location to be the subject of so many major African American writers. During much of the twentieth century, Spain, unlike France, was not considered a bastion of liberal democracy. Nor was it, like the Caribbean, a location with

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<sup>11</sup> Certainly there is good reason the locations have been focal points. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Africa was an important destination for diasporic intellectuals in the search of a “homeland” (and the corresponding debunking of this possibility for others). Paris was mythologized as a metropole that was, at the least, less racist than the U.S., and in the early twentieth century it became a meeting place for intellectuals of the African diaspora and a destination for many African American expatriates of the mid-century (Fabre, *From Harlem* 1-8). Both continental Latin America and the Caribbean also attracted major African American figures because of the development of early Pan-African movements, the perception of a shared diasporic experience of the slave trade, and the development of radical politics (Jackson 1-9). And the Soviet Union was an important destination for leftist intellectuals during the early and mid-twentieth century (Baldwin 1-24). Current scholarship is beginning to expand this range of sites; see, for example, recent work on Baldwin in Turkey (Zaborowska).

a recognized significant diasporic population. Just the opposite: Spain was intricately involved in the transatlantic slave trade. But its medieval history and the socio-political events in Spain during the first half of the twentieth century attracted African American intellectuals who created a compelling body of work about it. Both of these periods in Spanish history provided a lens through which these writers could view European interactions with Africans that were crucial to a nation's identity.

#### Travel Studies: Defining Travel and Travel Writing

It is not surprising that accompanying the postmodern interest in space as a theoretical concept has been a resurgence of scholarly interest in travel. A focus on travel highlights the transformative effects of contact, cultural exchange, and the questioning of national identities and borders once thought to be natural. Through travel, the traveler can deliberately enter a contact zone. And with travel comes travel writing; the two have a long historical connection. "The traveler's tale is as old as fiction itself," Hulme and Youngs remind us (2). Travel writing can be fruitfully investigated to explore the effects of travel at both an individual level and a socio-political level. "Travel writing is perhaps the mediative genre par excellence" for thinking about issues that transnationalism raises as a framework for American Studies because it so clearly focuses on cultural exchanges that bring "the nation in tension with categories of analysis that transcend national boundaries [such as] networks of race, ethnicity, religion, and class" (Fox 639, 642).

When one considers travel as a category of investigation (and, of course, the associated focus on travel writing), several key issues continue to surface in the scholarship. How is travel to be defined? What is the role of travel in the formation of individual and

cultural identity? And what historically has been the relation of the knowledge that is produced in the documents of travel to power?

Given the variety of types of mobility and migrations experienced by people, it is important to consider how broadly to define the concept of travel. As James Clifford has pointed out, the term travel “goes a certain distance and falls apart into nonequivalents, overlapping experiences marked by different translation terms: ‘diaspora,’ ‘borderland,’ ‘immigration,’ ‘migrancy,’ ‘tourism,’ ‘pilgrimage,’ ‘exile’” (*Routes* 11). Moreover, as those within diasporic studies would remind us, not all travel is voluntary. To separate travel from the material pressures that lead to many forms of exile and migration, the term travel is often understood to involve a measure of freedom and privilege on the part of the traveler,<sup>12</sup> even if the subject position of the traveler might affect the traveler’s experience, whether because of race, gender, or class. For my purposes, travel will be defined as a “practice featuring human movement through culturally conceived space, normally undertaken with at least some expectation of an eventual return to the place of origin” (Adler). This definition allows for a variety of motivations for movement as well as distance traveled.

Whether it is in the form of the romanticized heroic journey, the European Grand Tour, a romance of internationalist exile, or a nostalgic search for homeland, the most immediate theme of much travel is its transformative effect on the traveler. Travel is central to the human experience, to beliefs about home and community, and its transformative potential is compelling. It is crucial to the ways in which we construct physical territories as well as boundaries of social identity. The experience of travel, therefore, can be a powerful one. Trinh T. Minh-ha suggests that each journey on which one embarks involves “a re-siting of boundaries,” not just in a physical sense but also in the sense of individual and

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the influential works in travel studies by MacCannell, Fussell, Leed, and Roberson.

cultural identity (9). “The dialogic nature of identity formation,” explains Jane Conroy, is a reason for “the destabilizing effect of travel,” an effect that can be both frightening and enticing (xvi). The traveler embarks on a journey and discovers not only the “other” but also the self as defined through the other, as the traveler becomes aware of being not only a spectator but also the object being viewed by the culture visited. “Indeed, one does not become a ‘stranger’ until one is viewed by someone else . . . for both visitor and the visited view each other and contribute to the construction of new identities” (Roberson xviii). Travel, therefore, can prove to be a “profoundly unsettling” yet enlightening experience, “a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries—a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference” (Trinh 23).

The travel writing that recreates journeys to other places shows not only these transformative effects but also the degree to which the form and content of these tales are intimately connected to the contexts from which they arise. As seen in tales of historical fiction, informative reports on foreign societies, and romantic adventures in search of the modernist self, the form of travel writing shifts to follow its various functions. This has been demonstrated, for example, in a number of studies that have examined tales of travel to the Americas from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this time, documents reflecting on travel were not merely for entertainment or information; they also became key documentation for European states. These travel accounts, maps, and other information based on first-person eyewitness for authority became a “semi-official business in which the beginnings of imperial histories were constructed”; “political or commercial sponsors wanted maps, often kept secret, but the public interest aroused by stories of faraway places was an important way of attracting investment and—once colonies started—settlers” (Hulme and

Young 3). While the first-person perspective is important for establishing authority in such state documents, it becomes equally important within modernist tales of expatriation for different reasons. In his classic study *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (1980), Paul Fussell argues that the travel writing of this generation had become “an implicit celebration of freedom” as the reader follows the writer on a series of exotic adventures abroad (203). Fussell describes the polyvalence of this travel literature, pointing out similarities to other genres such as the memoir, myth, quest, and journey. Here, these journeys have more affinities to what we associate with literary texts, such as novels for example, than to texts of documentary evidence (history, anthropology, science, journal, etc.).

Narratives of travel, therefore, are difficult to pin down in terms of a specific “travel writing” genre marked by specific conventions. In thinking about travel writing as a concept, I am maintaining the distinction Jan Borm makes between what might be considered travel writing/literature generally and the travelogue as a specific genre within it. In “Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing, and Terminology,” Borm draws on German and French distinctions in terminology to argue against defining travel writing as a genre itself, contending instead that it is a collection of various types of fictional or non-fictional narratives that “deal predominantly with the theme of travel” (18). The predominance of the theme of travel becomes the unifying element of the works; travel writing becomes a topos through which narratives can be comprehended and analyzed. The traditional first-person, supposedly non-fictional account of travel, then, becomes just one genre of writing that can be placed within the larger category of travel writing (Borm 19). Travel writing as defined in the present study, therefore, includes works associated with other genres as long as travel is a

significant component of the work and a mechanism through which its ideas are conveyed, as in, for example, a novel in which travel is central. In this way we can think of calling such texts “travel writing” when we would like to approach them from a travel studies perspective. Having adopted this definition, I am able to include a novel by Frank Yerby in my study of travel literature. Because the plot revolves around one character’s travels it can be used to help us examine how an author imagines the effects of travel. In addition, Yerby’s novel, as historical fiction, incorporates a past time as part of the imaginative geography of Spain in which it participates; Yerby’s novel addresses the medieval period of Arab-Berber rule in Spain that is central to representations of Spain. Through this novel, we can get a sense of one mid-twentieth-century African American representation of the time and space that are key to contemporary representations of Spain.

#### Representations of Spain: from Orientalism to Theoria

Despite the potentially transformative effect of travel, much of the scholarship on travel writing has highlighted the connections between the knowledge produced in travel writing and existing power structures, reflecting the influence of theorists such as Michel Foucault. Notable here is the importance of the groundbreaking work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978), and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), in the scholarship about travel writing. Travel writing is often associated with European colonial expansion and is read as reflective of a national character that typically supports nationalistic or imperialistic goals. Scholarship of this sort has identified the rhetorical moves made in European travel narratives to support colonial goals.<sup>13</sup> It constructs an “other” place, people, and culture in terms that attempt to appear neutral or scientifically objective while maintaining the

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of this type of work include Spurr, Roberson, and Hulme and Youngs.

traveler's cultural beliefs about his or her own culture's superiority. Along with the technological advancements Europe enjoyed was the notion that Europeans could study, interpret, understand, and in many cases ultimately improve the land and inhabitants of the areas to which they travelled (Bridges 53). In this tradition, the viewer's own values and beliefs are reaffirmed even as other locations and cultures are being incorporated into a new world view. What becomes important here is not what the traveler learns from travel (in terms of self or other), "but what use the traveler . . . make[s] of that knowledge" (Roberson xx). Even analyses of contemporary travel literature are concerned with how current, more culturally sensitive and politically aware representations of the other reproduce these structures in new forms.<sup>14</sup> The study of representations of Spain in Anglo-American travel literature has often followed this pattern of Orientalism.

The history of relationships among Spain, England, and the U.S. has produced a history of representations of Spain and Spanish-ness from all sides, representations that fluctuate along with the relations themselves. Crucial to conceptions of Spain, however, including its modern representation of itself, is the trope of the "Loss of Spain" (Flesler 76, Borreguerro 420). This refers to the eighth-century Arab-Berber conquest of the Iberian Peninsula from North Africa and the ensuing 500 years of Arab-Berber rule in various parts of what is now Spain, a period of what is popularly (and sometimes pejoratively) called Moorish rule. This episode in Spanish history has been central to Spain's national foundational narrative largely because of its end, which was figured in traditional Spanish history as the Reconquista—or Reconquest—of Spain. In other words, the period of Moorish rule leads to what is retrospectively presented as the inevitable formation of Spain as a modern nation-state, beginning with the ascension of the Catholic kings, Isabella and

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<sup>14</sup> For example, see Lisle.

Ferdinand. This conception of national identity brings with it the consolidation or rather, the narrowing, of “Spanish” identity to one recognized as European and Christian.

In fact, the Reconquest—epitomized in the 1492 fall of Granada and the subsequent Spanish colonial exploration of the Americas beginning with Columbus’s 1492 expedition—transforms a Spain that had been “lost” from European Christendom into an agent and symbol of the modern West itself. As Enrique Dussel argues, the end of the Islamic rule in Western Europe and Europe’s reorientation of its sights from East to West through the exploration of the Americas enables the European conception of itself to shift from one surrounded by the Muslim world to one at the center of a world moving Westward. “Western Europe’s bursting the bounds within which Islam had confined it, gave birth to modernity,” contends Dussel, and the “West” develops as it transforms “other subjects and peoples into its objects and instruments for its own Europeanizing, civilizing, and modernizing purposes” (90). Spain’s colonial expansion is accompanied by the creation of a Catholic identity consolidated through the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from within its borders and through its conversion of indigenous peoples in the Americas. In the traditional Spanish representations of itself, therefore, during the Renaissance and as it is reemphasized centuries afterwards during the Franco regime, the trauma of the “loss of Spain,” its Moorish past, is transformed into a necessary episode in a larger narrative of the rise of a modern Western nation through the concept of Reconquest.

In addition to the conclusion of this particular Spanish national narrative in the rise of a modern Western European nation, the period of Muslim rule is central to another discourse, one of Spanish exceptionalism, which claims that Spain is essentially different from the rest of Europe. The concept of Spanish exceptionalism, though no longer embraced within

academic circles, can be traced back several centuries and has been attributed to various historical phenomena. It was, however, famously developed in the mid-twentieth century by Américo Castro, who tied Spain's difference in national character to the legacy of the *convivencia*, a now well-known term he coined to describe the cohabitation of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian societies of medieval Spain.<sup>15</sup> And it continued to be popularized well into the latter half of the twentieth century by several political scientists, such as Howard J. Wiarda, who attributed Iberian difference to a number of factors, including the geographic separation from the rest of Europe by the Pyrenees, a lack of Enlightenment influence and industrialization, the embrace of Catholicism and, later, fascism. But the lasting influence of the Arab-Berber rule of al-Andalus from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries is generally figured as the central contributing factor to this difference.<sup>16</sup> Spain has been portrayed as operating outside of European modernity, yet it is not part of Africa either. As a space cast as simultaneously external yet linked to other clearly defined spaces, it is particularly open for writers to project upon it what they are interested in.

Representations of Spanish national identity in an Anglo-American literary tradition highlight this exceptional Moorish past of Spain. Pere Gifra-Adroher in *Between History and Romance: Travel Writing on Spain in the Early Nineteenth Century United States* (2000) and María DeGuzmán in *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (2005) provide detailed histories of the ways in which Spain was a central figure in Anglo-Americans' creations of their own national mythology. The figure of Spain

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<sup>15</sup> Castro famously developed his thesis in *The Structure of Spanish History* (1954). The peacefulness of this situation has been challenged by a number of scholars, such as David Nirenberg, whose *Communities of Violence* suggests that violence was a crucial factor in sustaining such coexistence.

<sup>16</sup> So pervasive has the idea of Spain's difference been that in 1964 the Minister of Information and Tourism under General Francisco Franco used the slogan "Spain is Different" in its campaign materials to promote Spain as a tourist destination. See Eugenia Afinoguénova and Jaume Martí-Olivella xxii.

is continually revised as its relationship to the nascent U.S. changes. Gifra-Adroher examines the movement of early U.S. representations from Spain as a political lesson, connecting Spain's economic stagnation with Catholic despotism as opposed to the U.S.'s Protestant republicanism, to the later "aestheticization" of that image during the romantic period. As Spain's threat as a competitor to the U.S. in the Americas lessens, its image becomes more exoticized and the landscape is imagined as one filled with markers of its medieval and imperial past (Gifra-Adroher 15-6). Its architectural relics and Moorish legacy begin to stand in for Spain itself, including a romanticized version of the ghostly presence of the chivalric Moor, doomed by his own culture's corruption (Gifra-Adroher 42).

As tensions rise during the late nineteenth century, however, with the coming of the Spanish-American War, the importance of the "Black Legend" in the creation of Spain as "morally blackened" as well as racially tainted begins to resurface. DeGuzmán traces the prominence of figures of Spain in "Anglo-America's articulation of its empire as antiempire (the "good" empire that is not one)" and "its fears of racial contamination and hybridity" (xii). The image of the Spaniard is transformed from "a figure of moral blackness and alien whiteness to a figure of dangerous, implosive 'racial' mixture as a justification for further aggression and expansion on the part of the United States" (xxviii). Instead of representing "the ideal" Western nation that had driven out the other (the Moor, the Jew, the Gypsy, etc.), the Spaniard is laden with the projection of the U.S.'s "own fears and fantasies about miscegenation as national and, moreover, imperial degeneration" (xxviii). Only after Spain becomes less of an economic, political, or imperial rival over the course of the twentieth century do Anglo-American images of the deviant otherness of Spain begin again to subside.

Despite its various interpretations, whether as the loss of Spain to moral deviance or as the Reconquest of Spain and the inception of European modernity, the legacy of Moorish rule becomes *the* defining episode in representations of the history of Spain. The African American authors who are the subjects of this dissertation are inheritors of these cultural practices of representation. Yet this Orientalist framework for understanding travel literature from the perspective of those in power cannot fully account for the representations of Spain that are presented in their narratives. It does not, for example, account for representations that are produced when the subject positions of the creators of travel literature are not easily associated with the goals of European colonization or Western dominance, as in the case of African American writers. Given the oppressive political situation for African Americans in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that African American writers' dominant use of travel writing is not to validate and reaffirm American culture completely. African Americans living in a segregated society, for example, were clearly not full American citizens at home during the first half of the twentieth century; American identity usually assumed an Anglo-European ethnic background for full citizenship and acceptance. Because of the limits on African Americans' rights as citizens in their own country, and even in their ability to travel there, their perspectives on the U.S. as home space is more complicated than the above framework would suggest. The travel writing associated with an African American perspective often challenges or critiques the U.S. and often Western hegemony in general.

It follows, then, that African American representations of Spain are as complex as their own subject position in travel. As stated above, Spain's Moorish past resonates with twentieth-century African American writers considered in this study, but their uses of this

history in their representations of Spain intervene in the Anglo-American traditions mentioned above. These authors are entering a centuries-old conversation among Americans traveling to and commenting on Spain and an even older conversation about Spanish-ness. The figure of the Moor is present in each author's construction of Spain, whether in the physical faces and bodies of the Spanish people or in their cultural expressions—the past constantly impinging on the present. Furthermore, this figure, connected to Spain's past, is also connected to its early twentieth-century colonial rule in Morocco and the Franco dictatorship throughout the middle of the century, aiding in the mapping of Spain as a link between Africa and Europe. This mapping is used by the writers in this study to situate Spain as a location and reconfigure the global imaginary as a whole, challenging conventional ideas derived from modern Europe about spaces around the world.

It is important to observe, of course, that this perspective is not completely in opposition to those associated with the Orientalist discourse. It is through the act of travel abroad, in many instances, that African Americans ironically found themselves to be perceived as representatives of the West or even as American citizens. We could consider here not only examples of personal travel but also the ways in which African American performers, especially musicians, were used as cold war ambassadors of the U.S. to countries around the world. In addition, these travelers are not only recognized as American citizens by those whom they encounter but also carry with them the perspectives they have inherited from the culture in which they were immersed in the U.S. There are moments in which these writers speak as members of the Western U.S. hegemony as well. Hughes, McKay, and Yerby all have the tendency at times to draw on stereotypes of “the primitive” to connect Spain to Africa. And though Wright states his desire to be a citizen of the world, claiming no

national or racial affiliations except those placed on him by others, by the end of his travelogue he explains that he is forced by Spain to acknowledge his own “Westernness”: “I was part, intimate and inseparable, of the Western world, but I seldom had had to account for my Westernness, had rarely found myself in situations which had challenged me to do so. . . . But Spain was baffling” (228). In this action of identity construction through the other, potential cultural bias is laid bare for African American writers no less than for others.

The goal of this dissertation in examining African American travel narratives of Spain, then, is not to claim an essential “difference” of African American travel writing from travel writing by those associated with other communities, but to consider the ways in which these travel writers use representations of Spain for themselves and their readers. That is, this dissertation analyzes the way that a location called Spain (as opposed to some “real” place itself) is created in these travel texts and the uses to which these writers put their creations of this space. To do this, I would like to join other scholars in shifting attention from the well-known othering/orientalizing discourses in travel literature to what it can provide that is productive in thinking about our understanding of and relation to those we perceive as other and, consequently, ourselves. For example, travel has historically been used as means to wrench the self away from the familiar in order to develop a critical perspective on one’s home environment in the effort to reassess cultural beliefs that have been normalized.

Roxanne Euben discusses such a tradition of using travel to develop political knowledge in her comparative discussion of travel narratives, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (2006). In this work, Euben describes the ancient Greek concept of *theoria* as the association of travel with the

development of political wisdom.<sup>17</sup> She illustrates the development of *theoria* as a practice by referencing Plato's argument in *The Laws* for sending citizens out to travel and learn about others. According to Plato, "the polis will never in its isolation attain an adequate level of civilization and maturity, nor will it succeed in preserving its own laws permanently, so long as its grasp of them depends on mere habituation without comprehension" (qtd. in Euben 22). The practices of travel and *theoria* serve as "vehicles of wisdom and *political* wisdom in particular" ensuring that a community's values and culture are the result of deliberation rather than mere habit and custom (Euben 22). Observation of others' ways, then, is necessary for the constant assessment of the self, whether the end result is affirmation or change. Travel, from this perspective, becomes "a practice of the pursuit of knowledge about others and oneself by way of literal and imaginative contrasts with seemingly alien lands, peoples, and institutions" (15). This "alien" land might be a great distance off and associated with a large shift in beliefs and values (for example, "East" v. "West") or simply be reflective of variations in ethnicity, sexuality, race, etc. within local communities. Travel is not only transformative of the individual as that individual experiences the other, but it can also be transformative of the society that pays attention to the knowledge and wisdom the engagement with others can provide.<sup>18</sup>

By engaging the texts that are the subject of this dissertation as *theoria*, this dissertation analyzes the cultural and political wisdom developed in African American travel

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<sup>17</sup> This is the term from which the English term "theory" originated.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, Euben also describes the ways in which travel and narratives of travel have been perceived as dangerous. Information brought home from travel must be carefully judged by those who can distinguish between "wisdom and contamination." Again, referring to Plato's model, Euben explains that "only men of good repute over the age of fifty will be allowed to travel abroad for the purposes of observing other practices and people, and then only for a period of no more than ten years" (qtd. in Euben 22). As Hulme and Youngs point out, "Societal attitudes to travel have always been ambivalent. Travel broadens the mind, and knowledge of distant places and people often confers status, but travelers sometimes return as different people or do not come back at all" (2).

writing about Spain. The authors of these texts use Spain as a location through which to contemplate the meaning of race and nation in the global movement of people, cultures, and ideas. As they disrupt conventional myths of the significance of these identities, they search for new formulations of identity through which to structure relations between people. They search for this in the Spanish history of *la convivencia*, in the radical politics of early twentieth-century pre-Civil War Spain, and within the oppressive context of Franco's dictatorship throughout the mid-century. By writing about Spain, these writers resituate African American experiences in a larger global context, and they look to their notions Spanish history and culture, idiosyncratic as they might be, to provide clues for developing new modes of relations to others outside of the U.S. and, consequently, new identities for themselves.

*Geocriticism: Literary Cartography and Mapping Diasporic Identities*

In this dissertation I argue that an examination of the *theoria* developed in the body of African American travel writing about Spain anticipates the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century theoretical critiques of the traditional Western imaginative geography and its participation in racialized national discourses. Not only do these writers make visible agencies and perspectives that lie behind these inherited maps, but they also claim the mapping process for themselves, redrawing maps in their literary works. Reading these writers' work as literary cartography, as literary participation in a revised mapping of a global imaginary, allows us to trace alternative imaginative geographies used to debunk inherited beliefs about distinct parts of the world. These new mappings seem to be aimed at mobilizing an African diasporic identity that would not replicate reductive nationalisms or

traditional black internationalism but could be used, instead, in the forging of connections with others worldwide. Spain's geographical location, its cultural and political history, and its peculiar reputation as "different" make it an especially useful location to serve as focal point around which to develop these literary cartographies.

### Literary Cartography

My approach to these authors' work through the geographical metaphor of cartography reflects the recent trend in travel studies, and in postmodern theory more broadly, to shift the theoretical focus from the single axis of time—understanding history—to its intersection with a second axis of space—understanding the role of spatial relations—in investigations of the construct of modernity.<sup>19</sup> This focus on space highlights how conceptions of the globe—the nature of the various spaces of which it is comprised and the relations between these spaces—are intimately tied to our understanding of our own identities as well as the identities of others. Given this interest in geography, it is not surprising that maps, as representations of geographic knowledge, and the practice of mapping itself have become important subjects of investigation for those seeking to further an understanding of modernity and the legacy of identities formed within it. Studies of mapping practices, in visual maps and in literary and other texts that participate in mapping spaces, shed light on the significance of our imaginative global geographies.

Recently, Robert T. Tally has labeled such a geographic approach to reading literary texts, that is, reading them through the lens of geography, as "Geocriticism." In "Geocriticism and Classic American Literature," Tally describes how literary narratives, in his specific case nineteenth-century U.S. literary narratives, like conventional geographic

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<sup>19</sup> For more on the so-called spatial turn of theory, see Soja.

maps, help to map spaces “to give shape to a conceptual or imaginary geography that would allow individuals and communities to orient themselves” (3). This “literary cartography” created in written texts functions as both a map of physical geography as well as a speaker or character’s plotting out of his or her own cognitive map to help make sense of the world in an organized way.

The set of works that are the subject of this study engage in this type of literary cartography, self-consciously dismantling the prescribed early modern European maps of the world, including some of the specific associations between spaces and identities mapped in them. Instead, their literary cartography attempts to take into account the individual’s lived experience of a space and has the potential to subvert official maps, instead mapping a space in ways that stretch or oppose official institutional maps. As in much travel writing, the writer becomes the cartographer, plotting itineraries and rearticulating relations between the objects in the field of their maps.<sup>20</sup>

### Maps and the Postmodern Critique of Cartography

Maps, of course, are designed to clarify the world in which we find ourselves. They are strategies of visualizing the complex relationships between the tangible and intangible elements of our environment, providing ways for us to understand and interpret these relations (Abrams and Hall 1). Because it depends on the process of selecting what is important to represent, mapping embodies the practice of interpretation; consequently, all interface choices for a map have an agenda. Maps represent the geographical thinking of the

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<sup>20</sup>This reflects Mitchell’s contention that “[a]lthough the map metaphor has always been employed in philosophy and literature in order to conflate the notions of cartography, representation, and textuality, it is the capacity of this trope to self-reflexively articulate the epistemological shifts undergone by the concepts of metaphor, text, and map in the twentieth century that renders it a powerful tool in postmodern writing” (3).

culture that produces them, and, in turn, they help create that culture's imaginative geography by providing a way of understanding and orienting oneself and one's culture in the world. This means that, despite a history of being credited with the objectivity associated with science, maps are essentially ideological productions, representative sets of cultural beliefs regarding the objects in the field being mapped (e.g., the various hierarchies among the objects or relative importance of the objects).<sup>21</sup>

Historians of cartography and cultural critics have shown that the assumption of objectivity and truthfulness we often associate with geographic maps develops with the rise of European early modern cartography itself. The perception of maps as objective has been a point of vigorous postmodern critique, a critique located in the association of geography and mapping with the privileged status of science rather than as a subjective enterprise. Early modern cartography arises with the need for mapping areas of the world (including the Americas) that were becoming subject to European colonizing entities and the development of technology to help do this accurately, advances in art that focus on realism, and as the discipline of geography is being philosophically separated from history and established as an objective scientific discipline (Mitchell 18). This early modern conception of the world was converted into "fact" supported by the science of geography, which was then used in service of empire.

Much of the scholarship on early modern European geographic representations of the world, therefore, is related to changing beliefs about spaces around the world as the developing colonial powers of early modern Europe attempted to incorporate the Americas into a revised sense of their own globalizing identities. Scholarship that analyzes the

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<sup>21</sup> For more on representational strategies of maps and the history of early modern cartography, see Harley and Woodward; Wood; and Jacob.

mapping of this period often tracks the rise of the geographic concept of the West as a geographic metaphor for a modern ideological space and its relation to the rest of the world, which is figured as other than the West. This conception of the world is one largely based on the concretization of boundaries drawn between various parts of the globe, carving out continents and nations as self-contained, bounded spaces, some of which were identified as modern/ advanced/ developed and others as primitive/ backwards/ underdeveloped.<sup>22</sup> Scholars of modernity have focused on how these categories, defined and solidified within the geographic imaginary of early modern Europe, have contributed to a legacy of knowledge that has defined, and often continues to define, relations among various peoples and places around the world.

An excellent example of the productive scholarship that comes from this approach is Walter Mignolo's *The Idea of Latin America*, in which Mignolo investigates and critiques the derivation and evolution of the concept of a "Latin" America (as opposed to an America that is not Latin). This work illustrates the stakes of such cultural studies arguments about mapping and reveals the ways in which geographic knowledge has been constructed to support specific ideological viewpoints, specifically constructions of race and nation, used in service of empire.<sup>23</sup> A significant part of Mignolo's study investigates the rise of the concept of the West, or Occidentalism, in relation to the Americas and includes analysis of medieval and early modern European maps of the world. His work echoes that of historians of cartography, demonstrating medieval maps as openly ideological followed by early modern maps that hid their ideology behind the guise of science. Mignolo's approach to these maps as cultural work that demonstrates a European concept of the world sheds light on the

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<sup>22</sup> David Harvey argues that the projection of the globe onto a two dimensional plane converted it into a space "conquerable and containable for purposes of human occupancy and action" (246).

<sup>23</sup> Again, see Gregory, Harley, and Wood for deconstruction of maps that show these processes.

development of the racialization of the Americas (and other spaces outside of Europe) through the naturalization of the concept of continents as discrete spaces, both individually bounded and different from each other. These representations often differentiate among the various peoples that inhabit those spaces—specific continents are associated with specific peoples—creating a hierarchy of peoples based on their assumed differences.<sup>24</sup> The work of Mignolo is an important example of the way in which we can see global relations being established through geographic identities of the early modern period as evidenced in maps.

### Mapping Revised—Counter Cartographies

In spite of critiques of the agendas operating behind maps, postmodern perspectives continue to employ metaphors of mapping, suggesting mapping's usefulness as a conceptual tool. As Abrams and Hall argue, "Mapping has emerged in the information age as a means to make the complex accessible, the hidden visible, the unmappable mappable. As we struggle to steer through the torrent of data unleashed by the internet . . . mapping has become a way of making sense of things" (1). In fact, in a perceptive analysis of the postmodern use of the metaphor of mapping, Peta Mitchell suggests that "[i]n a world where the real is no longer a given, the map becomes the key metaphor for the negotiation (physical and cognitive) required in order to derive meaning from our environment" (3). Despite the history of problematic uses of mapping, it remains a compelling way of understanding our

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<sup>24</sup> Mignolo examines the history of European mapping and the integration of the Americas into the famous T-in-O map, "a tripartite Christian cosmology that divided the world into three"—Europe, Asia, and Africa—published in the ninth-century edition of Isadore of Seville's *Etymologies*. Each of the three sections is attributed to one of the sons of Noah: Asia to Shem, Africa to Ham, Europe to Japheth. This was a distinctly Christian European point of view. By the sixteenth-century maps of Gerardus Mercator (1542) and Abraham Ortelius (1575), the world is established as a four part or continent world (land masses within water) with Europe as the central perspective on the map. The T in O map was essentially imposed on the newer, more "scientific" looking map. Mignolo demonstrates how the concept of specific spaces for specific peoples coincided with the renaissance development of race as way of "categorizing individuals according to their level of similarity/proximity to an assumed model of ideal humanity" (16).

environment. Out of this persistence of mapping have emerged a number of interdisciplinary calls to use maps and cartography in ways that counter previous dominant modes.

James Corner, renowned landscape architect, warns of the need to remain cognizant of the dangers of the “agenda of technocracy and control,” yet he also asks us to consider what maps can do rather than only what they have represented: “What about mapping as a productive and liberating instrument?” What about the “ways in which mapping acts may emancipate potentials, enrich experiences and diversify worlds?” (Corner 213). This echoes other late twentieth-century theoretical attempts, such as those of Frederic Jameson, who asserted the potential of cognitive mapping in relation to urban spaces: “Disalienation in the traditional city . . . involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories” (51).

The African American travel narratives from the first half of the twentieth century under consideration in this study demonstrate what Corner calls for at the end of the century, an attempt to use mapping processes “as a collective enabling enterprise, a project that both reveals and realizes hidden potential” (Corner 213). These authors map a global imaginary through Spain that challenges the dominant European early modern one that they have inherited and, with varying degrees of success, they attempt to use personal experiences to remap global identities in ways that promote new and more varied affiliations. That is to say, they are involved in the type of “Counter Cartographies” critic Brian Holmes discusses as he analyzes the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century “aesthetics of critical and dissident cartography, capable of twisting the techniques and visual languages of network maps away

from their normalized uses, thereby pointing to a place for autonomous agents within the global information society” (22).<sup>25</sup>

In considering these African American travel narratives as literary counter cartographies, it is useful to identify how numerous counter cartographies operate, including the ones that Holmes describes. They often make two moves: first, they focus on the process of mapping rather than the product of the map itself; and, second, they move away from a correlation with an objective scaled image of reality and move towards mapping as a social activity that can provide, bit by bit, alternative perspectives revealing what official maps have hidden. In both of these moves counter cartographies often acknowledge and self-consciously embed an awareness of the subjective nature of mapping into the mapping process itself.

Cartographers engaged in the project of shifting the focus from maps to mapping are concerned with shaping our understanding of what is occurring in the process of mapping itself. They generally wish to draw our attention to mapping as a process recognized as always ongoing, incomplete, and indeterminate. Mitchell discusses the evolution of mapping from the construction of physical maps to a postmodern notion of cognitive mapping such as Jameson’s: “The process of conceiving of a map, as discussed in postmodern thought, is a cognitive process of imagining and representing the relations between those objects or spaces. For postmodern geographers, cartography becomes much more a discursive practice than a science” (Mitchell 21).<sup>26</sup> Mapping that self-consciously strives to create knowledge

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<sup>25</sup> Holmes’s work includes discussions of a number of mapping projects that attempt to counter official maps and narratives, including the 1974 Arno Peters equal-area projection of the world, McArthur’s Universal Corrective Map of the World (a south-up map with Australia in the center), and more recent cartographies based on collectively constructed GPS images based in individuals’ walking paths through cities.

<sup>26</sup> For more on cognitive mapping, see Jameson (51).

through its process reflects Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's distinction between a map and a tracing:

What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields. . . . The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged competence.

(12)

For theorists such as these, trying to revise the perception of what maps and mapping can do, mapping allows for a novel arrangement of information in ways that can challenge dominant perceptions of the world around us—the facts we believe from previous maps. “In containing multiple modes of spatiotemporal description,” claims Corner, “mapping precipitates fresh insights and enables effective actions to be taken. . . . Whereas the plan leads to an end, the map provides a generative means, a suggestive vehicle that ‘points’ but does not overly determine” (228).

Conceived in such a way, mapping is a process of revealing creative connections and insights rather than an attempt to appear as the revelation of connections that are evident or factual. Mapping can function as a conceptual process of understanding complicated social issues.<sup>27</sup> Conceptual maps, such as the “social mess maps” described by Robert E. Horn, visual analytics and public policy expert, are important models for all maps, including those that provide geographical cues. Horn’s “social mess maps” are graphic representations of

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<sup>27</sup> “Ideas about spatiality are moving away from physical objects and forms towards the variety of territorial, political and psychological social processes that flow through space. The interrelationships amongst things in space, as well as the effects that are produced through such dynamic interactions, are becoming of greater significance for intervening in urban landscapes than the solely compositional arrangement of objects and surfaces” (Corner 227).

messy social situations used to untangle social relations, using images, text boxes, and arrows to map various forces at play in a situation. They are designed “to convey the provisional nature of the connections; once ‘cross-boundary’ causalities between social entities are disentangled, relationships can be realigned” (2). The importance of spatial order and traditional national boundaries decreases in this type of mapping, and there is an interest in what words and other figures show about spaces of flow in the world.

The literary cartography considered in this dissertation is, of course, dependent on words and images, and also shifts from mapping situated things to revealing the forces and movements flowing through spaces. It most closely aligns with what are referred to as network maps—maps that focus on the flows between various nodes. And like other alternative cartographies, they openly challenge the traditional associations between an idealized version of objective science and maps as representations and highlight the role of perception in the process of mapping. They point to the role of subjectivity in mapmaking as literary non-fictions and fictions that embed the mapper in the map itself.

### The Potential of Network Mapping

The notion of network mapping has become especially popular in the context of globalization as a way of tracking flows of capital and information across national boundaries. And though this can be mapped in ways that reinforce the “cultural logic of late capitalism,” network maps can also work against the centrality of the nation-state, which often asserts its own reality through the map itself. The network map as a form of mapping that highlights spaces of flow between various nodes has the indeterminacy of the figure of the rhizome described by Deleuze and Guattari: “The rhizome,” they explain, “connects any

point to any other point . . . . It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and overflows” (23). While the network map plots points, it highlights the relations between them—the spaces between various nodes. Network maps gesture towards the ways in which each relation is related to others and suggests motion over time implied by the various flows between nodes and the ebb and flow of the importance of individual nodes themselves.

Network mapping is an appropriate metaphor for the type of cartography in which the travel literature in this study engages. Maps that function only as wayfinding tools might illustrate a path between two nodes only for the point of getting from one to the other. But network maps, like travel literature, have the ability to focus on the journey in between. This means that each point along the way is a point of overlap in space and time between nodes, a location or perspective from which surrounding sets of relations might be reconceived.

When viewed from above, the network map is vulnerable to the same critique as the traditional bird’s eye view perspective, that is, a totalizing impulse. Such a view can, as Harvey reminds us, suppress social relations, so we must always seek out the deemphasized. Yet as J.J. King argues, networks also resist such an aerial view. They hold contradictory impulses for a comprehensive view of the network, on the one hand, and recognition of the impossibility of accomplishing such a task within any landscape, on the other. The network, King claims, “at once inspires and thwarts the cartographer” (4).

Such an approach, one that focuses on both the individual node and its relations, can remind us not only of the incompleteness of the map but also of the subjectivity necessarily embedded in the map. This process of mapping would record and identify patterns and relationships among items in the map, including one’s own relation to them—thus

embedding agency into the map. This also makes self-reflection an important part of the mapping process, as one reconfigures and reorients from within the network, rather than from a position above it. It points to the process of selection and arrangement at the heart of the mapmaking process, again, exposing the subjective agency interacting with the field of data.

We can see such network mapping impulses in the literary cartographies this dissertation examines in the following chapters. For example, all of the writers in consideration here embed a self-reflective subjectivity in the global imaginaries they begin to construct; one of the attributes of travel writing is the creation of a self-reflective persona throughout the text. McKay and Yerby map a trans-Mediterranean network to challenge the North-South, East-West continental divides, allowing Spain to function as a key node through which exchanges flow that debunk these divides. Hughes struggles to balance the local and global impulses at the heart of network maps as he tries to understand the relationship between specific sets of identities and struggles (anti-racist struggles in the U.S., anti-colonial struggles in Africa, and the anti-fascist struggle in Spain during the Civil War) in ways that connect an African diasporic identity to others in a larger global context. And Wright presents the ways in which potential networks are being stymied by a frozen Western-constructed, three-world global imaginary that limits the critical self-reflective work necessary for the creation of alternative mappings of the world. All of these writers struggle against the power of a dominant culture's maps to subject its readers to its delineations of self and other, negating others' map-making capabilities in the process. In response, they act as cartographers on the street creating their own maps in the literary cartography of their travel writing.

As each of these writers contributes to a literary cartography through mapping Spain in various ways, each participates (whether consciously or not) in a shared attempt at mapping an alternative imaginative geography of the globe. They enact the “collective enabling enterprise” that Corner claims is possible (213). Collectively their work demonstrates the social learning Horn describes as possible from collective mapping as we judge “whether one person’s description of the world squares with another’s” (52). Although it can draw from measured observations of the world, mapping—as a process of constructing a representation of the world—has the potential to create change in the ways we envision global relations. Mapping that attempts to take into account the individual’s lived experience of a space has the potential to subvert official maps, representing spaces in ways that stretch or oppose official institutional maps.

We can see in the set of African American travel narratives examined here the creation of new cognitive maps that might dislodge specific associations between spaces and identities mapped in early modern cartography. These alternative cognitive mappings are used to create knowledge of the self as well as of the other in novel ways.

### Mapping African Diasporic Identity

African diasporic studies has, of course, already participated in a type of geocriticism through its challenges to national and racialized essentialist identities ascribed to diasporic people. Among the central questions of the foundational work in this field is how one might map a diasporic identity that could counter these tendencies, tendencies that arise hand in hand with the nationalism that emerged in conjunction with the geographic imaginary of modernity. A legacy of past and ongoing migration discounts any simple notion of ethnic or

national identification, especially when the diasporic subjects are not embraced or easily absorbed into their new national communities. Because diaspora offers an opportunity to question nationalistic conceptions of space and identity, theorists of diaspora have used it to intervene in the traditions of identification described above in the context of modernity. To accomplish this task, theorists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have argued that diasporic identity cannot be reduced to a concrete set of essentialist traits or qualities but is a practice of the articulation of identity, and have focused our attention on the process of identity construction (becoming) rather than on a product (being).<sup>28</sup>

This notion of identity as something that never solidifies and is always in flux resembles the concept of mapping described above. In fact, much recent scholarship on diasporic identity employs concepts and images that are geographic in nature. For example, studies such as Hall's that draw on the articulations of diasporic identity have attempted to avoid the binary center-periphery construction that created many of the frozen identity types and that undergirds much postcolonial work.<sup>29</sup> They focus on opening up a binary framework and have often derived from the geographic model of basin-centered thinking, that is, a focus on relations between various sites situated around a particular body of water, such as Gilroy's construction of the Black Atlantic and Joseph Roach's circum-Atlantic in

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<sup>28</sup> Stuart Hall argues for a concept of identity as "a production which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (234). In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy argues that black intellectuals have consciously created works with a transnational frame of reference in an attempt to "transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (19).

<sup>29</sup> First, because so many are influenced by postcolonial politics, many reproduce only the self-other, core-periphery binaries typical of that type of study. As David Scott argues in *Conscripts of Modernity*, this binary is useful in discussing the anti-colonial politics of postcolonial theory, yet it is limited in its ability to provide explanations for some of the more complex identifications that occur when we move outside of the standard center-periphery dynamic (7-8). Redefining the attributes of the core and periphery does not necessarily change the nature of the relationship between them or the map that reflects this relationship. A map that remains within the confines of a conventional, static representation a self-other, core-periphery doesn't account for the complexity of each community's definition of self.

*Cities of the Dead*.<sup>30</sup> This conception of space works against notions of discrete continents as well as a clear two-hemisphere world, focusing, instead, on a history of connections and exchange within a network of sites that come into contact. Here, even the concept of a “border zone” is challenged as the basin (what would normally be the border) becomes a conduit of the flow between a network of sites. This basin-centered thinking functions, therefore, very much as does the network map described above.

Other recent approaches for mapping diasporic identities drawing on geography and mapping metaphors have often emerged through the discourse of transnationalism, either using diaspora to transcend national identities and leave behind racialized constructions of state or focusing on the difficulties of transcending these national boundaries. Wendy Waters, for example, suggests in *At Home in Diaspora* that diaspora is used by writers as a “third space” from which to “conceive of themselves as extra-national” (xi). In *The Practice of Diaspora*, Brent Hayes Edwards locates the city of Paris as a site from which to study the rise of black internationalism during the early twentieth century in Paris, pointing to the way the material reality of national language differences and culturally specific definitions of blackness intrude upon the attempt to create a transnational diasporic identity. And in *Black Empire*, Michelle Stephens develops the metaphor of the Black Ship of State to represent the ideas of three influential Caribbean writers’ attempts to articulate a black transnationalist identity; they appropriate elements of imperial rhetoric even as they challenge imperial domination. Though both Edwards and Stephens astutely describe the difficulties inherent in the attempts to use transnationalism (whether articulated as black internationalism or as diaspora) to transcend the raced nation as the primary concept of identity, both remain

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<sup>30</sup> The Black Atlantic and the circum-Atlantic are two in a series of basin-centered constructions—including for example the Pacific Rim, the circum-Gulf of Mexico, and for this study the Trans-Mediterranean—that attempt to understand the complicated interactions that occur between various locations around a body of water.

hopeful of the possibilities transnationalism might provide in thinking through formations of community that could challenge the imperial (colonial or neocolonial) maps of the world that emerged simultaneously with the nation-state.

Other postmodern attempts to transcend the center-periphery binary and challenge the clear borders between separate spaces and identities figure sets of islands or an archipelagic landscape as a way to imagine cultural and individual identity. For example, Antonio Benítez-Rojo's concept of *The Repeating Island* suggests we understand culture as a set of repeated processes rather than as a set of specific identifying attributes. He suggests we understand the Caribbean as a culturally complex space of paradoxes which produce an "island" that repeats itself, forming an archipelago of repetitions with a difference in constant movement over time.<sup>31</sup> This geographic metaphor has the benefit of dislodging the map from one specific moment in time, allowing us to see the constant recreating or becoming of an island repeating itself differently.

Within this variety of geographic modes of figuring diasporic cultures and identities, Édouard Glissant, another theorist of the Caribbean, focuses on the figure of the individual orienting him or herself within these maps of the islands. In his *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant endorses a concept of errantry, the practice of purposeful wandering in the effort to engage with others and develop a sense of self through these relations. He opposes the notion of "root-based" identity, in which one has a fixed identity that can be traced to a single specific source, to "relational identity," in which one's identity is always being produced in relation to others that one encounters. Glissant suggests that errantry, constant travel in service of the development of the self through contact with the other, is the ethically superior concept of

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<sup>31</sup> Francoise Lionnet develops a similar concept in "Continents and Archipelagoes: From E Pluribus Unum to Creole Solidarities."

identification. Indeed, as Michelle Stephens observes, we can see a preference for this subversive “wandering” figure in African diasporic literature; in this case it can even be seen in the title of Langston Hughes’s autobiography *I Wonder as I Wander* and in Claude McKay’s final claim in his literary autobiography *A Long Way from Home*: “All my life I have been a troubadour wanderer, nourishing myself mainly on the poetry of existence. And all I offer here is the distilled poetry of my experience” (270). The figure of the errant wanderer resonates with Euben’s connection between travel and transformation in proposing travel as central to an understanding of identity construction. It also highlights the importance of travel literature in tracking articulations of the self as various selves engage others within the travel narrative.

The writers considered in this study use the new global maps they attempt to construct to work through the theoretical issues identified above. Hughes seeks to understand black experience in a larger transnational context that remains relevant to local national struggles, and McKay attempts to balance an eclectic cosmopolitanism with the needs for “group aggregation,” his term for strategic essentialism, that can serve specific political purposes. Both attempt to develop new identities for their new global imaginaries despite operating with racial or national language from the old one. And Wright attempts to understand how religious, racial, and national categories created in the First World can be used by Third World leaders to transform global relations and transcend the Three Worlds structure of the Cold War. All struggle with using the language and imagery available from the Western imaginative geography they wish to subvert to create a new geography for the future, one that is informed by a diasporic perspective but is not limited by the contemporary ways in which the diaspora was being defined.

### *The Presence of the Moor*

Within the literary cartographies of Spain created in African American travel narratives, there are repeated representational tactics and images. A central image in these texts, and one that is linked to the ways in which Spain is being mapped, is the figure of the Moor. Images of the Moor find their way into representations of the Spanish people, Spanish history, and Spanish culture. Indeed, I argue that the figure of the Moor becomes a double in these texts for the space of Spain itself; these writers use the Moor as a figure onto which to project relational identity in ways that mirror their use of Spain to redefine a global geographic imaginary. Ultimately, the Moor mediates the ways in which these writers relate to the people and space of Spain and how they define relations to others around the world.

The figure of the Moor is present in a good deal of literature about Spain, including travel writing. It is, however, a figure that is employed in various ways by writers throughout history; this highlights the role of this image as a constructed representational figure, one that shifts in its significance over time and according to various agendas. Travel writing by African American writers is not exceptional in the tendency to use the Moor; the Moor is constructed and mobilized in particular ways in these works, ways that support the goals of mapping diasporic identities in relation to others around the world. Despite the common appearance of the Moor throughout these works, Moorish identity is difficult to pin down. The slipperiness of Moorish identity in the works in this study reflects a longer history of ambiguity in both English language literature and critical work (and in Spanish literature as well).

The term *Moor* has a long and contested history, both as a historical figure and as an image representing various ideas.<sup>32</sup> While it generally has been used to refer to various populations of people who have historically inhabited North Africa, its significance has changed over time. In his article “The Moors?” Ross Brann considers the meaning and significance of Moorish identity in literary works, film, and scholarship. Brann notes that even today the figure is “employed regularly in academic circles and in popular culture without much question or reflection” and “without clarification of who precisely the Moors are” (310).<sup>33</sup> Recounting a history of the uses of the term Moor, he explains that “Andalusi Arabic sources—as opposed to later mudéjar and morisco sources in Aljamiado—neither refer to individuals as Moors nor recognize any such group, community or culture” (310). Moor is a term applied from the outside, by Europeans, yet “unlike relatively stable terms of Roman provenance inherited by Christians such as Arab, Ishmaelite and Saracen,” the significance of the term varies in particular historical moments and shifts over time (311).

Early in the history of al-Andalus, Moor signified “Berber” as a geographic and ethnic identity. Later writing, however, from twelfth- and thirteenth-century Christian kingdoms, demonstrates the “transformation of *Moor* from a term signifying Berber into a general term referring primarily to Muslims (regardless of ethnicity) living in recently conquered Christian lands and secondarily to those residing in what was still left of al-Andalus” (311). In addition to shifting the significance of the term from one geographically-based ethnic group to a broad religious group, this use of the term flattens out the differences

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<sup>32</sup> The complications proliferate if we consider the extended constructions of morisco (a converted Catholic of Muslim heritage living in Iberia) and mudéjar (a Muslim from al-Andalus who remained there after the Reconquest without converting to Christianity).

<sup>33</sup> “[O]ur own cultural artifacts employ the term *Moor* fluidly, alternately referring to race—and specifically to African origin, to Berber as opposed to ‘Arab’ identity—or to a North African or Iberian Muslim religious and cultural identity differentiated from Christian-Spanish” (Brann 310).

between the various ethnic Muslim communities within the Islamic kingdoms throughout the eighth to twelfth centuries, the significant conflict between which contributed to the political upheavals in the Islamic world during that time.

Scholars have also noted other variances in image elicited by the term Moor that stem from combinations of the above meanings. Within thirteenth-century texts, for example, various semantic transformations of the Moor provide occasions in which “the racial dehumanization and religious demonization of Moors” by Europeans “very nearly converge” (Brann 312). Brann and Loomba point to examples of texts in which Moorishness becomes increasingly associated various forms of “blackness;” the Moor is associated, in some cases, with the metaphorical blackness of the soul as an expression of religious prejudice, and, in other cases, with physical blackness associated with the image of Africa, despite the fact that the North African Arab and Berber populations were not necessarily dark-skinned. For Christian readers, then, the Moor indicated not only religious and cultural difference, but also a foreign presence from Africa, one increasingly represented through a physical darkness (Loomba 25-7, 46-9). The Moor’s relation to geography, religion, and racial meanings is complex and changes as the significance of these categories change themselves. For example, the idea of race itself undergoes a variety of changes from the end of the medieval period through the end of the Renaissance and into the eighteenth century. Many early modern scholars have increasingly warned that it is a mistake to draw a direct line between that the notions of scientific biological race that emerge in the nineteenth century and earlier references to race.<sup>34</sup> If the precise conceptions of race differ in significance over time and

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<sup>34</sup>Ralph Bauer points to shifting meanings and uses of race, particularly as they relate to the idea of whiteness, in the context of the eighteenth-century Spanish and British Americas. He locates discussions of whiteness in circum-Atlantic political discourses of creolization and debates surrounding natural history and creole nationalism (Bauer). Ruth Hill, in her recent investigation of the importance of categories of caste, race, and

across cultures, it is important to recognize that the image of the Moor has consistently been associated with that very set of shifting and overlapping categories of identity from the medieval period onwards.

From Spain's purity of blood statutes of 1449 through the sixteenth-century imperial wars and later, the perception of Moorish religious and cultural difference allowed the Castilian kings to create a shifting identity of their own, one based on seemingly nationalistic calls for homogeneity in religion and heritage. In other words, from medieval times through the Renaissance, the figure of the Moor is one through which Europeans define themselves and build their own sense of Europeanness. In fact, as Levering Lewis shows, the term *Europenses*, or Europeans, was coined to describe the identity of Christians after the defeat of Muslim armies in Poitiers in 732 (Lewis 172-3). Henry Kamen views the expulsion of Jews and Moors from Spain as a part of a Castilian political move to consolidate religious and political unity around a single ideology that would serve Castilian monarchs in imperial ventures at home and abroad (59). The presence of Moors was used as a symbolic device to unite an otherwise fragmented Iberian peninsula around the ideology of territorial unity and cultural homogeneity, whether or not these existed in fact and despite the fact that difference can never be eradicated.

This history of scholarship reveals a commonality among European representations of the Moor: as Emily Bartels notes, despite its ambiguous and shifting identity, the Moor is “first and foremost a figure of uncodified and uncodifiable diversity” (5).<sup>35</sup>

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status in the fluid constructions of identity in eighteenth-century Spanish America, also warns us to be wary of projecting nineteenth-century conceptions of biological race onto previous centuries (197-200).

<sup>35</sup>The Moor's difference was so marked yet the terms so indeterminate that it was variously applied, most notably to the newly encountered indigenous peoples of the Americas, who are at times pictured and referred to by the Spanish as the American Moors (Fuchs 7).

## Uses of the Moor: Maurophilia/Maurophobia in European Literature

Given the instability of the figure of the Moor's identity, it is not surprising that the significance and representation of the Moor in literature over the centuries varies depending on the perspective and location from which it is viewed and the identity categories to which it is related. Traditions of maurophilia and maurophobia depend on the purpose writers have for representing this figure, which is itself a construction. When viewed from the developing Catholic Spanish nation, for example, the religious Muslim identity and foreign otherness (whether racialized or not) were often emphasized in support of the creation and consolidation of European Spanish identity. However, in liberal critiques of the blood purity statutes and protests against the infamy label, Moors became exotic or noble figures to be provocatively or nostalgically remembered (Fuchs; Brownlee). As mentioned above, from the Anglo empire struggling to define itself in relation to the Spanish empire, the Moor was often identified as physically black, Africanized, as part of the Anglo empire's attempt to figure the Spanish as morally blackened. Yet there is an Anglo tradition of the Moor as exotic and, again noble, that is associated with a nostalgic view of the Oriental East. The Moor thus becomes a figure in the European imaginative geography which can be constructed in relation to a number of identity categories depending on the time and place from which it is viewed.

The indeterminacy of the Moor as an image is precisely what seems attractive to the African American writers in this study. The Moor, as an unstable marker of difference, is both intimately connected to Spanish identity and available as a canvas upon which to project various ideas of difference. As previously mentioned, African American writers inherit an Anglo-American tradition of representing Spain and, therefore, the Moor. Their

representations will also revise these representations, creating the Moor from the context of their own perspectives, locations, and purposes.<sup>36</sup> The figure of the Moor is manipulated by each of these writers for his or her own purposes—to create similarities between themselves and Africans who once inhabited Spain, to debunk the myth of racial purity in Europe, or to probe the way in which Spain and the rest of the West are connected to the South and East. The Moor is central to mappings of Spain, which is used as a vehicle through which to construct Western Europe as having already been Africanized—that is, to be “Western” is not to be “purely” Northern and white. Yet each of these authors sets up his or her own relationship with Moorishness and Spain, a relationship that is then used to construct their relations to others around the world.

African American travel writing about Spain reveals a space that often functions as the other of Europe and of Africa, yet as part of each, thereby challenging the idea of clear continental divides through its relation to a trans-Mediterranean circuit, including the Middle East and Africa. This travel writing about Spain highlights the importance of travel as a type of wayfinding for individuals and larger societies in need of self-reflection. The ultimate goal of this wayfinding is to develop a new global imaginary that does more than simply soften and rework the old systems of representation and domination that defined much of European travel throughout the modern period. It helps us reflect on ourselves as we position ourselves and our home spaces in relation to others around the globe.

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<sup>36</sup> Timothy Marr observes that the association of the combination of Islam and Africa with the figure of the Moor provided a unique transnational identity available for performance by African Americans through the middle of the twentieth century. Islamism “provided transcultural resources” for writers “because its heterogeneity confounds the continental categories of race and religion that have constituted hegemonic definitions of nation and hemisphere” (524). Marr quotes Dizzie Gillespie’s account of mid-century jazz musicians saying “Man, if you join the Muslim faith, you ain’t colored no more, you’ll be white” (543).

### Summary of Chapters

Chapter 2 examines writing about travel to Spain by two key figures associated with the Harlem Renaissance whose experiences with Spain occurred during the 1930s: Claude McKay and Langston Hughes. In records of their travels (memoirs, poetry, and letters), these writers represent Spain as a location from which larger global issues of their time can be framed and understood. In particular, the work of these writers combines reflections on the Spanish situation in the turbulent 1930s and reflections on U.S. race politics of the same time, creating a commentary on black identity, nationalism, and cosmopolitan/transnational politics. To do this work, they invoke images of the medieval Islamic empire in Spain as the central episode defining Spain and employ the figure of the Moor as a central metaphor for understanding and representing various forms of national and racial identity. In the process of creating such narratives of travel, we can also see these writers recovering a tradition of travel for developing political theory. In particular, Hughes and McKay focus on travel and the resulting engagement with the other—past or present—as a path to engaged reflection on self and home.

Next, Chapter 3 focuses on the travels of the main character in Frank Yerby's 1965 *An Odor of Sanctity: A Novel of Medieval Moorish Spain*. Yerby's novel chronicles the travels of Alaric, a Christian Goth, as he wanders the Iberian peninsula and North Africa during the tumultuous years of Arab-Muslim dominance of Andalusia. Read through the lens of travel writing, this novel exposes the ways in which the experience of travel and cultural exchange can unsettle one's sense of home and self. The novel blurs the boundaries between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East as it maps a trans-Mediterranean geography and culture in which a network of sites of cultural and material exchange tie disparate groups

together in an intimate narrative over an expanse of time. The novel critiques nationalism, among other essentialist identities, as the character restlessly roams this territory in search of the component ingredients through which to craft and express a sense of an authentic self, futilely attempting to stabilize boundaries and categories that stubbornly refuse to remain static. Even the form of Yerby's novel resists clear categorization by genre, developing and abandoning the conventions of a number of possible genres—the popular romance, the action-adventure tale, historical fiction—leaving the hybrid format of the travel narrative as a convenient way to conceive of the plot.

Chapter 4 explores the self-conscious use of travel and the travel narrative as a tool for developing political wisdom in Richard Wright's *Pagan Spain* (1957), his book-length travelogue of his trips to Spain. When read through the lens of his other travel narratives of the 1950s, specifically his 1956 *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, *Pagan Spain* is revealed as a complex investigation of the modern heritage of religious, racial, and national identities as they were manifesting themselves during the height of the Cold War. Wright uses his travel narrative of Spain, a Western European nation, to challenge the three world concept of the map that was then dominating Cold War politics in the hopes of attempting to envision a new system of global relations that could escape the Cold War's binaries and its limited political options. He uses his rendering of the Spanish nation as a meditation on Western identity, ultimately mapping Spain at the heart of the modern European colonial identity and presenting its fate under Franco as a cautionary tale for Cold War powers. Wright further argues for the need to understand our methods of relating to others as central to any construction of identity that is meaningful.

Finally, Chapter 5 will turn to a contemporary African American travel narrative of Spain that rewrites earlier travel writing about Spain. It will compare Lori Tharps's *Kinky Gazpacho* (2008) to the earlier writing to help shed light on what they were struggling to map—the way race and nation intersect variously and variably in the identities of a diasporic people. Tharps's narrative begins with different assumptions about the intersection of race and nation that affect her relation to and representation of Spain. The effects of travel, however, are such that towards the end of the book, reflection on these categories begins to lead her into the same global imaginary developed in the previous chapters.

These chapters build on one another to show various approaches to and stages in a relationship to Spain that demands new ways of understanding individual identity in relation to a global imaginary that is meaningful in the twenty-first century.

## Chapter 2: “Moors as dark as me”: Mapping Spain in the 1930s

Maps are not records of what each part of the world actually is; regardless of historical and cultural context, maps are careful imaginings of what people have wanted the world to be.

Matthew H. Edney, “Mapping Parts of the World”

### *Spain as an Archive for Black Intellectuals*

Renowned bibliophile Arthur Schomburg, whose collection of materials formed the foundation of the Schomburg Center for Research into Black Culture, wrote a number of articles published in the late 1920s in *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* that drew on his trip to Europe in the summer of 1926. These articles refer to his travels in Spain, specifically his time in Granada, Sevilla, and Madrid. Rather than a set of generalized reflections on his travels, his series documents the contributions of people of African descent to fifteenth-through seventeenth-century Spanish culture and history, contributions that he argues are evident in the landscape and institutions of the country. These articles detail the accomplishments of Spanish thinkers, writers, and artists of African descent. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, they reveal that this information is available and acknowledged in countries other than the U.S.

Schomburg's essays narrate his walks through major cities in search of artifacts that reflect the presence of great figures of African descent. From his time in Granada, Schomburg recounts walking through the university where "one may still see the minutes attesting the fact that a black man, Juan Latino, received here, on May 4, 1546, his B.A. degree before the archbishop of Grenada, the learned men of Spain and the elite of the city" ("In Quest" 153). He notes seeing the home of Leo Africanus, "born of Negro parentage at Granada" (Schomburg, "Negroes" 70) and the home of the "Negro priest who was seen now and then with Latino and the King of Spain walking through the streets of Granada" (Schomburg, "In Quest" 153). And, of course, he describes the beauty of the notorious Alhambra, where he "saw in the sunshine the legacies of that civilization, which grew luxuriantly like an exotic plant native, yet foreign, to Spain. . . . and the mastery work of the Moorish artisans and the inscriptions of the Koran, mute with eloquence" (Schomburg, "In Quest" 153). Seeing the Alhambra was like "drinking and eating nectar and ambrosia," claims Schomburg, extending his gratitude to Washington Irving for his role in encouraging the Spanish government to preserve "for posterity" these "architectural jewels of Africa" ("In Quest" 153).

From his trip to Sevilla, Schomburg reports on a quarter of the city that housed a black community in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He describes the community's history, church, and leading members as he walks through the streets, pointing to landmarks named after these figures, including photos. He even excitedly recounts meeting with one of this community's descendants. Schomburg does all of this, all the while emphasizing one of the main sub-topics of the essay—the respect shown to these figures by their contemporaries in the Spanish church and the respect paid by twentieth-century Spanish culture for their

memory as part of the treasure of Spanish history. Indeed after describing the Cathedral of Sevilla as an “imposing” “spiritual sensation,” he describes its baptistery as a “museum of the work of notable painters” (Schomburg, “Negroes” 70), specifically detailing the work of the artist, Sebastian Gomez, also known as the Mulatto de Murillo, and other works that include black subjects. The presence of paintings by Gomez in this “Temple of Spain, dedicated to the service of the Eternal God” is for Schomburg a matter for “future generations of black people to rejoice in” (70).

Schomburg’s essays participate in two projects that are important for understanding later 1930s African American travel writing about Spain. First, Schomburg’s discussion of famous historical figures reflects the idea driving his life-long project, outlined in his famous essay “The Negro Digs Up His Past,” that “The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future” (70). They demonstrate a belief, also expressed in the essay, that this history is to be culled from sources around the world, placing a black experience in a global context.<sup>1</sup> And second, written by an important intellectual figure of the time, Schomburg’s essays on Spain participate in opening up Spain as a location of specific interest for black intellectuals. His portrayal of Spain both challenges and draws from popular Anglo-American representations of Spain that configure it as a space associated with a primitive past and exotically influenced by Africa.<sup>2</sup> Because of his historical mission, Schomburg is almost exclusively interested in Spain’s past, but, for him, Spain’s association with Africa is a credit to the nation. In fact, the idea that the Spanish people accept and

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<sup>1</sup> He praises The Negro Society for Historical Research “for succeeding in stimulating the collection from all parts of the world of books and documents dealing with the Negro,” and for bringing “together for the first time cooperatively in a single society African, West Indian and Afro-American scholars” (71).

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1 for further discussion of Anglo and Anglo-American traditions representing Spain.

continue to display past ties with Africa in their cities is exactly what makes it distinct from and a more productive a site for study than the U.S. This representation of Spain as a location through which black subjects can explore their global identities is central for the travel writing about Spain by the two Harlem Renaissance writers—Langston Hughes and Claude McKay—that are the subject of this chapter.

### Representing Spain at the Century's Start

After Schomburg's 1926 European trip, he several times expressed his desire to return to Spain to search archives and museums of Madrid, Seville, and Zaragoza to uncover documents housed there that would fill in the history of the role of Spain as a part of the history of the African diaspora (Sinnette 153). He had even applied to various organizations for funds to support such a trip because he was convinced that research there would “unravel the truth of the historical background of Negroes” (qtd. in Sinnette 154). Schomburg may have been among the most prominent of intellectuals expressing such ideas, but he was not the only scholar engaged in constructing a more comprehensive diasporic history for African Americans. Other scholars were looking abroad, and even looking to Spain and Spanish figures, in this effort.

Valarez B. Spratlin, for example, Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Department of Romance Languages at Howard University from 1931 until 1961, completed his doctoral dissertation in Spanish in 1931, which he later revised, translated, and published in English as *Juan Latino, Slave and Humanist* (1938). Spratlin demonstrated his interest in both figures of African descent in Spain and representations of African figures in Spanish literature, as evidenced in his articles for *The Crisis* and *The Journal of Negro History*. In his

published essays, Spratlin not only analyzes Latino's work but, like Schomburg, shows an interest in the influx of Africans of all types to Spain. Locating his primary interest in a wave of Africans into the "wharves of Seville" as part of the African slave trade (especially those from Guinea from where so many would be enslaved), Spratlin mentions the variety of Africans involved in the "invasions" into Spain over the years: from the Carthaginians of the sixth century b.c.e., to the Moors of the eighth century c.e., to the Guineans and others of the fifteenth century. And like Schomburg, he is interested in the tributes paid to these figures by their contemporary European Spaniards, mentioning Cervantes's tribute to Juan Latino at the beginning of *Don Quixote*: "What more gratifying tribute could be paid to this remarkable Negro than an epitaph written on a page of the world's greatest novel!" (Spratlin, "Juan" 300). "The Negro," claims Spratlin, "to know himself must peer far out over the horizon" (Spratlin, "Negro" 61).

Not only were scholars such as Schomburg and Spratlin doing this work, but there were also those calling for the training of black students in foreign languages specifically so that such work could continue to be done. One of several articles that encouraged travel to Europe or knowledge of Romance languages was W. Napoleon Rivers's essay "Why Negroes Should Study Romance Languages and Literatures," an essay originally delivered at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1933. Rivers's argument has much in common with Schomburg's work. Rivers argued that "one way to obtain this historical knowledge is to know the Romance languages and literatures. For these were the languages and literatures of peoples of western and southern Europe who, after the Greeks and Romans, established the earliest contacts with Africa and its peoples" (Rivers 119). According to Rivers the study of Romance languages would open up

scholarship to sources that, unlike Anglo-American scholarship, did not hide the role of Africa and Africans in the world, as well as adding to the “world of ideas” available to the black student or scholar (119). In fact, Rivers particularly mentions Portugal and Spain as sites and languages of particular interest because of their roles in the slave trade and because they themselves had been “vast melting pots of Latin and African cultures and civilizations” (119). And, also like Schomburg, he suggests that, “although Spain is not a first rate power today,” Spain had housed in its institutions much to contribute to the vast “historical fabric of the Negro,” a contribution that “must not be overlooked” (Rivers 119).

The number of scholars working on this and similar projects abroad clarifies the idea that African American travel can be the expression of an intellectual and political commitment to serve the black community rather than an individual pleasure tour. Any self-discovery attained through travel is politicized as a discovery of a hidden group history or identity. As they move travel into the realm of an intellectual and political activity, these writers represent Spain as a location to be explored for more than traditional “sun and fun” tourism, as exemplified by stories of Jack Johnson on vacation.<sup>3</sup> Spain is recognized as a site for scholarly work and a country that is welcoming to black intellectuals and the topics they would like to explore there.

### *Harlem Renaissance Writers, Spain, and Politics of the 1930s*

Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, two prominent figures of the Harlem Renaissance, both traveled to Spain in the 1930s and published accounts of their experiences in Spain in essays, poems, and travel memoirs. In particular, Hughes published a series of

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<sup>3</sup> A number of articles were published in the *New York Times* during the teens chronicling Johnson’s exploits in Spain during his years in exile in Europe.

articles about the Spanish Civil War in 1937 that later formed the basis of the section on his travels in Spain in his memoir *I Wonder as I Wonder*, and McKay devotes a significant portion of his 1937 memoir *A Long Way from Home* to his travels back and forth between Spain and Morocco in the early thirties. In their accounts of Spain, Hughes and McKay build on the ideas about Spain being circulated at the beginning of the twentieth century to develop a tradition of representations of Spain that recur in African American travel narratives later in the century. Like Schomburg, Hughes and McKay engage in a tradition of travel for developing political theory through critical reflection on self and other, home and abroad. And also as Schomburg had suggested, for these writers Spain provides a counterpoint to the U.S. and a space for African Americans to explore different ways of mapping their relationship to the U.S. and the rest of the world.

Hughes and McKay construct Spain as a location ripe for framing an understanding of larger global issues of their time. To do this they map Spain as a transnational space that acts as a nexus in a system of identifications including race, nation, and religion. To build their literary cartographies of Spain,<sup>4</sup> Hughes and McKay employ the figure of the “Moor,” a figure that can be ascribed various identities, from Spain’s medieval past. The indeterminate nature of this figure allows them to replicate, on an individual body, the way they wish to represent Spain in an alternative imaginative geography. Through a curious blend of reflections on the Spanish situation in the turbulent 1930s and reflections on U.S. race politics of the same time, their mapping of Spain provides a commentary on nationalism, diasporic identity, and the uses of a black transnational politics. The accounts of Hughes and McKay reveal the difficulties of rethinking global relations and identities of race and nation.

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<sup>4</sup> I am drawing on Tally’s concept of “literary cartography” described in Chapter 1 above.

## The context of the 1930s—Spain as Open for Representation

McKay and Hughes's travels in Spain correspond to two extraordinarily important political events in twentieth-century Spanish history. McKay travels in Spain, and Spanish Morocco as well, in the early years of the decade of the 1930s, during the prelude to and rise of the Second Republic. He refers to events surrounding the elections held in the spring of 1931, which swept Republican-Socialist candidates into power and led to the departure of King Alfonso XIII. The "new dawn" expected and predicted by many Spaniards at this time was to include sweeping social and economic reform. Hughes's journey, on the other hand, takes place during 1937, in the midst of the bloody Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and during the siege on Madrid. Hughes was, of course, deliberately in a war zone, sent by the *Baltimore Afro-American* to report on the Spanish Civil War for the black press. These two historical moments in the turbulent Spanish 1930s were moments of revolutionary potential in Spain. The first promised significant reform of the class system and political order, and the second was a harbinger of the struggle between democracy and the fascism that would later engulf the rest of Europe. Recognizing the political situation into which these writers enter is important for what these writers see in Spain and how they relate it to the U.S.

For McKay and Hughes, these moments represent a new kind of Spanish exceptionalism, one that fed into the Black Leftist political imagination that a worker's republic free of race consciousness was possible in Spain. McKay counters the stereotypical representations of Spain as backwards socially and politically, defending his preference of Spain, "so medieval and religion-ridden," over France to a French radical friend:

I expected radical changes in Spain sooner than in nationalistic France. That was not prophecy. The thing was in the air; students mentioned it to you on

the café terraces; waiters spoke of it in the pensions and restaurants;  
chauffeurs spoke of their comrades murdered in Morocco by King Alfonso;  
bank clerks said a change was coming soon, and even guides had something to  
say. (249)

Hughes also suggests that Spain might be the crucible in which important battles of class, race, and nation are being fought, battles to which people in the U.S. should be paying attention. He defends his hesitation to leave war-torn Madrid because it compares favorably to the general malaise in the U.S. during the 1930s:

And certainly there were abnormal deprivations plus the normal and great poverty—but not the dull relief W.P.A. kind of worried existence we had at home in Cleveland—with little hope in sight. Here in Madrid—where people had next to nothing—with the guns pointed at them every day to take that little away—they expected soon to have everything. (385)

These kinds of moments, in which the political fate of a nation is up for grabs, are fertile soil for writers. They are moments in which national identity and consequently the nation itself opens up as a fresh space, available for representation, for construction within writers' imaginations. They are able to position themselves in a moment of becoming, in which the nation can be defined in new ways.

#### Diasporic Spain and the Moor

Before looking at the politics these writers are developing in their contemporary moment in Spain, it is useful to consider how a sense of Spain's past is central to their ideas, as it was for Schomburg. Again, for Hughes and McKay, the legacy of "Moorish" Spain is

key for understanding the present of Spain. In Hughes's writing, in particular, this Moorish legacy is the explanation for a hybridity that marks the population of Spain, a hybridity that evolved from the peninsula's connections with North Africa and that had a distinctly racial as well as cultural character. One of Hughes's questions upon arriving in Spain was whether or not Franco's use of the "dark troops" of Morocco had affected the "racial attitudes" of the Spanish people during the Civil War (326-7). Hughes finally determines that it has not created "color prejudice," explaining that "Negroes were not strange in Spain. . . . Distinct traces of Moorish blood from the days of the Mohammedan conquest remain in the Iberian peninsula" (351). He then lists the variety of colors one can see among the Spanish people, from the "pure-blooded Negroes from the colonies in Africa" to the "copper colored Gypsies" (Hughes 351).

Hughes forges racial links between the present inhabitants of Spain, the "Moorish" invaders of Spain from past and present, and contemporary black people. This construction of Spain as already Africanized biologically (as well as culturally) is dependent upon the racial construction of the Moors as physically dark or black as well as African. That is, it draws on a racialized construction of the Moor, one that is not necessarily historically accurate, but carries in this moment great cultural significance. This "darkness" of the Moor is not a negative characteristic; its ongoing presence in Spain has led to racial acceptance, or, as Hughes and McKay describe, a lack of race consciousness that for both authors is desirable.

Hughes and McKay depend on the figure of the Moor to make the connections that they do. Yet this figure is itself difficult to define. Recent analyses of English Renaissance renderings of the Moor explore how Medieval and Renaissance European expressions of race

vacillate between conceptions of cultural or religious difference and biological difference. During the Crusades, for example, both sides were constituted of diverse peoples, but each was seen as a distinct group (Loomba 25). Blackness functioned as a spiritual metaphor, expressing religious prejudice, but as contact with sub-Saharan Africa increased with the slave trade, it increasingly referred to physical blackness as a marker of an inner difference. During the Renaissance, Moorishness, originally designating Muslim identity, became associated with physical blackness despite the fact that the North African Arab-Berbers were not necessarily dark-skinned. The essence of the Moorish difference is remarkably unstable—this figure can be Muslim/Arab or Black/African—resulting in a multivalent conception of the Moor (Loomba 93).

With this indeterminacy at the heart of the figure of the Moor, it becomes a symbol that can be used for various political purposes. The writers in this study all develop representations of Spain that intimately involve this figure in ways that suit their own political purposes, purposes that often link racial politics of the U.S. to issues abroad, the identities of those at home to those abroad. The Moor, then, becomes a central figure for creating a global imaginary that can frame theoretical explorations for such national and international tensions, particularly those linked to the idea of an African Diaspora.

### *Hughes in Spain: Mapping a Transnational Diasporic Perspective*

Of the Harlem Renaissance writers who visited Spain in the 1930s, the one most popularly associated with it is Langston Hughes. Hughes traveled to Spain in 1937 to cover the International Brigades for the *Baltimore Afro-American*. In the introduction to *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War*, Robin D.G. Kelley places the involvement of African

Americans in the Spanish Civil War squarely within the context of the American Communist Party and the development of the Black Left. In particular, Kelley's analysis points to the Black Left's perspective on Franco's fascism in Spain as an extension of the internationalist black response to Mussolini's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia. And certainly Hughes's own reporting of interviews with black volunteers confirms this internationalist perspective. His series of reports published in the African American press, and later incorporated into his autobiography *I Wonder as I Wander*,<sup>5</sup> begins with the goal of explaining why "a Negro [would] come way over to Spain to help solve Spain's problems—perhaps with his very life" (Hughes 243). Hughes highlights leftist responses to this question in the interviews he reports: one young Guinean tells him that fighting against Franco and for the Republic "stands for a liberal colonial policy with a chance for my people in Africa to become educated" (329), and an American college student explains, "Negro college students must realize the connection between the international situation and our problems at home. . . . Right here in Madrid, I've seen how Fascists destroy schools and libraries" (368). Fascism is being associated not only with colonial and class rule but also with racism that is associated with oppression in the U.S. Fighting in Spain was indeed being equated with fighting "against the kind of people who oppress Negroes in the American South" (Hughes 329).

Yet Hughes's discussion of what he sees in Spain is not a mere parroting of the Communist Party's perspective on the Civil War. His theoretical perspective develops beyond a simple party line. Hughes uses his perspective on the Spanish situation to reflect on the interrelationships among local, national, and international political struggles, particularly struggles that involve racial identities. His work attempts to create a geopolitics of black struggle from a global perspective that does not erase local particularities. To move

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<sup>5</sup> Hughes incorporated several of his articles, word for word, into his memoir.

towards this idea, Hughes attempts to reconfigure the map of global relations that emphasizes national borders, to create an imaginative geography that maps black struggles and the Spanish struggle together in a way that instead emphasizes contiguities without erasing the distinctive individual experiences. To create this map, Hughes relies on the central image of the Moor as an embodied representation on an individual scale of the geographic identity he is creating for Spain on a global scale. Hughes's writing about Spain, however, is evidence of the difficulty he faces in this project.

In Hughes's reporting and poetry from the Spanish Civil War, the Moor appears in several contexts: the Moor appears as the ancestor of the modern Spaniard, as previously mentioned; as the Moroccan conscript fighting in Franco's Army of Africa; and as family of black people around the world, including the U.S. The flexibility of the Moor's identity is central to his work as is its association with a variety of types of differences, that is, the ease with which it can be associated with many and diverse "others." This identity functions to build alliances in a way that race or class alone cannot because it crosses so many boundaries between East and West and between North and South.

In "Letter from Spain: Addressed to Alabama" (353-4), the most well-known of his Spanish political poems, one can observe a complicated reflection on the issues outlined above.<sup>6</sup> This dialect ballad is framed as a letter from an African American fighter for the republican army, Johnny, to a correspondent at home in Alabama, whom he refers to as "Brother." The narrative in the poem dramatizes a conversation between this soldier and a "wounded Moor" from Franco's army. The poem narrates Johnny's coming to consciousness of the similarity between his own situation and that of the Moroccan soldier,

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<sup>6</sup> This poem was first published in the *Volunteer for Liberty* in 1937 and subsequently republished in *The Daily Worker* in 1938.

despite being on opposite sides in the war. In this poem, we can trace Hughes's complex arrangement of spatial relations through Johnny's contact with a "Moor." The poem also demonstrates the successes and failures of such a mapping.

The poem opens with Johnny's account of meeting a Moor, wounded and dying, after a battle. In his study of this poem's black international politics, Michael Thurston observes that Johnny instantly connects with the Moor through race (129).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, several times throughout the poem Johnny likens himself to the Moor through color, twice referring to the Moroccan soldier as being "just as dark as me" (2, 24) despite ironically being on the opposite side in the war. Johnny is moved to ask the Moor why he is "fighin' against the free" (4)—a question that might be reframed to ask Johnny why he is in Spain as well. When he learns that the soldier was "nabbed" in his land and taken to Spain to fight, suggesting that he been conscripted as a "pawn" of the Francoist forces,<sup>8</sup> Johnny's exchange with the Moor opens up a deeper set of associations. As Johnny looks at the Moor dying in a Spanish town, he also looks "across to Africa / And seen foundations shakin'" (19-20). In the following series of lines, Hughes maps the ways Spain is linked to other spaces:

For if a free Spain wins this war,  
The colonies, too, are free—  
Then something wonderful can happen  
To them Moors as dark as me.  
I said, I guess that's why old England

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<sup>7</sup> Thurston also places Hughes's work in the larger context of the political and aesthetic factions of Harlem, explaining Hughes's own effort to develop a racial and class revolutionary politics that would transcend this local Harlem infighting. (Thurston 102-5).

<sup>8</sup> In his report "Hughes Finds Moors Being Used as Pawns by Fascists in Spain," Hughes attempts to create a sympathetic portrait of Moroccan troops being used in Franco's army as African subjects of colonization (Hughes 1).

And I reckon Italy, too,  
Is afraid to let Republic Spain  
Be good to me and you—  
Because they got slaves in Africa—  
And they don't want 'em to be free  
Listen, Moorish prisoner—  
Here, shake hands with me! (21-32)

The language of the soldier being “nabbed” resonates with the language of slavery, which is used later in the poem to describe colonial rule in both North and sub-Saharan Africa. This language would, of course, invoke the transatlantic slave trade for the “Brother” in the poem reading it in Alabama as well as the American reader. As Johnny’s concern shuttles between the Spanish conflict, the dying Moroccan soldier, colonization in Africa, and racism in the U.S., he collapses the various spaces related to these national identities. The intimate connection Johnny feels to the dying soldier, his ostensible adversary in the war, is one based on the connection between the spaces at hand—Europe, Africa, and the Americas—that can be traced back in time to the transatlantic slave trade. Yet in his contemporary moment, the multiple figures meeting in Spain in the poem have the chance to redefine these traumatic relations by bonding together in fighting for Spain. Johnny’s encounter with the Moor, through whom he has this vision, is central to his conception of his place in a broader global struggle and his ability to speak about it to his brothers at home.

Brent Hayes Edwards cautions us about simplifying Hughes’s vision in this poem. Edwards points out that Johnny can understand what the wounded Moor says only through a translator, and his moment of recognition is undermined by the death of the soldier at the end

of the poem (695-7). Edwards astutely draws our attention to Hughes's awareness of difference within diaspora and the difficulties of communication across national borders. Yet the poem allows for the transformation of Johnny through his travel to Spain and his conversation with the Moor, even if it required translation. Translation, here, is necessary in order to facilitate communication, to facilitate connection between people. The potential that travel offers would fail without it. Through his act of relating to the Moor, determining both similarities and difference, he defines his own identity. The Moor's shifting racial/national identity against the background of a nation attempting to redefine itself in new terms allows Hughes to build a series of connections and alliances in his attempt to articulate a broader geopolitics through the local conflict in Spain.

After Hughes, with some regret, leaves Spain and crosses into France, he reflects on borders: "What a difference a border makes: on one side of an invisible line, food; on the other side, none. On one side, peace. On the other side, war" (399). At first, this reinforces the arbitrariness of borders as "invisible line[s]," especially given the merged spaces he establishes in his map of struggles he is witnessing around the world. And yet, he notices the material effects of such a border: "On one side, peace. On the other side, war." He continues his contemplation of borders through a repeated image of tightrope walking that occurs directly after his border crossing:

I wondered about borders and nationalities and war. . . . In the last few years I had been all around the embattled world and I had seen people walking tightropes everywhere—the tightrope of color in Alabama, the tightrope of transition in the Soviet Union, the tightrope of repression in Japan, the tightrope of fear of war in France—and of war itself in China and in Spain—

and myself everywhere on my tightrope of words. Anybody is liable to fall off a tightrope in any land, I thought, and may God help you if you fall the wrong way. (400)

In this final passage of his section on Spain and near the end of his travel memoir, Hughes, on his “tightrope of words,” expresses the desire to develop a perspective through which to accommodate the equivalences he establishes between the struggles he is witnessing around the world. Hughes integrates black Americans and Africans among many others into his map of Spain during the Spanish struggle. All of these people are flowing into Spain as a node in a network connecting a series of locations in which similar political struggles—anti-racist struggle, anti-fascist struggle, anti-colonial struggle—are occurring. Hughes uses his portrait of Spain in an attempt to create a map in which he can balance the totalizing force of equivalence of these struggles on a global scale with the particularity of the local struggles themselves. The figure of the Moor in the context of the Spanish Civil War is central to Hughes’s walk on his tightrope of words. The Moor embodies, if only for a brief moment, the potential he maps in Spain—the existence of a nexus of systems of identifications that allows a series of connections and alliances to be built.

*McKay’s Spain: An “antique bridge between Africa and Europe”*

In his travel memoir *A Long Way from Home* (1937) and city poems,<sup>9</sup> Claude McKay, like Hughes, uses Spain as a location through which to reimagine connections between various people and places around the world and to simultaneously reflect upon racial politics in the U.S. McKay’s representations similarly draw upon the indeterminate figure of the

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<sup>9</sup> For more on McKay’s “Cities” cycle of poetry, see Maxwell.

Moor, yet his approach maps both Spain and the Moor in a way that clarifies what they represent: a remapping of the global imaginary that has dominated Western thinking since the development of early modern European cartography. McKay notes an “African streak” in Spanish culture that whets his appetite for visiting Africa. Then, when he does travel to Africa, he expresses a longing to return to Spain (249). Presence in one location and culture crystallizes a perspective on the other even as they are intimately tied to each other. Within the narration of his movements between the two spaces, McKay figures the relationship between Spain and Africa as a cultural conversation, an exchange of ideas and influence over time amidst colonial enterprises. In addition, McKay broadens the scope of the conversation by demonstrating that it encompasses a larger geographical area, including vast stretches to the east (Baghdad), south (sub-Saharan Africa), north (Europe), and west (Americas). McKay’s representation of any one location, then, is always defined through its relation to spaces around it.

McKay’s city poems, several of which he includes in his memoir, illustrate the geographical imaginary at the heart of his method of representing Spain. “Tetuán,” for example, chronicles the history of empire and exchange between North Africa and Spain (236). The poem begins not with a vision of Tetuán, as one would expect, but with a vision of the Alhambra in Granada, the location of the Islamic empire’s last stronghold in the Iberian peninsula:

The conquering Moor an homage paid to Spain  
And the Alhambra lifted up its towers!  
Africa’s fingers tipped with miracles,  
And quivering with Arabian designs. (1-4)

In these lines, the invasion of Spain by North Africans is transformed into a “tribute” to the peninsula, and the physical mark left by the invading force, the Alhambra, is praised for its beauty. The construction of this palace is represented as an African miracle on European soil, one whose inspiration was not solely from the South (Africa), but also from an East (Arabia) that had already penetrated Africa. When Tetuán is finally introduced in the second half of the poem, McKay envisions a city built at the end of the fifteenth century by refugees from the Catholic conquest of Andalucía: “a fort of struggle and strife, / Where chagrined Andalusian Moors retired” (10-11). Yet rather than a humble retreat, this city is a “repaid . . . tribute” from Spain that brings to it “a fountain bubbling with new life” and “filled its sparkling with flamenco laughter” (9, 12, 14). This final image is of a beautiful “mosaic,” a blending of the two cultures already themselves blended.

One of the effects of McKay’s poem is the representation of a space that is a “mosaic” combination of cultures over time; in his memoir he describes Spain as “the antique bridge between Africa and Europe” (237). These spaces are forever linked through the circulation of goods, cultures, ideas, and people that makes distinguishing the West from the Rest impossible—and undesirable. He brings this contact into the political present when, for example, he recalls being in Morocco in 1931 when King Alfonso abdicated. In Tetuán, he “witnessed a wonderful demonstration of amity and fraternity between the native Moorish and civilian Spanish populations” (249). In this instance, the colonizers and colonized are able to celebrate together the coming of Republican ideals. McKay paints this exchange in surprisingly positive terms—surprising because he is, after all, representing a series of violent imperial invasions. Rather than picturing North African/Muslim invasion into the Iberian peninsula or the violent Spanish colonial return to North Africa as violent takeovers,

McKay focuses instead the beauty the mixed cultures and arts leave behind. McKay, though certainly not condoning imperial violence, looks at the beauty that has arisen from the migrations of peoples that have accompanied these imperial acts, setting much of post-colonial politics on its head.

In a poetic tribute to “Fez” (McKay, *Complete* 226), McKay also connects Spain to the Near East. McKay begins the poem with another displacement of cities: “Mine eyes saw Fez, my heart exclaimed Baghdad / In Africa” (1-2). Strikingly, the poem about the “heart of Morocco” ends with a vision of the city that links its “beauty African in shape and form, / With glowing fire of Andalusian eyes” (13-14). He paints a similarly vivid (if not thoroughly Orientalized) version of Fez in his memoir:

In Fez I felt that I was walking all the time on a magic carpet. . . . I was invited to princely marriage feasts to eat *cous-cous* from the common dish with stately old “turbans,” to drink *thé a la menthe* in cool gardens, to intimate *flamenco* dancing of fatmas in the *garconnieres* of *fondouks*. . . . For my days were fully occupied in sampling the treasures of the city; . . . following the Afro-Oriental bargaining; feeling the color of the accent of the story-tellers in the market places. . . . For the first time in my life I felt myself singularly free of color consciousness. (229-30)

McKay figuratively and linguistically demonstrates a “magic carpet ride” through an Afro-Euro-Oriental marketplace, a space of so much color that he ironically finally feels “free of color consciousness.”

## Network Mapping: The Trans-Mediterranean to the Americas

Through this series of poems mapping a landscape around the Mediterranean, McKay subverts the conceptual map that uses the Mediterranean to divide North from South and East from West, that is, the tradition of modern European cartography that designates continental land masses as discrete entities. In its place, McKay provides a map that uses Spain as an example of a larger phenomenon taking place around the Mediterranean; it is a site from which we can view the circulation of people, culture, and ideas around the region. This map of a trans-Mediterranean<sup>10</sup> is flexible and reflective of change over time. His ability to move back and forth in space throughout the network he maps, even if only in imagination, brings to the fore a focus on the multidirectional flows of exchange that have occurred throughout a long history—each node of this network becoming one center of in-betweenness, rising and ebbing in importance over time as well. McKay maps a network of interlocal, interactive contexts that have the potential to transform us and our connections to others in the world.

Interestingly, McKay's map, if it has any particular geographic orientation, seems to reorient us towards the southeast as if to reject the European version of colonization as a civilizing process led by and towards the West. The "West," if one could even separate this entity, is only a brief historical moment embedded in a long history of global markets, global circulations of ideas, products, and people. Though no supporter of colonial politics, McKay nevertheless appreciates the cultures created through migrations of people and the beauty that cultural mixing can bring, and his map questions the belief in essentially "different" civilizations or cultures whose fates or futures are determined independently. Modern national borders cannot hold against the power of such a history of migrations that, despite

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<sup>10</sup> See the discussion of the trans-Mediterranean in Chapter 1.

the violence of empire, surprisingly does have one positive outcome: McKay notes the beauty of what can be created when difference is encountered.

From this perspective, one can understand McKay's insistence on his own cosmopolitanism throughout his narrative.<sup>11</sup> But it also makes the ending of his memoir curious. In the final chapter of his memoir, "On Being a Minority," McKay delivers a lecture on the need for black Americans to develop what he calls a "group spirit," what seems like a kind of nationalism that would be antithetical to his own professed cosmopolitanism. He begins by reflecting on what he has noticed in his travels: "Wherever I traveled in Europe and Africa I was impressed by the phenomenon of the emphasis on group life, whether the idea behind it was the Communist co-operative or Fascist collective or regional autonomy" (266). He begins to consider the political usefulness of such a group life, explaining that "even the dictatorships were making concessions to the strong awakened group spirit of the peoples," referring even to concessions the Primo de Rivera government was making to Basque, Catalan, and Andalusian nationalists (266).

But, McKay says, turning his attention to the American scene, "there is very little group spirit among Negroes . . . [they] sadly lack a group soul":

Negroes do not understand the difference between group segregation and group aggregation . . . . Except where they are forced against their will, Negroes in general prefer to patronize white institutions and support white causes in order to demonstrate their opposition to segregation. (267)

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<sup>11</sup> McKay tells a story of being accosted by a representative of the British consulate about whether he was British or American. He responds that he is an "internationalist." When asked what that meant he answered that it meant he was "a bad nationalist" (231). In *Black Empire*, Michelle Stephens argues that McKay, a naturalized American citizen who was born and raised in Jamaica and who spent much of his life traveling, lacks a clear national identity. This lack rather than being seen as a limit can function as an enabler of free movement and anticipates theories of postmodern migrancy (Stephens 131-7).

It would seem here that McKay's American politics is contrary to the world he was endorsing. But the rest of the passage bears out the connection he is making between the shifting associations among individual cities on the networked map as they change over time and his notion of a "black" identity or group spirit. His notion of group identity is not simply racial but political: "language groups, labor groups, racial groups, class groups. Certainly no sane group desires public segregation and discrimination. But it is a clear historical fact that different groups have won their social rights only when they developed a group spirit and strong group organization" (267). Here we see a theory of a strategic use of identity, one that is developed in the context of a number of social and historical forces acting on the individual, but one that is ultimately to be transcended and made irrelevant.

McKay seems to suggest that it is expedient to capitalize on one or more of the identities to which one might relate for political purposes in a particular context with the goal of eventually transcending that identity. If not Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism" (214), his suggestion bears a resemblance to what some historians refer to as a "community of interest" in which the community is built around a shared specific political interest rather than any sense of a long-term affiliation (Potter 935). As such, the identity of this kind of group would be flexible. The surfacing of one of these communities and its eventual recession resemble McKay's mapping of cities on a network; the cities are complex combinations of cultures that rise in importance and then fade in the fluid movements of exchange around the Mediterranean network map.

*Recuperating a Tradition of Travel—Mapping Global Relations through Spain*

Schomburg, Hughes, and McKay define theoretical and political stakes in their travel writing about Spain in the early twentieth century, helping us to see the value of recovering a tradition of travel for ethical and political purposes. More than simply an individual leisure activity, travel and thoughtful reflections on that travel are politically charged activities, activities that can be encouraged for ethical reasons. This in many ways reflects the ancient Greek concept of *theoria*, discussed by Roxanne Euben in *Journeys to the Other Shore*, in which travel could be the “practice of the pursuit of knowledge about others and oneself by way of literal and imaginative contrasts with seemingly alien lands, peoples, and institutions” (Euben 15).<sup>12</sup> This is important for us in thinking through what travel can offer in terms of critical self-reflection.

This chapter has revealed a tradition of African American travel writing that arises from the creative interaction between the political work enacted in the mapping of an alternative imaginative geography and the personal transformation that occurs in the act of mapping itself. For Hughes and McKay travel provides the critical distance needed for reflection on how to conceive of diasporic identities in relation to national and international or cosmopolitan identities. To work through these reflections, Hughes and McKay’s travel writing about Spain must counter the imaginative geography inherited from early modern European colonial conceptions of the world. That is, they must challenge a conception of the world in which relations between people are mapped and defined based on stereotypical identities correlated with specific bounded geographical reference points (Africanness, Westernness, Americanness, etc.) and are arranged in a particular hierarchy. The difficulty

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<sup>12</sup> For more on travel studies and the concept of *theoria*, see Chapter 1.

they face is in how to remap a world in a way that can allow for the local contexts of lived experience but does not replicate these constructed regional and racial identities.

Hughes attempts to explore and articulate a transnational vision of the world that could accommodate the collapsing of Spanish identity with Black Alabamian identity. For Hughes to conceptualize such an identity, he relies on the figure of the Moor to embody various aspects of each identity he associates with Spain. The Moor can be, for Hughes, the colonial subject, a black man, and the ancestor of the Spaniard, depending on the context. The Moor, therefore, is an aid for Hughes in envisioning a Spain in which a variety of participants aligned in struggle could transcend race consciousness as the result of their affinities.

McKay constructs a map that shows the fluidity of peoples and cultures in a trans-Mediterranean context, the body of water resonating with this fluid movement. For him nationalisms are not to be understood as particular states that have distinct origins and characteristics, but as a way of conceiving of a community of interest strategically. These communities, and the individuals in them, are always to be defined in relation to those around them. Yet these shared interests are not to become concretized into reified identities.

For both Hughes and McKay movement of people through culturally constructed space is important. Just as they use travel to provide the occasion of defining themselves in relation to others, they seem to suggest this as a necessary, ongoing process. The position of the self is important in creating the network maps they suggest, yet the self can only be positioned in relation to the flows around it. The selves in these maps change as the context in which they find themselves changes. This concept of identity as always in formation, as constantly changing in relation to those around us, captures what is embodied in Hughes's

Moor. In addition, the categories and the others with which we are identifying ourselves are constantly in motion as well, as reflected in the fluidity of the map that McKay constructs. We might strategically employ these identities, but they are in flux, continually changing with local contexts. The cities he maps are always changing—the cultures with which they are identifying themselves metamorphosing. The individual, then, like the city, is always in the process of becoming in ways that are meaningful through relations to others, and the character of how we relate to others remains the crucial aspect of identity.

## Chapter 3: A “brief identity granting hiatus”: Frank Yerby’s *Novel of Moorish Spain* and the Trans-Mediterranean

In rendering space inert the map becomes a monument to the ultimately unrealizable *desire* for the permanence of boundaries and perfect stability both territorial and political.

Peta Mitchell, *Cartographic Strategies of Postmodernity*

### Mapping Yerby’s *Novel as Travel Writing*

Frank Yerby (1916-1991), author of 33 novels and the first African American to publish a best-seller, built his career crafting popular novels to appeal to a broad audience. Yerby nevertheless integrated painstaking historical research into his novels, taking his audience around the world and through hundreds of years of history. His novels’ sensational plots are set in locations that range from the antebellum South, to nineteenth-century Africa, to first-century Rome, to ancient Greece. Though he publically repudiated “political” or social protest fiction,<sup>1</sup> Yerby was among those African American writers of the mid-twentieth century who chose to live abroad rather than remain in a segregated U.S. An expatriate in Spain from the mid-fifties until his death, it is not surprising that Spain and its

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<sup>1</sup> Of his early work Yerby said, “The idea dawned that to continue to follow the route I had mapped out for myself was roughly analogous to shouting one’s head off in a Mammoth Cave” (Yerby, “How and Why” 145).

colorful history became the subject for one of his novels. In 1965, Yerby published *An Odor of Sanctity: A Novel of Moorish Spain*. Set in the ninth century, this novel chronicles the life and travels of the main character, Alaric Teudisson, the son of a Visigothic count, against the backdrop of the *convivencia* in Muslim-ruled al-Andalus. Yerby's *Novel of Moorish Spain* provides a fictional account of the cultural and political exchanges of the period by following the main character's encounters with various Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities in the Iberian peninsula, including the court of Emir Abd al Rahman II. From there Yerby takes us on a tour around the Mediterranean, into North Africa, and back to al-Andalus as he dramatizes Alaric's struggle to define his faith and self in the midst of such difference.

Labeled the "prince of pulpsters" (Turner 569), Yerby wrote novels that could be classified as examples of various popular genres, including the heroic journey, the popular romance, and the historical novel.<sup>2</sup> Yet *An Odor of Sanctity* resists fitting neatly into any of these categories. Though much of the novel resembles the classic hero's journey, the main character never is able to return to a clear or discernable home, and he dies at the end without having achieved the understanding that was object of his journey. And though filled with seductions and a quest for love, the novel does not end as a romance novel should. The main character, Alaric, is married to a woman he cannot stand, and, as his family falls apart, he dies for a cause in which he does not believe. So while the novel at times appears as if it might adhere to each of these genres, it fails to embody any of them well. The novel comes closest to fitting the form of a historical novel. In what remains one of the most thoughtful analyses of Yerby's work, Darwin T. Turner argues that Yerby creates "anti-romantic"

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<sup>2</sup> Yerby, himself, called them costume novels. He explains that he resists the label historical since so much of the history ends up on the "cutting room floor," where he says it belongs since a novelist's first aim should be to entertain. At other times he complains that they cut the guts out in favor of more sex (Yerby, "How and Why" 145).

historical fiction to “debunk” popular historical beliefs. The emotional impulses that led him to begin his career as a social protest writer resurface in his use of existentialist outsider characters plunged into wild and thrilling plots, interrupted by “digressive essays” discussing history: “Ideas—bitter ironies, caustic debunking, painful gropings for meaning—writhe behind the soap-opera facade of his fiction” (Turner 570).

In the case of *An Odor of Sanctity*, the novel becomes increasingly historical as the novel progresses and fails to produce the endings required by the other popular genres. The last chapters place the main character in the middle of the Christian martyr movements in 852 c.e. and incorporate a number of historical figures in the action, including several well-known priests who encouraged this movement. The novel writes our fictional main character, Alaric, into the history of the 852 Metropolitan Council in Cordoba that was convened by leading Church authorities to rule on whether to condemn those Christians who deliberately spoke in public against the prophet (a crime that was punishable by death under the Islamic rule) so that they could become martyrs. The novel has Alaric speak in front of the council, but the narrator tells the reader that what he said was not written down. Rather than continuing the pretense of the novel as history and leaving his words unspoken, the narrative speaks for Alaric by supplying what he *might have* said. This ironically occurs just after the narrator has chastised chroniclers of history for digressing from the “facts” of history, claiming that those who do so provide “evidence of mankind’s incurable desire to rewrite history, reshape it—after brutal fact cannot any longer give the lie to his dreaming” (555). Of course the narration of the novel itself, even according to its own fictional world, is guilty of the same thing, speculating on what its character said rather than sticking to the facts.

The novel continues to wrestle with its claimed status as history, especially at the very end. The final pages of the novel, which relate the series of events leading to the death of the main character, move in and out of the language of legend and myth. Twice, while recounting fantastic events (one character's hair turns white in a single moment, a crowd of people seem blinded in another) the narrator refers to "legend" before pausing to correct this move: "But for legend, Reader, here we have no place; he who treats of more than totally verifiable fact, exists forever in a state of venial sin. Let us, therefore, turn once more to history, begging your indulgence for yet another while" (561). But both times, the narrator returns to what the legend says anyway. The novel is fiction masquerading as history that devolves into legend. While it may debunk popular versions of history, it also engages in deeper postmodern debates about the nature of historical writing and its relation to the "real" or factuality.<sup>3</sup> It cannot provide a "correct" counter-history to popular versions of history, only yet another interpretation of history that can be placed in relation to other narratives already existing.

Because the novel refuses to settle easily into any fixed genre, I argue for the utility of reading the novel as travel writing. Travel can be thought of as a topos through which works that encompass a variety of generic forms can be productively read.<sup>4</sup> In *An Odor of Sanctity* travel is not only a significant theme of the story, but it also functions as a primary mechanism through which the plot develops, the main character evolves, and ideas are expressed and shaped. Many of Yerby's novels are preoccupied with the capacity of the individual (often a renegade anti-hero) to carve out his or her own way in life in accordance with his or her own desires and sense of morality rather than simply conforming to general

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Herzberger; Linehan for postmodern debates about the nature of Spanish history.

<sup>4</sup> For more on defining travel writing, see Chapter 1.

societal norms (Hill 145). This novel delves more deeply into the development of the main character as he uses travel to help him define a clear sense of self and tenets by which to live. Rather than tracing the consequences for an already developed individual who has chosen not to conform to society, this novel investigates the ways in which the individual comes to an understanding of the self and what he or she chooses as a way of life through the act of travel. Read through this lens, then, the novel ultimately sheds light on two contested practices that are central to much travel writing: first, the production and representation of difference associated with the other, and, second, definition of the terms in which one judges that difference and our ability to understand it.<sup>5</sup>

The plot of Yerby's *An Odor of Sanctity* centers primarily on the development of the main character, Alaric, especially his struggle to define his own identity in a changing world. Just as the form of the novel evolves throughout, Alaric's sense of self changes every time he engages the other in his travels. To explain the difference between himself and another he must attempt to define each. This has the effect of allowing the main character to grow in ways he could not at home, yet it also proves to be disorienting and threatening to the ways in which he was raised to understand the world. Alaric's travels induce him to probe his own ethnic nationalism, his ideas about race, and eventually to question his faith, the cornerstone of his identity. Through Alaric's exposure to the difference he experiences outside of his home, Yerby forces his character and his readers to reconfigure the traditional geographic imaginary of Europe in relation to the rest of the world. The novel unfolds as Alaric attempts to reconfigure a geographic imaginary that accounts for what he sees and to reintegrate himself into the world in a meaningful way. Yerby's novel tracks what happens to a character when he attempts to live in a community that recognizes and includes difference, a

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the contested nature of this function of travel writing, see Lisle.

community that itself is undergoing constant change. Yerby makes us aware of the provisional yet parallel ways in which individual, community, and national identities are formed and how we might reimagine our connections to these identities. While his character, Alaric, struggles with how to accomplish this, and in the end appears to fail, his narrative does give some clues about how we might better understand ourselves and our relations to others. This is demonstrated in Alaric's role as mediator among his family members and his fascination with translating.

*The Effects of Travel—Dismantling Nationalism*

*An Odor of Sanctity* follows Alaric on his travels through the Iberian peninsula, from his home in a Gothic community of the North to the heart of the Muslim empire in Córdoba, and around the Mediterranean through North Africa. At the novel's start, Alaric, as the son of a Gothic noble, is located at the heart of the power structure of his own community. Early in the novel, however, we can hear Yerby's "debunking" of the northern European history that presents the idea of spaces North as more civilized and advanced than the South. Alaric's interactions with those he perceives as other when he travels reflect the dramatic contact of cultures at the time as well as the dramatic effects contact has on the traveler. His exposure to others forces a radical assessment and redefinition of his home culture and sense of self. His travels through the Muslim empire in southern Iberia and journeys around the rim of the Mediterranean expose a network of sites of cultural and material exchange that tie disparate groups together in an intimate narrative over a large expanse of time. Alaric's exposure to these places undoes the geographic imaginary he had inherited from his culture.

As he rethinks his own identity in relation to this new information, he must revise and remap his understanding of global relations.

### Reflecting on Home and Elsewhere

The novel begins with a series of short conversations in the first chapter that help portray the Gothic culture from which Alaric comes, as well as Alaric's tendency to question received ideas. Even before his formal travel begins, Alaric has already begun to develop a critical distance from his own culture because of his position as a type of cultural outsider. The young Alaric is criticized by his family for being too much of a scholar, his head buried in his books, and not enough of a warrior. Though regretting his own slight build and striving to be a better warrior, Alaric has learned the benefits of study through studying ancient warfare, research that aids him given his small stature. We can also see that Alaric's studies are leading him to question some of his assumptions, particularly about ethnic superiority. When his parents criticize the "Spanish" servants, themselves the result of Roman rule over the Iberian peninsula, Alaric wonders how different the Goths are from the Spanish given 400 years of Gothic presence in the territory. Pressing his point, he asks his parents if they are not Spanish too, to which his parents respond with disgust. Alaric does not relent; he asks his father to speak in Gothic. Of course his father cannot; he speaks only the Romance language of the Spanish "natives."

Alaric then constructs a picture of their ancestors entering the peninsula four hundred years prior, as a "tribe of blond, blue-eyed barbarians came over the Pyrenees in ox carts . . . dressed in bearskins. With their beards reaching to their knees" (6). His lecture to his parents ends in his own strong declaration of a Spanish identity: "I am a Spaniard, Father!

This is my land. I know no other. I have as much right to it as Julio here, or Turtura, whose black hair and eyes mean nothing! Their grandsires were invaders and barbarians, too!” (7). Aside from their position of power, Alaric argues, the Gothic nobles are the same as the Spanish peasants, having much the same language and culture, even having adopted the local form of Christianity. Their difference exists only in their own insistence on difference, one that appears linked to an ambiguous set of physical markers—a prevalence of blond hair and blue eyes over darker hair and eyes. And even this distinction is questioned in a following conversation with his brother who informs him of the blond hair and blue eyes of many in the Muslim community that have resulted from the frequency of their having children with northern slaves and local women.

In these early passages in the novel, Alaric’s somewhat playful banter poses real questions about the ethnic nationalism he has been taught in the light of migrations of people and cultural change. Alaric reverses the stereotypes with which he is familiar, picturing the Goths as more “barbarian” than the Spanish—his frequent thoughts about the odors emanating from the unwashed bodies of his own family members reinforcing this in a rather graphic way. Yet this play with national stereotypes seems fairly harmless given his family’s position of power in their region. His travel south into the Muslim empire, however, amplifies and extends a skepticism he had already begun to develop about the ethnic superiority of his ancestors. He must more deeply confront his own questions regarding national and racial identity, and he becomes increasingly disoriented as his belief in the superiority of his faith is undermined as well. His confrontation with the Muslim other in Córdoba begins the reorientation to identity and the journey to rearticulate the self that unfolds over the course of the rest of the novel.

Alaric's immediate response to Córdoba is representative of his overall reaction to what he finds in the Muslim empire. Alaric's first impression of Córdoba is of a magical city: "everything [is] a wonder," including the shops, artisan work, architecture, and a copy house in which books were reproduced. His awe is transformed into embarrassment by his own culture when his guide asks him "Do not you infidels have the like?" (51). When he finally reaches the Alcázar, Alaric is led through "a richly carved double door of Lebanese cedar" to what he eventually discovers is a bath with marble floors and columns, alabaster walls; jade and porphyry urns, plants, and a pool "out of whose center a sizable fountain played" (55). As he stares at the baths in Córdoba he feels crushed:

The essence of a man is pride. All his life, Alaric Teudisson had been proud of his race, his lineage, his nobility—and now, without a word, with the most exquisite courtesy, these Moorish devils had reduced him in his own eyes to a stable boy, rude of dress, awkward of speech, clumsy of motion, and filthy of person. (56)

Alaric's reaction is extreme. Those aspects of his identity with which he had positively associated himself—race, lineage, and nobility—are reconfigured in his eyes as aspects of which, perhaps, to be ashamed. This new world reminds him of what he only sarcastically joked about before, that others view his Gothic culture as one of limited intellect. He finds himself reflecting on history for new interpretations and remembers how his ancestors destroyed the Roman aqueducts rather than adopting the technology.

As Alaric spends more time in the south, eventually becoming friends with Muslim and Jewish families, even abandoning his right to inherit his father's position at home for a position working for a Jewish banker, he experiences a loss of certainty in even his own

religion. His belief in Christianity as the “True Faith” is the one prejudice that had remained unshaken before his travel. But interaction with those of other faiths undermines the stereotypes he had of them, stereotypes that were important to his sense of righteousness. In the Jewish community of his employer Hasdai ben Sahl, for example, he is surprised to find an intellectual yet compassionate community of skilled doctors, merchants, peasants, etc. who manage their community through generosity to each other as they navigate their way through lives dominated by Islamic or Christian rulers. In Saadyah, ben Sahl’s son, Alaric finds a sharp wit and intellect that aids him in his journey to understand himself better, and the father Hasdai ben Sahl teaches him “that infant science which centuries later would come to be called banking” (232).

Religion, therefore, becomes the identity category with which Alaric wrestles the most and through which much of his search for self is played out.<sup>6</sup> He takes the opportunity to delve into an exploration of religion first through travels for his employer to Alexandria, where he enjoys reading ancient manuscripts, and then through a full spiritual pilgrimage to holy sites in Spain and back again to Alexandria. Alaric’s journey begins in the location of a traditional Catholic pilgrimage site, Santiago de Compostella. He visits the relics of St. James and begins to question the priest about the central beliefs that have established Santiago as the heart of Christianity in the area. Alaric begins to reject the priest’s answers in favor of what he has learned through his reading about history—the names and dates of Christian lore simply do not add up. He ponders other, less religious and more politically pragmatic purposes that drive the development of the site as a holy pilgrimage: the consolidation of its own power and the motivation of the people to begin a war on the Islamic

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<sup>6</sup> Yerby takes advantage here not just of the location of al-Anadus but of the historical moment in which the novel is set to probe the ways in which religion functioned much the way race and later “civilizations” will as a way of organizing people.

empire in its name. The Church, Alaric concludes, seems to be shaping knowledge for its own purposes rather than for the good of the people.

### Trans-Mediterranean Maps

For Alaric, the social process of self-definition is disrupted as he comes to see ethnicity, nationality, and later race and religion, as social constructs. He begins to lose a sense of what distinguishes an “us” from “them.” We can trace this dissolution of identity to the attacks that occur throughout the novel on what Anthony D. Smith calls “cultural resources.” Smith outlines a set of “cultural resources” employed by individuals that allow them to help create the nation as a socially constructed reality.<sup>7</sup> These cultural resources serve as the “sacred foundations of national identity,” and include the following: “1) myths of origins and ancestry, 2) myths of election, 3) collective attachment to sacred ancestral homeland, 4) myth-memories of golden ages, and 5) ideals of sacrifice and duty” (20-1). These cultural resources provide the opportunity for specific beliefs to which individuals can become attached, demonstrating the subjective nature of national identity.

The conversations Alaric has with his father at the beginning of the novel, including his own claim to Spanish identity, interfere with any romantic notion of a privileged ancestry, as he paints the Goths as barbarians in comparison to the Muslim court. His willingness to leave his own home, which he acknowledges his ancestors conquered in warfare, to live with others, places in doubt any strong relation to a sacred homeland. And finally he loses any sense of special destiny or privilege associated with his Christian identity when he begins to doubt the truth of his own religion. The plot of the novel reveals martyrdom for Christianity,

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<sup>7</sup> Smith’s list of social processes that are central to the development of a nation include 1) self-definition, 2) myth-and-memory-making, 3) territorialization, 4) public culture, and 5) lawmaking. Each of these corresponds to one of the cultural resources necessary for nationalism (20-1).

which is supposed to express the ultimate sacrifice for one's faith, as the result of political maneuvering by the church. His sense of any superior Gothic or Christian identity is so disrupted that at one point he goes to war on behalf of the Emir, defending the territory against Norse invaders.

Alaric comes to an understanding of these cultural resources as subjective and culturally constructed rather than based in reality, as much contemporary scholarship on nationalism also argues. The trauma of the loss of identity that Yerby inflicts on his main character forces the reader to rethink the same traditional European view of the globe and global relations that Alaric possessed. As Alaric begins to learn more about the traffic of people, cultures, and ideas circulating throughout the regions through which he travels, he can no longer justify a belief in a specific ethnic heritage as pure, a religious culture as isolated from others, or regional geographies as distinct. His response to this new awareness is much like what we see in the work of Claude McKay—the projection of a new map that better reflects the flow of people and ideas over time. Through Alaric's perspective, Yerby creates a trans-Mediterranean map that represents the dissolution of distinct national or cultural boundaries in favor of a global imaginary that presents the world as a network of interrelated sites, rising and ebbing in importance over time.<sup>8</sup> Rather than highlighting the particular territorial or cultural boundaries emphasized in early modern European cartography, Yerby's map focuses on connections between sites that have always already been in contact with others. Alaric praises the Emir's court for taking advantage of this contact through its willingness to learn from others. The reverse of this—the dismissal of others because of one's confidence in one's own superiority—is what he condemns most in his own culture.

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 2 above for more on the trans-Mediterranean created by McKay.

This new map, based on the concept of a trans-Mediterranean world, is best illustrated in the bath Alaric encounters on his first visit to Córdoba. The bath contains materials and technologies from locations all around the Mediterranean, including North Africa and the Levant. Córdoba as a whole is thus represented as a lively site in a system of global exchange. It is culturally complex, with a mix of people loosely joined under the Islamic rule and at the same time consciously and actively integrated into a larger network of sites that cross space and time.<sup>9</sup> The overwhelming effect on Alaric derives from his realization that centuries of technology and craftsmanship have been harnessed, honed, and brought to a central location by the al Rahman court of al-Andalus. The Islamic court is praised for the technological advancement it brings to Europe, including glassworks, waterworks, and paper, as well as refinement in the arts, and an interest in gathering ancient texts. Through their efforts and funding, the learning of the Greeks and Romans is accessed, translated and developed to bring the European continent out of its cultural dark ages. Yerby uses this picture of Córdoba to undo the stereotypes of North and South, challenging the myth of northern European superiority, exposing the “other” roots of the European Renaissance.

#### Nationalism at Home and Abroad

Yerby’s novel of the medieval Iberian peninsula, published in 1965, can be read as a critique of nationalism in both U.S. and Spanish politics of the time. Both were based on myths of ancestry and election of the sort that are critiqued in the novel. In particular, Yerby was critical of versions of black nationalism on the rise in the U.S. In a 1983 interview for *EL*

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<sup>9</sup> Despite the flattening of the term “Moor,” Yerby emphasizes the diversity within the Arab-Berber empire, explaining in the prologue that the term “Moor” is nearly meaningless because of the range of cultures to which it refers— “Berber, Arab, Yemenite, Syrian, Bedu” (vi).

*Pais Semenal*, Yerby fielded questions regarding various nationalisms—including those of minorities in the U.S. and of European states. Yerby responded,

Que son siempre regresivos. Está por venir el día en que la gente sea lo bastante inteligente como para organizar el mundo sobre una base menos accidental que las fronteras geográficas o los idiomas. [“They are always regressive. There will come a day when people will be intelligent enough to organize the world in some way less accidental than by geographic borders or languages.”] (qtd. in García Gómez; *my translation*)

He more specifically criticizes versions of Black Nationalism that turned to Islam and/or Africa to fulfill myths of origins. Yerby scathingly attacks Amiri Baraka for changing his name from LeRoi Jones, pointing out what he sees as the inaccuracy of such myths:

En la historia universal, ninguna raza se ha mostrado tan feroz en sus relaciones con los demás como los árabes; y cuando un negro cambia de nombre y adopta otro en el idioma de la raza que con más crueldad ha tratado a los negros es porque es un maldito ignorante. [“In the history of the world, no race has shown such ferocity in its relations with others as the Arabs; and when a black person changes his name and adopts another from the language of the race which treated blacks with the most cruelty, it is because he is a damn ignorant.”] (qtd. in García Gómez; *my translation*)

And he expressed disapproval of Alex Haley’s *Roots* for what he saw as similar lapses in historical knowledge, telling a joke at Haley’s expense about those who would glorify themselves by tracing their histories to great figures:

Esto me recuerda un chiste muy malo, de una niña que le dice a su abuela: Abuelita, cuéntame un cuento.... –Pero hija, ¿qué cuento quieres que te cuente? ¿Caperucita Roja? ¿Blancanieves? - No, abuelita, cuéntame el cuento de cuando eras una puta en Chicago. [“This reminds me of a bad joke, of a girl who says to her grandmother, Grandmother, tell me a story. . .—But child, what story do you want me to tell you? Little Red Riding Hood? Snow White?—No, grandmother, tell me of the time when you were a prostitute in Chicago.”] (qtd. in García Gómez; *my translation*)

Yerby was similarly dismissive of the Franco regime’s continued use of the White Legend, including a focus on Catholicism, in its version of Spanish identity. Recalling trouble he had securing a visa because of being a writer, he remarked, “¿Qué otra cosa podía hacer un régimen que tenía como tema *Abajo la inteligencia, viva la muerte?*” [“What else can you expect of a regime whose theme was *Down with intelligence, long live death?*”] (qtd. in García Gómez; *my translation*).

Such nationalistic feelings are not only based on falsities, according to Yerby, but they also are strangely adaptable, undermining their own claims. Those with strong nationalist rhetoric seem able to abandon their idealism when it serves their purposes. He notes this in the novel when Alaric comments on the frequency with which Gothic and Hispano-Roman nobles pledged their allegiance to the Emir when it was expedient to do so. Again, in the context of mid-century U.S. and Spanish politics, one would have to question the U.S.’s devotion to liberty as it propped up the Franco regime with much needed aid in return for military bases in Spain.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On the relationship between Spain and the U.S. including the Military Facilities in Spain Agreement, September 26, 1953, see Liedtke.

*Relational Identity and the Mapmaking Process*

Alaric's sense of identity is shaken through his contact with others. His encounters with people whose modes of life and beliefs differ from his own force him to reflect on his own culture as well as judge what he sees in others. He loses, as he admits to a Jewish friend, his "certitude of being right" (79). Most importantly, by the end, he loses any sense of special destiny or privilege which he can hold onto when he begins to doubt the truth of his own religion. And so for much of the novel Alaric continues to travel, restlessly roaming, in an effort to regain his bearings, to reorient himself in the world, and in search of a framework or material from which to craft and express an authentic self. He struggles to reintegrate the various new ideas he is discovering and various aspects of his own personality back into a whole.<sup>11</sup> He is caught in a cycle of searching out and uncovering difference and then being torn about how to react to and judge that difference.

Despite maintaining a job and house in Toledo, Alaric becomes a wanderer of sorts. He wanders from site to site, but not in a purposeless way; he is searching to engage the other, whether in person or through archives of documents, in order to develop his own sense of identity. Édouard Glissant's concept of errantry in many ways resembles the fate of Yerby's character. In *The Poetics of Relation*, Glissant develops the concept of errantry in opposition to practices that support root-based identities, that is, identities that are built on myths of purity, ancestry, and attachments to particular territory. Instead, Glissant advocates relational identity, in which one is always building a sense of identity through relations with others. Errantry is the practice of constant movement, purposefully encountering the other in

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<sup>11</sup> For more on the difficulty of reintegration, see Conroy; Trinh.

order to avoid a fixed identity and to create an identity that is always in the process of being formed (Glissant 11-22).

Alaric deliberately seeks out the other as a form of developing himself. Learning from others and evolving was, after all, the characteristic of the Muslim court he was initially attracted to when he arrived in Cordoba (and the corresponding lack of interest in others what he disliked about his own culture). Yet he is unable to fully embrace the kind of errantry that Glissant argues for. Throughout the novel, as Alaric travels, his sense of self is shaken and he slowly feels alienated from any community. And though he conceptualizes a trans-Mediterranean map that accounts for the flow of people and ideas around the Mediterranean (people and ideas that were always already in contact with those outside of the Mediterranean world), he is never quite able to abandon the search for a new community to which he can belong. He is ready give up the territorialization of nationalism, but ultimately he seems unable to surrender the processes of self-definition and myths of election that accompany it.

As a result of his discomfort with a Christian community that is becoming increasingly anti-Muslim, for example, he makes one last attempt to locate a version of Christianity with which he can reconcile himself, hopefully gaining a sense of belonging even if only to an intellectual tradition. After failing to find what he was looking for in original Hebrew texts, he discovers in the texts of ancient Egypt that even they had two gods who rose from the dead; “everything that Christians of the West believed unique to their faith were Eastern commonplaces” (434). His discovery of the ways in which religions are related in the same network of overlapping and succeeding cultures brings frustration rather than comfort; Alaric sees it as presenting nihilism as the alternative to a religious nationalism. The reality of the dissolution of the boundaries between communities, of the clear

differentiation between the self and the other, is psychologically difficult for Yerby's character. Yerby strips him of his nationalism, but he maintains a drive for a collective identity to which he can belong.

It seems that Alaric's difficulty is partly due to his attempt to replace his shattered, fixed identity—one that he was ironically unhappy with since it devalued him as a man—with another fixed identity. He does not mind abandoning his old map of global relations, one with clear spaces for each culture and, moreover, one that suggested a hierarchy of these cultures, yet his actions reflect a desire to replace it with a new map that has different but similarly fixed boundaries that will remain stable. He is constantly frustrated by his inability to settle into a new community after he loses faith in the supremacy of his Gothic Christian background. Yerby creates a character that is uncomfortable with the state of errantry he has entered. In fact, several times he nearly succumbs to what is often portrayed as being the ultimate danger of travel, that is, “going native”<sup>12</sup> and converting to one of the other religions.

### Fixing the Map

The bind in which Alaric finds himself through much of the novel seems to stem, in part, from the limitations of Alaric's imaginative mapping. He recognizes a larger trans-Mediterranean world that exists as a network of variable sites, themselves fluctuating in importance, linked through cultural exchange over time. This is the beginning of a way of seeing his surroundings that provides opportunities for rethinking the relations between

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<sup>12</sup> In her discussion of *theoria*, Euben points out that Plato, in his *Laws*, explains that the reason for being selective about who might travel abroad is to avoid such problems: “only men of good repute over the age of fifty will be allowed to travel abroad for the purposes of observing other practices and people, and then only for a period of no more than ten years” (qtd. in Euben 22).

individuals and communities around him. Yet his desire to fix this map, to ultimately refreeze it in time and halt its fluctuations, creates a problem for him. This is a difficulty caused in part by the traditional two-dimensional map that freezes time in whatever configuration it is created. The form of the map itself suggests the stability Alaric longs for.

If we shift, however, from thinking of the map as a product to thinking about map-making processes, it is easier to envision a geographical representation of Glissant's useful concept of relational identity. We see that travel within the type of network that Alaric maps affects the sets of relations he has to various identities he might inhabit at any time. His sense of identity becomes complicated when he engages with others in his dialogue. Dialogue with others necessitates that he understand their relationships to his culture as well as their relationships to their own. For example, within his own Gothic culture he felt alienated by his scholarly abilities, but when he travels abroad he feels more keenly his relation to his Gothic culture and his intellectual accomplishments are questioned. And his relation to his own Christianity changes as he travels from his Gothic community to Jewish communities, to Muslim communities, to ancient Egypt. The fluidity of this reality is disorienting for Alaric.

Yet, there is stability to this system, a stability that Alaric either fails to see or finds difficult to embrace. That is, while each of the factors involved (the individual, identity categories and beliefs, and the other) are all in motion, what remains stable is his behavior itself—his quest to find himself through his relationships with others. This means that the relation itself becomes essential—it becomes the stability of the whole system in which all of the elements are contingent and changing. In other words, the form of relating to the other becomes the stable contributor to identity, something in which to ground oneself, even if one

is sensitive to the contingent nature of the other parts of the system. One can make one's method or form of relation to others a stable centerpiece of identity.

### Mediation and Translation in Relation

The example of Alaric's journey, though frustrating, is not without some suggestions for working through the challenges posed in making a shift to considering how one relates to others as a form of identity. Alaric settles, in the last part of the novel, on attempting to manage his loss through immersing himself in the family he creates, one that resembles the type of community he seeks. He becomes the father of three daughters, each of whom he allows to marry a man of different faith. In addition to having Jewish, Muslim, and Christian sons-in-law, his sister's husband is Muslim, and he maintains his relationship with his Jewish best friend. Earlier in his life, he had given up a return to nobility in his Gothic community and a position in the court of the Emir in Cordoba to work as a translator for a Jewish banking household in Toledo, one that gives him access to the trans-Mediterranean world through the opportunity to travel. Later he is able to leave that job, and devote himself entirely to translating texts at a publishing house. These two strategies for dealing with his dilemma provide some insight into conceptualizing a different kind of identity.

Alaric finds himself in the role of mediator between family members whose religions and political perspectives are different. He keeps the family together through frank and open dialogue, intervening any time there is religiously-based conflict to remind them of their other common bonds. The endeavor of keeping the family together, however, becomes increasingly difficult as the tensions among the outside communities rise with the political situation in al-Andalus. As sects of the Christian church begin to radicalize and promote

martyrdom as a method of rallying Christians together to contest Islamic rule, Alaric's new young bride gets pulled into the radical Christian movement, creating heightened tension in the household. Outside forces pull at the seams of the family and tear them apart—Alaric is eventually killed while attempting to save his fanatic wife from martyring herself for the Christian cause. Yet his role as mediator between family members allows for this remarkable community to exist, at least for a while.

Alaric's role of mediator at home is replicated in his life's work, translation. In his acts of translation, he comes in contact with other worlds and investigates their relations to his own. One of the most interesting scenes in his development is when he first translates Greek for the Emir. He finds himself in a complicated chain of translation in which he translates a Greek text into Romance while the Emir's secretary translates his Romance into Arabic. This series of translations, of creative equivalencies, brings a past work into the present, distant ideas into the present situation. He builds his life through translation, the attempt to understand and represent others, both to develop himself and to interact with others. It is when participating in this process of cultural translation that he is happiest.

In fact, Alaric's translation is pitted against isolated mono-lingualism. Alaric learns that the Emir keeps a particular set of guards, called the Mutes, for protection. Though they are not physically mute, they are kept from learning the languages of the people around them so that they cannot communicate with others. This keeps them dependent on the Emir and at odds with the masses around them. Though they can speak, they might as well be mute for the good it does them. This, the novel seems to suggest, is the worst of all possible situations and their role as guards and militia suggests the violence for which those unable to communicate can easily be employed.

Of course, Yerby's novel does not end with a utopian vision of *convivencia*. Despite Alaric's hard work as mediator and translator, the world into which we are taken is a world in which the coexistence of the three religions is tenuous at best, held together through a series of tributes paid as a result of conquest and continuous violence in relations. Peace often depends on deliberately ignoring the laws communities create to delineate themselves from others, as when the Emir attempts to have Christians recant so they will not need to be executed. Yerby, in fact, points out some of the more destructive aspects of this trans-Mediterranean trade, the kind of behavior often referred to in critiques of globalization. One of the primary ways in which cultures are coming into contact is through violence. One of the most prominent markets exposed in the novel is slavery. And the borders of the Gothic kingdoms and Islamic empire are the site of constant battles in which one is never sure who is allied with whom. These battles often end in the enslavement and rape of women. Alongside translation, violence is portrayed as one of the primary methods of managing relations between communities.<sup>13</sup>

Just as the novel is haunted by a nostalgia for a unified individual identity, it is also haunted by a nostalgia for a community tolerant of difference that never quite was and we know from the beginning is doomed to failure, as Alaric's family is. The prologue to the novel anticipates this. Yerby begins his novel with a dramatic bird's eye view of the Iberian peninsula, watching it over a thousand years of history. He describes a litany of names for the land invented by the long list of peoples and cultures that have inhabited the space, each group imagining the land differently based on its geographical and cultural perspectives: for the "ancient African desert dwellers" the land is Iberia, "Land of the Rivers"; for the northern

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<sup>13</sup> David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence* (1998) argues for understanding the role of violence in coexistence.

Celts, it is “a bull’s hide staked in the sun”; the Carthaginians see “Ispahnia, land of the Rabbits”; for the “matter of fact” Romans, it is “Hispania,” the name adopted from “their Semitic foemen”; and for the Arab-Berber empire, al-Andalus, named after the Vandals that had previously invaded; etc. (Yerby v). He pauses in this vast history only for the “brief time” that is Medieval Spain to focus closely on the lifetime of the main character of the novel:

It is of one [truncated] instant snatched from the context of that last great meeting, one spark struck white hot from the anvil of opposing wills, bloods, creeds . . . one puny, gesticulating figure outlined for a meteor’s flash against the dust clouds of history, endlessly piping his shrill, impotent “I! I! I!” above the hideous cacophony of battle, [through the intervals of quiet, standing apart for one immeasurably brief identity granting hiatus from that] . . . that we will attempt to treat here. (vi)

In this picture, amidst the roar of the battle of history is one individual, attempting to stand apart for an “immeasurably brief identity granting hiatus” from the constant struggle. The individual might attempt such a move, asserting one’s agency for a brief moment in defining one’s identity, but this passage suggests that the surrounding forces are too strong for such an identity to be viable for long before it is again swept up by the forces around and forced to change. This picture is similar to what recent work on nationalism explains: the myths of root-based identities are supported by the violence of territorialization. One might achieve such an identity for a moment, but the inevitable forces of contact with others will undermine such an identity eventually. Yerby’s character, Alaric, spends his life struggling for that “brief identity granting hiatus” only to have it recede from his grasp.

## Chapter 4: “Spain was Baffling”: Richard Wright’s *Pagan Spain* and Western Identity

It was strange, but, in this age of swift communication, one had to travel thousands of miles to get a set of straight, simple facts. . . . Propaganda jams the media of communication.

Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain*

### *Pagan Spain in Context*

In 2008, a set of new editions of Richard Wright’s works was reissued by Harper Perennial in honor of the centennial of his birth. In addition to his now classic early works, such as *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, this series included editions of Wright’s later works written during his self-imposed exile in France from 1947 to his death in 1960, including his book length non-fiction. The republication of these works reflects the growing attention these later works have recently received, as they have shifted their focus from the piercing critiques of U.S. racism of his earlier canonical works to the anti-colonial politics and philosophical investigations of his later works. Specifically for this series and seemingly in the spirit of this recent scholarship, a one-volume edition of three of Wright’s 1950s non-fiction books was produced under the title *Black Power: Three Books from Exile*, a title

derived from his 1954 travelogue about Ghana, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos*. It is interesting, however, to note that this volume collects his travel narrative of Ghana and the narrative of his trip to the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (1956), with *White Man, Listen!*, a 1957 compilation of essays drawing on his previous work, including these two texts.<sup>62</sup> *Pagan Spain*, his account of his travels through Spain under the Franco dictatorship published in 1957, is strangely excluded from what might have made sense as a collection of his 1950s travelogues. This exclusion is not completely surprising; it fits a larger pattern in Wright scholarship that has largely ignored or isolated *Pagan Spain* from the rest of Wright's canon.<sup>63</sup>

Upon reading Wright's *Pagan Spain*, one can understand the urge to treat it separately or set it aside altogether. The book, which narrates and documents Wright's series of three visits to Spain in 1954 and 1955, is a difficult and at times troubling narrative. On the surface, Wright's journey to a Western European country seems out of step with his 1950s focus on decolonizing Asia and Africa as well as his interest in French existentialism, and his characterization of its people as generally irrational and backwards (indeed, "pagan") seems harsh if not an ill-informed rehashing of the longstanding representation of the Spanish Black Legend.<sup>64</sup> Structured as a series of vignettes of his interactions with the

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<sup>62</sup> The *Black Power* collection and title suggests a focus on racial blackness in a way that circumscribes these texts. Certainly *Black Power* analyzes one nation of an increasingly postcolonial African continent, but *The Color Curtain* spends as much time, if not more, analyzing Asian perspectives at the Indonesian conference as it does African ones. Despite a possible focus on Wright's anti-colonial politics such a collection might have, a title such as this risks minimizing the incredible complexity of these works, reducing his later expansive interest in global politics to a concept more easily understood as reflecting the U.S. race politics associated with his early career.

<sup>63</sup> A handful of notable essays on this text have been published in recent years. Virginia Whatley Smith's groundbreaking edited collection of essays *Richard Wright's Travel Writing* (2001) collects three essays on *Pagan Spain*; see Lowe, Evans, and Kinnamon. See also DeGuzmán, Hakutani, Reynolds, and Weiss.

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of the way in which Wright's text present a revival of the Black Legend see DeGuzmán.

people of Spain that are thematically linked to a number of translated sections of the *Formacion Politica*, a Francoist civil service text for young women, *Pagan Spain* is even formally complex—part documentary, part ethnography, part psychoanalysis, and part literary travel writing.<sup>65</sup> And within this complexity, Wright’s argumentative moves and final pronouncements can seem as “baffling” as Wright says he found the country of Spain itself (*Pagan* 228).<sup>66</sup>

Yet the production of *Pagan Spain* is closely connected to *Black Power* and *The Color Curtain*. Wright began his series of visits to Spain in 1954 to take notes for *Pagan Spain* for his first book project since *Black Power* and before he heard of plans for the 1955 Bandung Conference. As he explains at the beginning of *The Color Curtain*, he hears of the conference while in Paris for the Christmas holiday of 1954, between trips to Spain. He returned to Spain for one last visit and session of note taking, leaving for the conference from Madrid (Wright, *Color* 11-15). Wright attended the conference and wrote his account of it in *The Color Curtain*, published in 1956, before returning to his notes to write *Pagan Spain*, which was not published until 1957. In fact, much of the first half of *The Color Curtain* is a narration of Wright’s thoughts about the conference he is about to attend while sitting on the train traveling through Spain, reading through notes he has taken from interviews he completed in preparation for his Indonesian trip (*Color* 18-75). Given that these texts are intertwined chronologically, it should not be surprising that they are also intertwined ideologically.

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<sup>65</sup>For insightful discussions of the form and generic complexity of *Pagan Spain*, see Lowe and Reynolds.

<sup>66</sup>An early reviewer of the book, Richard Strout, stated in the *New York Republic*, “There are so many ways of misunderstanding this vivid book of travel journalism that it is likely to kick up controversy” (qtd. in Lowe 119).

If we read *Pagan Spain* in the context of Wright's other travel narratives, we can see a multi-faceted project emerging out of these texts as a whole. In them we can observe Wright's use of travel and the travel narrative to seek out and cultivate a political wisdom. Throughout his travel books, Wright seeks to understand the complicated existence of others in their specific geographic, historical, and cultural contexts to arrive at a better understanding of global politics and his own position within it. It is in this context that some of Wright's ideas in *Pagan Spain* can be best understood.

A closer look at *Pagan Spain* shows the complexity of Wright's developing vision of a post-Cold War world order and of the process we would today call globalization (including the difficulties of imagining a productive version of it). Wright's particular work in *Pagan Spain* is to redraw the reference maps with which we normally conceive of the world. He is able to use Spain's peculiar position as a Western European nation that seems at odds with conceptions of the West to help disrupt the division of the globe and global relations into the standard post-WWII, Cold War, three-world concept map.<sup>67</sup> To Wright, this map of the world is divided into two realms, both derived from a common source of Western culture, fighting over rights to the third, each with equal belief in its own righteousness and disregard for others. In other words, despite the three worlds involved, global politics has essentially been divided into a binary, two poles that are the only real actors in the global conversation, with the Third World only being heard in its relation to one of the first two. This, Wright suggests, will inevitably lead to bloodshed. Over the course of his travel narratives, Wright attempts to tease out a new system of relations to envision a post-Cold War world. For

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<sup>67</sup> The "three world" designation grows from the popular Cold War division of the world map into a First (relatively high-income capitalist) World, a Second (relatively high-income communist) World, and a Third (relatively poor) World that was not formally aligned with either of the first two. It is with a view to this original context that I use these terms.

Wright, this would seem to begin with bringing the third term, the Third World, into the global conversation as an equal participant in order to eventually transcend the fixed divisions and begin a new era of coalitional politics.

Part of the difficulty in reading *Pagan Spain* is that Wright himself is uncomfortable with the world he is beginning to imagine as an alternative to the inherited Cold War conception of global relations. At the Bandung Conference (Wright's eventual model for an alternative coalitional politics), Wright observes a focus on religious, racial, and national identities as central to the emerging politics. These identities, which he regards as essentialist and exclusionary, are difficult for Wright to accept, and he is skeptical of their value for developing productive political relations given his own strong ties to ideas of universal humanism.<sup>68</sup> In this context, Wright's obsession with the religiosity of Spain, which he deems irrationality, and the peculiar way in which he figures Spain in his thesis make more sense. In particular, Wright struggles to understand what role identity politics, in particular the various racial, religious, and national identities of which he is extremely skeptical, should play in mapping a system of more productive global relations. He attempts to link individual psychological and group identities (forecasting the prolonged future of identity politics, much to his dismay) to a larger global understanding in a way that is productive for the future. But as prescient and laudable as Wright's groping for a new way might be, *Pagan Spain* is representative of both the successes of Wright's attempt to re-imagine the world and its shortcomings.

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<sup>68</sup> For more on Wright's universalism, see Gilroy, Hakutani, and Relyea.

Wright's Developing *Theoria: Pagan Spain* and *The Color Curtain*

Some of the perplexing or challenging moves that Wright makes in his representation of Spain, including his focus on religion and national identity, are best understood in the context of Wright's other travel literature from the period. Wright's narrative of his trip to Ghana in *Black Power* and his account of the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in *The Color Curtain*, because they focus explicitly on decolonizing nations of Africa and Asia, point to Wright's concern with the dynamics of the imagined three-world division of the globe, a global structure that is essentially binary in nature with each of the first two worlds attempting to subsume the third, non-aligned world into itself. He comes to see that this map is limited in perspective because it fails to represent the non-aligned nations' perspectives or acknowledge their potential contributions to transforming global relations beyond the Cold War impasse.

Such a geographic imaginary is derived, of course, from the perspective of the first two worlds, and the assumptions upon which it is based have much in common with the typical travel narratives written from the perspective of the Western imperial nations. That is, such an imaginary isolates distinct geographic locations and places them in an evolutionary "historical queue" in which the inhabitants and cultures of some places are stuck in the past (Lisle 203). In this case, the traveler might experience a fond nostalgia that these places might evoke; nevertheless, the traveler will also inevitably recognize that the way forward to the future can only be achieved through the modern cultures, in other words, the culture of the traveler. This denies the coeval nature of other cultures and suggests that they would benefit from being brought into the present through the modern cultures, no matter the effect it has on their ways.

Even Wright himself, though he exposes such thinking in his work, is not free from espousing it as a result of his own assertions of affiliation with Western ideology. Throughout his travel writing, including *Pagan Spain*, Wright never quite escapes replicating the pitfalls of the ethnocentrism of the traditional Enlightenment travel narrative (Lowe; Reynolds). Evidence of this exists throughout his texts, particularly in terminology such as “primal” and in notions such as “progress.” Yet this is not all there is to Wright’s work. There is another impulse, one that suggests that this perspective on others is flawed, and that others’ perspectives must be heard. In *The Color Curtain*, for example, Wright suggests that the resistance to incorporating others’ ideas will impede real change. In fact, his experiences at the conference confirm for him the dangers of allowing the binary nature of the three-world structure to dictate relations, particularly when it comes to the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. He comes to understand from the participants that, to many of these intellectuals, capitalism and communism are merely two versions of the same Western impulse to dominate and wrest self-determination from them. And this, he explains, will likely lead to massive resistance and bloodshed no matter which of the two worlds attempts to exert its power.

Wright’s work in *The Color Curtain* is to find a way to figure the so-called Third World into global politics as a third term or third set of voices in conversation about future global relations and to convince his Western audience of the need to do so. He wishes not to leave these voices in an imagined past but to consider the values they represent as possibly viable in the present and for the future. In this move, Wright’s work reflects the more recent trend in transnational criticism of understanding a historical moment geographically rather than historically, that is, looking at the interactions and exchanges between various

geographic sites at a particular moment rather than focusing on progressive narratives over time of a space in isolation. This counters the impulse of much travel literature of putting other places in the past by figuring all locations as coeval.

One can see the beginnings of these impulses in his description in *Black Power* of the Ashanti, whose “primal outlook on life, his basically poetic apprehension of existence” he admires. In fact, he points out that there is much to admire in a culture that has managed to maintain “the preeminence of the spiritual over the material”:

What the social scientist should seek for are not “African survivals” but the persistence and vitality of primal attitudes and the social causes thereof. And he would discover that the same primal attitudes exist among other people; after all, what are the basic promptings of artists, poets, and actors but primal attitudes consciously held? (Wright, *Black* 266-7)

Despite Wright’s language of the “primal,” which might evoke a vision of Africa as “primitive,” Wright suggests that the immaterial values of this specific African culture are not located only in this place and in an evolutionary past. He sets them up as instructive for the West in the present. He is not consigning them to a nostalgic past but considering how one might employ the persistence of such values (nature, family, faith, and honor) in the present moment, particularly in contrast to the materialism of capitalism.

Wright’s own resistance to Western territorialization is not complete. He recognizes his own difficulties in truly understanding and weighing others’ perspectives seriously on both practical and ideological grounds. He recognizes the difficulty these voices will face in being heard given their lack of military or economic might, especially when they are critical of those who must hear them. And he expresses his own discomfort with the direction of

much of the talk in the Bandung Conference. The talk, he quickly remarks, focuses on the racial and religious identities that have been solidified and formed in response to Western Colonialism. Though he recognizes that they are responses to the horrors of colonialism, they are still the very constructed identities whose political potential Wright is skeptical of and from which he disassociates himself in his vision of freedom.<sup>69</sup> In particular, he struggles to understand several prominent participants in the conference on the topic of religion and the state, notably Dr. Mohammed Natsir, former Prime Minister of Indonesia, and the then President of the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno. As he reflects on the speeches of these men and his interviews with them, Wright recognizes that these community self-identifications will shape these leaders' actions in the global arena.

Through Natsir, proponent of the Islamic state, Wright presents the idea that the Islamic state is seen by some of the participants as a middle ground between communism and capitalism, with the social concerns of communism and the democratic structure of capitalist states. Expressing his interest and dismay at the idea of a religious state that is not a theocracy, Wright explains he is impressed by “the firm rejection by the Asian mind of a division between the secular and the sacred” (*Color* 123). And as he listens to Sukarno's speech, he considers the local contexts from which such a concept might arise: the legacy of colonialism that denigrated the religions of the colonized, the encouragement to convert to Christianity, and yet the denial of full citizenship based on a racist rhetoric. In reflecting on this Wright concludes, “He is not trying to create racism and religion—he's trying to organize them” (*Color* 140). Towards the end of his account he reflects on what to make of what he has seen and heard about these religious and racial identities, which he describes as

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<sup>69</sup> In *Pagan Spain*, Wright famously claims, “I have no religion in the formal sense of the word . . . I have no race except that which is forced upon me. I have no country except that to which I'm obliged to belong. I have no traditions. I'm free. I have only the future” (21).

“a racial and religious system of identification manifesting itself in an emotional nationalism which was now leaping state boundaries and melting and merging, one into the other” (Wright, *Color* 140).

Wright’s own position as he replicates these ideas for his reader is as dynamic as is his ambivalence towards these ideas. At times he is a Westerner ready to reject outright the idea of merging religion and the state, while at other times he is attempting to enact his goal of bringing the Third World’s perspectives into the contemporary political conversation with the West, and at still other times he is the ally of those in the Third World who are acting in opposition to Western arrogance and racism. His identity thus fluctuates, and his message shifts depending on his position and audience in the moment. For the purpose of understanding *Pagan Spain*, it is most useful to focus on the way Wright attempts to distinguish Western identities and perspectives from non-Western ones for the West itself to understand.

### *Spain as the West and Its Other*

The work in which Wright is engaged in his other travel narratives, particularly *The Color Curtain*, is useful in understanding some of the topics of interest he develops in *Pagan Spain*, especially his constant focus on religion and national identity. Whereas in *The Color Curtain* he is interested in how the emerging nations of the Third World will act and be received in the global arena, in *Pagan Spain* he is more interested in investigating the nature of the categories being used to frame these questions, in particular the nature of what it means to be Western and the rise of modernity. The end of Wright’s *Pagan Spain* does, in

fact, attempt to explain the West to itself in a startling way, by presenting it with its own otherness.

Spain's position as both part of Europe and exceptional to it is important for the work that Wright does in this text. Wright creates a complicated picture of the location of Spain unsettling the configuration of the typical world map of the time; he loosens the hold of the traditional continental method of configuring cultural divides and hierarchies—that is, that Europe, Africa, and Asia, for example, are naturally discrete spaces with different cultures that can be ranked in terms of their “progress.” By casting Spain out of Europe and then making a series of linkages between it and various other spaces around the world, Wright disrupts this normalized understanding of the map derived in large part from early modern European cartography (and the implied historical queue described above). He draws from his experience of Spain to debate the assumed fixed identities of West and the rest—using it as a way to explore constructions of self and other. What is particularly striking about Wright's work is that while he separates the present Spain from the West he also shows a Spain of the past as the very heart of the West itself. This allows Wright to create a vision of Spain as both a symbol of the West and a symbol of its own otherness. Spain then functions as a mirror that can perform a sort of dual reflection; on the one hand, it can be turned to reflect the Other (in this case the Third World), and on the other hand it can also be turned to reflect the West and its behavior to itself. Spain can function in both ways, so Wright's use of the image of Spain shifts depending on the situation. Attention to Wright's defense of his thesis that Spain is indeed not Western sheds light on how Wright is able to do this.

Wright's interest in Spain stems from both longstanding concerns with the political state of the country as well as encouragement from others prior to his 1954-55 visits.<sup>70</sup> At the beginning of *Pagan Spain*, in fact, he reflects on his feelings about the outcome of the Spanish Civil War well over a decade later: "The fate of Spain had hurt me, it had haunted me; I had never been able to stifle a hunger to understand what had happened there and why" (Wright, *Pagan* 4). But after having put off a visit to Spain for a number of years and giving much thought to the prospect of visiting,<sup>71</sup> his conclusions about his travels there relate a sense of surprise at what he found. Wright concludes, in the last section of his book, that he had been wholly unprepared for what he encountered in Spain. He planned to write a book focusing on the political and economic problems of the nation as a result of Franco's regime. However, Wright explains, he was unable to do that: "No neat, simple dialectical diagnosis of class relations could clarify the reality that had flooded in upon me" (*Pagan* 227). The reality Wright is referring to is the psychological and social reality he perceives of the culture in Spain itself. And it is a reality he finds compelling, yet disturbing. His attempt, then, to "understand what happened there" is essentially an attempt to account for a "Spanish" psychology that would explain the outcome of the Civil War and the contemporary state of

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<sup>70</sup> Wright wrote a series of articles in the 1930s for the *Daily Worker* about the Spanish Civil War condemning fascism and Franco, sharing his concerns with a number of other American leftists of the time, including Langston Hughes. Biographer Michel Fabre suggests that Wright's decision to travel to Spain and make it the subject of a book length work was the result of several forces converging at one time, including the disappointing response to *Black Power* and his ambivalence about writing about the race situation in the U.S. (407). As he cast about looking for a suitable topic, he was brought back to Gertrude Stein's death-bed suggestion that he go to Spain. "You'll see the past there," Wright recalls her saying, "You'll see what the Western world is made of" (*Pagan* 4). Another consideration was the encouragement he received from two friends, sociologists Gunner and Alva Myrdal, to whom the book is dedicated.

<sup>71</sup> See Weiss for an account of Wright's research and source materials.

the country. In other words, his account attempts to be an account of a culture rather than its institutions of power and economy.<sup>72</sup>

This presentation of the culture seems designed to shock and disorient his audience, which Wright accomplishes by explaining his own shock and disorientation. Wright claims to have begun with one travel itinerary but explains that his journey took him down a very different path. Of course, encountering the unexpected is one of the conventions of engaging travel literature. Yet while this is a convention, it is one that is worth some attention because of the political nature of Wright's account of his travel. That is, deviation from the expected purpose of his book would be a break with expectations about the type of work he would produce and suggest a break with what one might be expecting from the topic—that is, a break with what Wright will imagine as the West. In place of the expected Marxist economic and political analysis of the country, Wright focuses on a cultural analysis of the nation and its relation to its sense of its own national identity. As he claims, he is trying to understand what it is about Spain that could have allowed for the rise of Franco. And in light of the Catholic image of 1950s Spain and Franco's use of religion for his own propaganda, this allows Wright to discuss issues of religious identity and secularism, issues preoccupying him as he watched post-World War II patterns of global relations. These concerns, therefore, are at the heart of much of the analysis of Spain around which his travelogue is developed.

In the last section, "The World of Pagan Power," Wright begins to develop the provocative thesis of his book that Spanish culture is "pagan" in nature, a thesis that creates

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<sup>72</sup> The form of Wright's travelogue reflects his agenda, progressing through a series of scenes of his time in Spain designed to show his interactions in everyday life with the Spanish people, relegating a series of orchestrated interviews (such as those that completely structure the text of *The Color Curtain*) to the end of the text. Interspersed throughout these vignettes and creating thematic unity are a number of translated sections of the *Formacion Politica*, a Francoist civil service text for young women explaining the tenets of the regime and Spanish history, from the grand destiny of Spain reaching back to the Golden Age to the meaning behind the colors on the ties of the Falangist party.

as many questions at the end of the text as it answers. Wright sets up his ultimate thesis with the statement that “[t]hough Spain was geographically a part of Europe, it had had just enough Western aspects of life to make me feel a little at home. But it was not the West” (*Pagan* 228). Here Wright’s designation of Spain as not Western might be considered an evocation of the Anglo and Anglo-American Black Legend or at least the assertion that Spain is somehow historically exceptional to the rest of Western Europe, an otherwise knowable and fairly unified entity with a shared ideology. Yet if we continue to follow Wright’s argument, this is merely the starting point for an even deeper probing of categories of identification. Wright’s declaration is followed by two questions. The first is a predictable question about Spain given his claim: “Well, then what was it?” But before Wright gives a direct answer to this question, he develops a complementary and equally complex question. Wright continues his discussion, not with a discussion of Spain but with a discussion of his own Western identity:

To be a functioning and organic part of something is to be almost unconscious of it. I was a part, intimate and inseparable, of the Western world, but I seldom had had to account for my Westernness, had rarely found myself in situations which had challenged me to do so. (Even in Asia and Africa I had known where my world ended and where theirs began. But Spain was baffling; it looked and seemed Western, but it did not act or feel Western.) Since I now felt most strongly, in fact, *knew* that Spain was not a Western nation, what then did being Western mean? (*Pagan* 228)

That Wright’s first question—“what was [Spain]?”—leads to a second question—“what then did being Western mean?”—reveals the comparative nature of developing

knowledge through the act of travel. When reading travel writing, one usually expects a portrait of a space designated elsewhere (in this case Spain) as well as an eventual return home (which Wright labels the West), after one has been elsewhere. Yet because an understanding of elsewhere is dependent upon a comparison to home, travel literature is often as much an exploration of the home space as it is a representation of that elsewhere, as much about the self as it is the other. Therefore, a declaration that Spain is not Western naturally leads to reflections on what being Western means. This generic convention, however, assumes a kind of stability about the locations of home and elsewhere and an itinerary that, though it might lead to some unexpected experiences, is essentially fixed and remains in place at the end of the journey. The traveler, after all, must know how to get back home to write the narrative.

Wright's surprise in this passage then, points to the unexpected degree to which his experience in Spain is disorienting, and it is so in two main ways. First, Wright presents his journey to Spain as one that took him farther from home (the West) than he had anticipated. Difference was apparently expected in his narratives of Africa and Asia, in which Wright figures as something of the typical Enlightenment traveler abroad engaging the exotic other, despite his own suggestion that he as a black man will have a kind of insider knowledge. "Even in Asia and Africa I had known where my world ended and where theirs began," he says referring to his other two travel narratives (Wright, *Pagan* 228). "But Spain was baffling; it looked and seemed Western, but it did not act or feel Western," continues Wright (*Pagan* 228), suggesting that it appears to blur the lines between home and abroad. The second form of disorientation, then, is the challenge Spain represents of defining his own

home, his own Western identity; that is in being forced to “account for [his] Westernness” (*Pagan* 228).

Wright’s surprising observation is intensified by the complicated relationship a figure such as Wright has to the concept of home. Wright is not “at home” in his home in the U.S., so much so that he chooses to live in exile in France. Yet neither is he a citizen of France, his choice location of exile.<sup>73</sup> Wright’s own position as insider/outsider (a part of yet different from the West) reflects the position he creates for Spain in the argument that follows—a position that is both outside of the West and, at the same time, at the heart of the West. This doubling of phenomena will eventually create the space for him not only to work on an understanding of Spain and the West but also to contemplate the process of the construction of identities and identity categories themselves.

In his argument to remove Spain from the West, Wright makes an interesting choice of historical moments in Spain’s history to reflect on. He does not refer to the standard episode that was typically used to question Spain’s Europeanness, the famed medieval *convivencia*, in which Iberian Christians, Jews, and Muslims lived together, largely under the Muslim rule. Wright instead chooses the time period afterwards, the moment of cultural nation-making that was the culmination of the “Reconquest” at the turn of the sixteenth century. Spain solidified its standing as a Catholic nation through the consolidation of the Catholic kingdoms, the expulsion (or conversion) of Jewish and Muslim peoples, and the extension of its Catholic mission further West through the colonization of the Americas. It seems Wright is interested not in a model of coexistence, but in the study of what happens when hard lines are drawn.

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<sup>73</sup> This is revealed in an incident in which he is accosted by the police because they believe he may be French but is then let off when they discover that he is an American.

Specifically, Wright focuses our attention, first, on a papal decree of 1455:

[T]he Pope had divided the world between the Spanish and the Portuguese and those nations had had not only the right, but the moral duty of enslaving those infidels who failed to kneel and kiss the cross and accept Christ as their Redeemer. Yet how was it that four hundred desperate, half-starved white men, with this cross, had conquered millions? . . . That they had triumphed in the name of the dead God nailed to a cross was undeniably true, but what had that cross meant to them? And what had it meant to the millions whom they had subjugated? (*Pagan* 281)

Here, Wright exposes the coalescing of religious and racial feelings of superiority with several of the impulses at the heart of the creation of the West as a concept and perspective itself. These “irrational” feelings in combination with the conviction that one has the Truth are harnessed for the justification of Western colonization. Spain reinvented itself through cultural nationalism as a Catholic nation and as its empire expands into the lands of “darker” peoples, the movement towards a biological notion of race is also developing. If the initial Spanish military success in colonizing sections of the Americas is central to the “westward” expansion that creates the notion of a West, then the feelings that undergird it are central as well.

This would seem to be an argument for making Spain central to the concept of the West—as a model of the rise of cultural nationalism, the development of racial thinking, and the spread of colonialism westward. But Wright links this period, instead, to the Spanish Civil War in an attempt to provide a rationale for his representation of Spain as Europe’s

Other. Wright explains his own psychological appraisal of the Spanish difference from the rest of the West:

Christianity, in order to survive, had had to institute with a bloody war another form of collectivity. Beleaguered by modern ideas, stormed by the forces of social and political progress, Spain had had to withdraw, had had to go back into the past and find some acceptable form of endurable life that could knit its poetic-minded people together again. The anxious freedom of capitalistic, democratic Europe and America could not be sustained by the Spaniard. He had rejected it as being too painful, too inhuman to bear. The tense Western nomads, hungry for personal destiny, and, above all, the murderous rationalism of sacrificial Communism, had been scornfully rejected in favor of an archaic collective consciousness based on family symbols: One Father, One Mother, One Spirit. (*Pagan* 286-7)

The persistence of these racial and religious frameworks and of reliance on a single Truth has alienated Spain from the West, according to Wright. By identifying this problem Wright pinpoints his final definition of Western identity and what creates its other: “I was finally led to believe that that difference lay in the area of the *secular* that Western man, through the centuries and at tragic cost, had won and wrung from his own religious and irrational consciousness. In Spain there was no lay, no secular life” (Wright, *Pagan* 228). Spain, according to Wright, lacks a developed sense of the secular: “All was religion in Spain,” claims Wright (*Pagan* 229).

In accounting for his sense of his difference from the people of Spain, Wright attempts to account for what he calls his own “Westernness.” He has chosen not to construct

and represent himself clearly in relation to the usual categories of race/ethnicity or nationality. He instead associates himself with the category of the West, which is obviously more than a geographical category; after all, Spain *is* in fact in the western part of continental Europe (that is, if we accept traditional boundaries applied to these land masses). The West as a category of identification is, then, an ideological concept, one that Wright associates with the epistemology of secular humanism.

In *Pagan Spain*, Wright embraces Enlightenment ideals of reason and science, yet rejects the ethnocentrism and racism that also arise with them, firmly situating himself as a Western man among Europeans who are not. Rather than assigning these values to Western European spaces and Western European spaces to these values, Wright creates a modified schema in which he explains the difference between the Western and non-Western identities as the *relationship* an individual or space has to the concept of the secular. He understands the West as a metaphor that signifies a specific relationship to an epistemological perspective (and socio-political construct), one that in this case promotes the idea of the secular and a method of understanding the world that he calls rational science. By working with a category of identity as a relation to a constructed concept rather than a fixed geographical one, Wright begins an argument that would fit fairly comfortably in critical theory about the constructed nature of identity today. Wright suggests that the identity categories we accept are too often read as static essences, firm content rather than a series of relations.

Wright's mapping of the West as both a place and a concept is a complicated one. If identities are formed in relation to abstract concepts, as Wright suggests with his discussion of the West, then they might change over time as an individual's or community's beliefs change. They are not fixed as we assume the metaphors tied to geographic boundaries are

(for example, the Western or Eastern, European or African). In addition, the concepts to which one relates might have arisen out of a specific place, but they subsequently exist outside of it—and are reshaped as they are put in conversation with other ideas. In other words, even the concepts associated with a specific identity category can shift over time. This explains how Wright is able to shift between visions of Spain as the heart of all Europe and Spain as the Other inside Europe.

*Spain as a Cautionary Tale: An Uncanny Look at Home*

Looking at this set of arguments in relation to the discussion earlier of *The Color Curtain* and *Black Power* can shed light on some of the perplexing twists in the way in which Wright is representing Spain. Most obviously, the focus on race and religion would seem to resonate with the rhetoric he witnesses in the speeches of the representatives of the emerging nations of Asia and Africa. Reading *Pagan Spain*, in other words, helps illustrate Wright's mistrust of the racial and religious identities being employed in their political speeches. Yet a reflection of the non-Western seems to be only a part of what the travelogue does. Especially when read in the context of his other travelogues, *Pagan Spain* is as much if not more so a reflection of the West to itself and, in the end, a cautionary tale for the West.

In *Pagan Spain*, Wright portrays Spain as Europe's other, trapped in a pagan past, yet even as he describes the grounds of Spanish difference, he reveals a double reality: Spain is at the very heart of the West as well. In fact, while reading through the first lesson of *The Formacion Politica* about the nature of Spain's place in the world and its destiny, Wright exclaims, "I was staring at the mouth, at the veritable fount of Western history" (29). Wright's double reading evokes the notion of the uncanny that critics such as Julia Kristeva

and Homi Bhabha borrow from Freud in an attempt to discuss national culture from the outside, either through the position of the margins (Bhabha) or through that of the stranger/foreigner (Kristeva). First, as a black American and, second, in choosing exile, Wright's work has much in common with what they theorize.

For Kristeva, the recognition of the foreigner within the state (or the parallel recognition of the difference of the other by the self) exposes the fiction of the homogeneity of the group (or the unity of the self). The foreigner, or the other, acts as a "symptom" of our own discomfort at feeling our own otherness or difference from others with whom we are living. In other words, the stranger outside mirrors the stranger within. In this case, the accusations of irrationality often launched at the non-Western world really hide the Western world's own irrational behavior. Wright uses Spain, again located outside the category of the West but at the heart of its construction, to exemplify this phenomenon.

At the end of *The Color Curtain*, Wright warns concerning the risks the West takes by not engaging in an ethical manner with the nations at the conference; he warns that the prevailing Cold War attitudes and modes of relating to the Third World are in fact destructive. In issuing this warning, he references his understanding of the dynamics that occurred in the conflict between the Spanish conquerors and the Aztecs. He explains that if the First World insists on its own ways, it will be fighting, as the Spaniards did, against a group that will unify around a common ground and that would rather die than be defeated (Wright, *Color* 217-8). This comparison is, of course, based on the picture he created in *Pagan Spain* of a Spain motivated by its own sense that it possesses the Truth.

Wright's Spain, then, becomes a cautionary tale. Despite Wright's argument that Spain lost its claim to a Western identity, finally expressed in the outcome of Spanish Civil

War, it historically operated just as he suggests the First World is operating with the Third World. In the final words of *Pagan Spain*, he describes the Spaniard stuck in an imperialist mindset:

Convinced beyond all counter persuasion that he possesses a metaphysical mandate to chastise all of those whom he considers the “morally moribund,” the “spiritually inept,” the “biologically botched,” the Spaniard would scorn the rich infinities of possibility looming before the eyes of men, he would stifle the hearts responding to the call of a high courage, and he would thwart the will’s desire for a new wisdom. (288)

This could describe the attitude historically promoted in any of the European colonial powers. But more significantly, it is not far from the West’s attitude towards those in the burgeoning movements in Africa and Asia. Spain and the First World, in other words, are both relating to their other in the same way.

### *Identity as a Mode of Relation*

For Kristeva, the usefulness of the experience of the uncanny recognition of the other within only begins with that recognition. The recognition of our own difference can open new ways of understanding the self and new affiliations with others based on alternative ways of interacting with them, ones that are not based on the expulsion of that which is different or the absorption of it into a homogenous whole (Kristeva 182-92). And these new affiliations, I would emphasize, are not just between established states or recognized subjects and the other, but also between the variety of subjects historically constructed as other. In Wright’s work Spain not only exposes the “irrational” and “primal” (as Wright would have

it) inside the West, elements that were consigned to the non-Western world, but the recognition of this opens up Wright's ability to disrupt the traditional map. It allows for the potential of affiliations to be built on the recognition of shared existence of difference that is not to be erased.

One of the things the history of Spain has been used to understand is a form of cultural nation-building in the Iberian peninsula that would presage Western ethnocentrism and nationalism linked to the modern nation-state. In particular, scholars have looked to the tangle of religion and race during the late Medieval and early Renaissance periods for explanations of the rise to prominence of the Western Europe and Enlightenment Humanism hand in hand with biological racism. In doing this work, these scholars have attempted to expose and evaluate the categories the European cognitive map has created and reinforced, for example, those that clearly designate specific spaces for specific peoples—whether the continental understanding, tied to race, that emerged from the European colonial movements and perspectives, or a Cold War three-world concept map.

In addressing forms of identity construction Wright is also dislodging geographical spaces from the categories ordinarily associated with them. This is important to his attempt to understand and draw out the distinction between the geographic metaphors of the Western and the non-Western. Despite disagreements we might ultimately have today with his conclusions about these distinctions, his work does provide insight into the process of identity construction.

The dynamics Wright's work illuminates make good headway in dislodging old identities that have been yoked to a primarily Eurocentric geographic imaginary. This is important because it allows for the emergence of productive non-traditional alliances that do

not call for the denial of various identities but can be crafted around a variety of relationships to ideas or entities. And these can be used as the basis for analyzing, subverting, or transcending the status quo global relations.

We can see Wright beginning to work in such a manner in his analysis of the relation of Spain to other spaces around the world. He does not simply make the usual linkages of Spain to Africa or the Middle East; instead, when considering his reluctance to go to Spain, he contemplates a striking set of associations. He comments that he does not think his reluctance stems from the fear of Spain's irrational totalitarian government under Franco; totalitarianism, he says, is nothing new to him—he had experienced it in the “absolutistic racist regime in Mississippi,” as well as during his year within Perón's police state in Buenos Aires, and also in the U.S. Communist party (Wright, *Pagan* 3). Indeed, Wright compares a series of sites that, no matter how different the sites at first might appear, share a common relationship to totalitarianism, and therefore are part of a network of spaces outside of the rational West that he defines.

We can also see such work being done in the way in which Wright brings the term “negro” into conversation with the political and social dynamics he witnesses among various populations in Spain. As Weiss argues, Wright reveals his interest in analyzing the similarities that the sorts of oppression blacks suffered in the U.S. had with other oppressed groups around the world, whether they were women, Protestants, Gypsies, Catalan nationalists, etc. (Weiss 34), groups that he refers to as “white negroes” (Wright, *Pagan* 62). In his essay about the ways in which Wright represents the women of Spain, Evans argues that this move reflects Kristeva's notion of “stranger affiliation”; Wright is seen as

identifying with others who share the same position from which he writes, that of the foreigner, or more importantly the experience of the native foreigner (Evans 167-70).

In both of these cases, identities are based on the relationship to a concept or other—that is, a relation to totalitarianism or a relation to forces of power, being oppressed or made other in one's own home. This allows Wright to reconfigure the inherited world map (an image that helps us organize and shape our understanding of various parts of the world) in ways that might surprise us and allows us a method through which to imagine new coalitions. Such alliances or coalitions, particularly as an oppositional politics, are not necessarily easy to accomplish. At the beginning of his travelogue Wright discusses his belief about the effects of oppression on most people, the kinds of responses it often elicits:

I had long believed that where you found tyranny, such as exists in Russia, you would also find a confounding freedom secreted somewhere; that where you had a stifling bureaucracy, such as in France, there was a redeeming element of personal liberty; that where you had a police state such as was in Argentina, you had under it, disguised, a warm comradeship; and that where you had a restrained or reserved attitude, such as in England, you had somewhere nearby, equalizing it, a licentious impulse to expression. (*Pagan* 15)

For Wright, these behaviors represent various types of coherent responses to oppression. So he wonders if this is the case also in Spain. As he encounters people throughout Spain, he searches for their coherent response to their conditions, to the dictatorship of Franco and the beliefs that accompanied it. Yet he seems unable throughout to locate such a response. He meets individuals whose responses to oppression vary greatly,

including both the rebellious and the bitter, separatists, the devout, and also the mentally ill. Even the intellectuals he interviews at the end are embarrassed by their position. It seems that no coherent response has emerged to unify the various groups that hold in common an unhappiness or disaffection with their state. No coalition such as Wright's configuration of identity suggests is possible has emerged; each group seems to be on its own.

Not only does this point to the difficulty of the alliances suggested above, but even Wright himself fails in conversation in what should be an example of such an alliance. Towards the end of *Pagan Spain*, Wright reports on a series of interviews that he conducted with several Spanish intellectuals in Madrid. The last of the short interviews that Wright recounts is a meeting with a Jewish businessman. The twenty-nine-year-old man, Wright tells us, one of only 2,500 Jewish people in Spain at that point, had entered the country five years before the interview, coming "out of Russia by way of Poland by way of Belgium. He had lost all of his family through pogroms and wars and revolutions" (*Pagan* 265). Yet, Wright quickly adds, "He spoke Spanish fluently" and "he looked and acted distinctly Spanish" (*Pagan* 265).

Setting the scene of their meeting at a café, Wright depicts them as "[b]oth from backgrounds of persecution, [sitting] seemingly securely anchored in a twentieth-century world of sanity and comfort" (*Pagan* 265), establishing the "stranger affinity" referred to by Evans. But as they begin to speak, any presumed sense of comfort disappears as Wright presses the businessman for answers to his questions about the treatment of Jews in Spain. In a strained conversation about the difficulties of marrying in the Catholic state, the Jewish man resists discussing the oppression of Jews, explaining that he has chosen to return to Spain because it was the home of his ancestors generations ago. "I feel that I am Spanish,"

he claims, to which Wright responds incredulously, “You *want to be* Spanish.” “I’M Spanish,” the businessman insists, effectively ending the conversation. As this failure of communication becomes apparent to him, Wright states, “A void hung between us” (*Pagan* 269). And the man races off in his car. We are presented with a moment of irreconcilable difference and the failure of communication. What is it that creates this void, this abyss, particularly in a text in which the goal ostensibly is the understanding of others?

This scene begins with a set of assumptions, assumptions about the identities at play in this encounter and the relations upon which to forge an alliance. In the beginning of this scene, Wright suggests that both figures are aligned, not through nation of origin or religion, but through their mutual experience of oppression and having been constructed as the other in their “homes.” Wright implies at the beginning that their status as strangers in the nation should provide them with a shared experience and serve as a basis of understanding and a shared oppositional politics. Yet the vision of a shared experience is shattered by the end of the scene when they face an impasse of understanding.

Wright continues to question the businessman about the plight of Jews in Spain, but it is clear that the businessman has a different agenda. Wright questions the Jewish businessman’s insistence on his own Spanish national identity. Having abandoned the U.S. as a home, Wright assumes the businessman would do the same with Spain, at least in conversation. He balks at the businessman’s attempt to reincorporate himself into the national body in the midst of the anti-Semitism of the present and the expulsion of the past.<sup>74</sup> It is interesting that Wright notes this man’s Spanish manners and that he delivers a short lecture to Wright placing the Sephardic diaspora as central to Spanish identity, explaining

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<sup>74</sup> Weiss suggests that Wright has underestimated the effects of the holocaust on Jews in Europe, assuming that Spanish anti-Semitism would be intolerable for the businessman when, comparatively, it might not be (34).

that they have been responsible for spreading the Spanish language and parts of its culture around the world. It seems that this man is set on finding a way to reincorporate his own Jewish identity into the national one, without rejecting or assimilating away the distinct Sephardic difference; in fact, he insists he is already Spanish despite the state's presumed stance on his difference. This is this individual's response to oppression of the Franco regime. He is finding his own way to resist. Yet Wright apparently rejects the attempt. He seems to be suggesting that the Jewish man cannot claim such an identity and it is implied that he ought not want to. Is this Wright's discomfort with national identities as a whole? Or is he suggesting that this man's difference, his Jewishness, is incompatible with any Spanish identity? Must his position as a Jew be embraced by the national culture for him to have the right to call himself Spanish?

In this moment Wright's own attitude suggests that their only path toward communication is an oppositional politics, but they create no dialogue about the thing that binds and also separates them—the possibilities of communities that incorporate difference without absorbing it or rejecting it.

*Wright's Travel: Methods of Relation and Ethical Communication*

Despite the failure of communication in this instance, we can see in the development of Wright's work a more positive model that is derived from purposeful travel. Dislodging old maps, old sets of relations, is important, but they must be replaced with new sets of relations that take into account the provisionality that Wright's work exposes. Wright insists on a separation of Spain from the West. Yet even as he challenges the conventional construction of the world, he replicates the way in which the structure is created. That is, in

the last example, Wright dismantles one static set of borders and relations only to replace it with a new set of boundaries that are not flexible enough to take into account the changing meaning of identity categories and the changes in the multiplicity of identity over time.

In *The Color Curtain*, however, we get a glimpse of another opportunity for Wright's travel to exemplify his emerging vision. After listening to the opening speeches at the conference and conducting a set of interviews, Wright struggles to understand what he has witnessed. Though enthralled to see leaders of the Asian and African nations meeting together to discuss ideas without the leadership of the Western World at hand, he is disturbed by the talk of race and religion that predominates. Yet at this moment, rather than simply rejecting the position being taken by the speakers, Wright expresses the need to take these ideas seriously. At the end of the text, as he asks the West to engage with these nations, he reiterates the need for the West to engage with them as equal partners in conversation, rather than as the bearers of truth.

Despite his own skepticism about the ways in which they are framing their arguments he suggests that engaging them is the way forward, is the third way (beyond the dialectic between the first two worlds) that might transcend the fixed three-world map and begin a new set of global relations in which all parts of the world are incorporated into a global body rather than needing to be subsumed into one of the existing paradigms. "New terms," he says, "will have to be found, terms that will fit the nature of the human material involved" (Wright, *Color* 220). He even suggests their own fragile relations at the conference as a model: "If Asians and Africans can sink their national and religious differences for what they feel to be a common defense of their vital interests, as they did at Bandung, then the same process of unity can serve for other ends" (Wright, *Color* 220).

But what is it that makes Wright open to this possibility? What allows him to move past his own deep seated convictions, to suspend judgment and evaluate seriously the ideas of others that he engages at this point?

Wright heads to the Bandung Conference thinking he will act as a translator between the intellectuals and politicians at the conference, on the one hand, and his primarily “Western” audience, on the other. He believes that his status as a black man not only will help him identify with the people he will interview but also will enable them to open up to him. He believes they will see in him an ally, a comrade. Yet when he arrives in Bandung and watches the conference unfolding, he begins to understand a difference between himself and those he has come to write about:

Well, what I heard from the lips of many Asians startled me, reduced my strictures to the status of a “family quarrel.” . . . I found that many Asians hated the West with an absoluteness that no American Negro could ever muster. The American Negro’s reactions were limited, partial, centered as they were, upon specific complaints; he rarely ever criticized or condemned the conditions of life about him as a whole . . . . Once his particular grievances were redressed, the Negro reverted to a normal Western outlook. The Asian, however, had been taken from his own culture before he had embraced or had pretended to embrace Western culture; he had, therefore, a feeling of distance, of perspective, of objectivity toward the West which tempered his most intimate experiences of the West. (Wright, *Color* 25-6)

Wright recognizes that his own relationship to the West is differently understood and represented back to him by those he interviews. Therefore, the relation he believed to exist

between himself and his interviewees is different from what he had previously imagined. In addition, he faces the fact that his own identity, his vision of himself as a critic of the West, might be different from what he had previously envisioned. What Wright must recognize here is that the self is not a specific, bounded location on the map. It is, as he suggested in *Pagan Spain* but develops here more fully, a set of relations to various categories constantly subject to reconfiguration as time passes or one encounters others. Wright seems to recognize that for his travel to be educational, he must not only compare himself to the other he engages, but also monitor the way he is received and the views the other has of the communication.

When he contemplates this process, his observations do more to develop the political wisdom he is looking for. In this case, Wright develops a sensitivity to the context from which the religious and racial feelings he witnesses have emerged. He becomes more cognizant of the ways in which material conditions that shape the lives of people who have been colonized in Asia and Africa might be very different from conditions in other spaces, even those in which oppression exists. While his own universal humanist views would normally have him balk at considering the importance of identity to development of a politics, he works hard to understand the speakers at the conference who insist on just that. He admits that despite his desire to do so, these identities are hard to wish away; he runs into the limits of his own rational universalism, uncharacteristically claiming at one point that at times “[l]ogic cannot solve problems whose solutions come not by thinking but by living” (Wright, *Color* 55).

## Ethical Models of Communication in Travel

If travel is to be recuperated as a method of developing political theory (the development of *theoria* discussed in Chapter 1), then the next project is to develop an ethical method for relating to others and other places in a way that fulfills its political goals. We can see that in Wright's text, the outcome of his conversations with others is affected by the way in which he chooses to engage that person. The complications of perspective and identity at play in any moment of intercultural communication are bafflingly complex for any one person to account for. What this suggests, then, is that the method of relation between the two partners in conversation is the crucial aspect of one's identity, as discussed in the analysis of Yerby's novel in Chapter 3 above.

This calls for an ethical approach to intercultural communication that works toward understanding and genuine consideration of others' views and differences, all with a critical eye towards the self. Lorenzo Simpson provides a useful model of the dialogical interaction that can be used in communication with others in the context of travel. Simpson explains that one enters the interaction with a set of one's own beliefs as well as preconceptions of what one thinks the other believes. Not only must the traveler attempt to hear the other out in his or her own terms, but the traveler must also be willing to hear what the other thinks of the traveler and his or her culture. That is, one must hear the other's version of oneself, which may or may not be recognizable, and must take this version of reality seriously. Only when a person has heard this and understood that it is truth for the other, can that person begin to judge the validity of the beliefs. If one uses such a method of relating to others, then one must continually reevaluate the self, listening to others versions of truth and reevaluating one's own (Simpson 78-98).

Wright demonstrates the power of this approach to communication with the different other despite his own personal misgivings. Wright's own position is clear. He sees religious and racial feelings as irrational. What he would like to come out of such an exchange is that the Asian and African countries move closer to the "secular" West while imbuing the West with some of the "primal" values he has described in other works. However, Wright's prescription for future relations does not suggest this is the way to approach the situation; instead, the ideas that emerge towards the end of Wright's book are more open-ended than that. Because of the economic and power differential, he still sees the need for the West to reach out to these nations. Yet between them there needs to be a relation of equality, one in which each side engages in the dialogue, translation, and evaluation of ideas inherent in the practice of *theoria*. Each must express its own positions but also listen to the other's translation of what it hears and sees, and vice versa.

Such a form of communication is required if we wish engagement with others to be educational, and certainly if we wish to employ these interactions in a political understanding of the world. Yet it can also help to build the potential of identity politics beyond what Wright sees as its divisive tendencies. The potential lies in the fact that one major form of identifying oneself, that is, one's identity, takes no other form than one's method of relating to others. This goes a long way towards reactivating the identity politics of which Wright was so skeptical. It can help us move beyond the identity categories to the kind of inventive alliances that Wright envisioned without having to disclaim the lived experience of them. The old categories are still useful and their very real impact on people's lives need not be ignored. Of course, the goal of this form of relation will need to be one that deals with

difference rather than eliminating it. In other words, it will need to focus on those skills built by the practice of *theoria*, the honest attempt at understanding through dialogue.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion—A Stranger in Spain?

Wayfinding maps, it seems, do not just tell us where we are going, they also tell us who we are.

James R. Ackerman, “Finding Our Way”

This project began with the recognition that a number of well-known African American writers had traveled to Spain and written significant works about it as a result. As discussed in Chapter 1, this set of texts is striking because Spain is not a location generally associated with African American writing—or African American perspectives on the diaspora. This study, then, proceeded as an investigation into several lines of questioning: What is it about Spain that attracted these writers? What did they see in Spain as they travelled? And to what use did they put their representations of Spain? As a result of asking these questions of each of the texts in this study, several themes emerged. Despite the very different genres of these texts (traditional travelogue, reporting, fiction, poetry, memoir), there are certain elements and representational strategies these texts have in common.

First, the representations of Spain in this travel writing draw on Spain as an exceptional location within Europe. They point to the so-called Moorish past of Spain as a central defining episode in its history, one that makes it different from the rest of Western Europe. For most, this opens the door for representing Spain as having already been

Africanized, an attribute that is almost always represented as a positive trait in these works. This allows Spain to be used as a hybrid space that connects Africa, Europe, and African Americans in ways that allow these writers to wrestle with issues of race and nation.

Second, in this travel writing, the literary cartographies these writers create as they map Spain for their readers challenge the global relations implied in the traditional maps based on the colonial modern European cartography. Rather than choosing to make Spain African or European, they use Spain to undermine any distinction between the two, opting instead for network mappings, for transnational configurations of space, that help us rethink relations among peoples around the world and the identities associated with them. The literary cartographies in this study help us understand the importance of focusing on mapmaking processes rather than the final map as a product. The network maps they create recognize the fluidity of spaces being mapped. Each node is subject to flows surrounding it, reminding us that the network is always in flux, just as individual identities are always being formed in relation to others.

And third, these texts all demonstrate the power of travel writing for personal and political transformation. Understanding global contexts for an African American experience is central to the work in which these writers engage as they recuperate a tradition of travel for critical self-reflection and political understanding. Travel writing is well-suited as a medium in which to participate in this process because it can provide a critically reflective literary cartography. These texts show us the importance of relating to others in the development of the self, calling for ethical approaches to relating to others as key in defining a self in a contingent context.

The mapping processes in which these texts engage help us question geographic spaces and identities that have been normalized, whether they are national or racial, which can help us imagine new relations between people of various locations; they also show, however, the difficulty of changing our entrenched imaginative geography of the world. As Chapter 1 explains, we have learned to imagine people around the globe as intimately linked with specific spaces.

In the rest of this chapter I will examine a recent African American travel memoir of Spain, Lori Tharps's *Kinky Gazpacho* (2008). My purpose in looking at a contemporary piece of literature is to consider how a narrative written after the late-twentieth-century debates about identity politics can help us reflect on the ideas developed in the earlier texts and their trajectory. I will start, however, with a reconsideration of Schomburg's trip to Spain, the earliest journey this dissertation treats, because Tharps's narrative is tied to it in many ways. At the end of her book, in fact, Tharps retraces Schomburg's steps through southern Spain, in search of the history of black people in its cities.

#### *Schomburg and Spanish Blackness—An Afro-Puerto Rican Perspective*

Arthur Schomburg's 1926 trip to Europe, including his time in Spain, both reflected and nourished his hunger to uncover the transnational history of the African diaspora. In his participation in scholarly societies, such as the American Negro Academy and the Negro Society for Historical Research, Schomburg consistently drew attention to the important role of black people in Latin America as well as in Europe, and his collection of books about black history in languages other than English, covering histories other than that of the U.S., also testifies to his interest in spreading this information (Sinnette 55, 127). In fact,

Schomburg increasingly bristled against what he perceived as the isolated North American focus and identity many Harlem Renaissance intellectuals embraced. In response to a question concerning the “foreign negro,” he wrote: “Personally I am unconcerned with the prejudicial angle of where a man comes from . . . the more I hear a man prattle about foreign-born the less he is in my estimation” (qtd. in Hoffnung-Garskof 38). Schomburg’s insistence on the international vision of an African diaspora reveals not only his own beliefs in the reality of such diasporic connections but also the complicated nature of his relationship to discourses of race and nation that accompanied his notion of diasporic identity. If we understand Schomburg’s identity as one that is constructed through his relation to several identity categories as well as one that changes as he migrates between locations, we can better understand Schomburg’s particular perspective, as well as those that he opposed.<sup>1</sup>

Schomburg was born Arturo Alfonso Schomburg in 1874 in what is now a part of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Raised and educated in Puerto Rico, he was fluent in Spanish, could read French, and immigrated to New York as a young man in 1891, seven years before Puerto Rico was ceded by the Spanish to the U.S. after the Spanish-American War. Schomburg’s relation to national identity, then, would have been complex, particularly in relation to both Spain and the U.S. Schomburg was active in the Puerto Rican and Cuban independence movements in New York, calling for their liberation from Spanish colonial power. Yet after the Spanish-American war Puerto Rico came under U.S. control rather than becoming independent as he had hoped, placing the U.S. in a colonial relation to Puerto Rico. And while the 1917 Jones Act granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, Schomburg’s relation to that citizenship would have been mediated through his identity as black. Any national

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffnung-Garskof’s “The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg: On Being Antillano, Negro, and Puerto Rican in New York 1891-1938” is an excellent account of Schomburg’s movement among various communities throughout his life.

affiliation for Schomburg, therefore, would have been tenuous, while his lived experience of blackness would have been consistent in many ways.<sup>2</sup> It is through his relation to Puerto Rico, the U.S., and through blackness that we can probe his relation to the Harlem Renaissance and to Spain.

This complicated set of relations is also what helped solidify Schomburg's role among the Harlem Renaissance intelligentsia. As Hoffnun-Garskof describes, "He became a respected race leader . . . because being fluent in Spanish and competent in French, Schomburg was able to serve as a correspondent and translator between North American blacks and a network of black intellectuals that grew within the new imperial order in the Atlantic basin" (40). Schomburg's interest in mining the Spanish archives for what they could yield for the construction of a black history fueled his representation of Spain as a space that was congenial to black intellectuals. For example, in one of his most compelling articles about his trip to Spain, Schomburg recalls a visit to the Prado in Madrid to see "The Calling of Matthew," a painting by Juan de Pareja, a servant of the celebrated Spanish artist Diego Velazquez. Schomburg's quest to "look upon the world of this colored slave who had succeeded in the face of discouragement" is almost thwarted when he finds that the wing in which the painting is displayed is temporarily closed for renovation (154). Schomburg, however, aided by his knowledge of Spanish, presents his case to the director of the museum and after a friendly conversation is allowed access to the restricted zone to view the painting. One might imagine this episode ending quite differently in the U.S. Schomburg, because he has already conceived of Spain as a black space, finds blackness wherever he looks. As

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<sup>2</sup> Schomburg claims to have been told by a teacher in Puerto Rico that black people had not contributed anything of substance to the island (Sinnette).

described in Chapter 2, Schomburg's other articles all document seeing a history of black figures throughout the cities in southern Spain.

### *Kinky Gazpacho*

Lori Tharps's 2008 travel memoir *Kinky Gazpacho* recounts her personal relationship to Spain, including her travels there and marriage to a Spaniard. It is a tale of journeys—one of her developing relationship with Spain as she travels back and forth from the country and another of her relationship to blackness during this time period. While struggling to understand “Spain's peculiar attitude towards blackness” (91), vacillating between calling it racism and ignorance, she works through her own relationship to blackness through contemporary discourses of race and nation.

Tharps's experience of travel to Spain is represented quite differently from Schomburg's. In her engagement with Spanish culture (alternately presented as a European culture in the process of othering her, and as an other to the more developed U.S.), Tharps's narrative is also a narrative of her relationship to national and racial discourses. Her relationship to Spain corresponds to her relationship to her own blackness. It is only at the end of the book, after she—ironically and apparently unknowingly—retraces Schomburg's journey in search of black figures and history in Spain, that she seems to begin the remapping so common in the travel writing considered in this dissertation. Understanding the factors at play in her relation to Spain can help us understand both the differences between her text and Schomburg's and the similarity of the ending of her book to his writing.

At the beginning of the narrative Spain is a space onto which Tharps projects her desires. As a child, she imagines that Spain will be a romantic site in which race will not

matter. Originally developing an interest in Spain through Spanish language classes in school, Tharps, as one of the few black students in a wealthy suburban private school, finds Spanish class a place where all students are foreign. The space of the classroom becomes an equalizer, indeed a place where she can excel if she pleases, based on her command of the language. Yet by the time she actually travels to Spain, this open space is already taking another form. As a Smith College student preparing for a study-abroad experience, she is challenged by friends and family about why she “was so intent on going to a country of colonizers instead of a country where the people had been oppressed. Like oppression was a selling point” (58). In this moment, we can hear two ideas being expressed simultaneously. First, Spain is being figured as a white Western European space—a space of the colonizer—one to be wary of when it comes to racial politics. And second, Tharps is ambivalent about going to a space in which race will be a clear and present issue. She had already expressed an interest in Spain because she “wanted access to another world when this one [black and white Milwaukee] got to be too much” (13).

In fact, one can see both of these ideas in Tharps’s accounts of her earlier travel to Morocco. Towards the beginning of her book, ostensibly in an anecdote about the need to embrace other ways when one travels, she tells the story of her trip to Morocco through a high school exchange program. As a young girl, she is overwhelmed by culture shock during the beginning of her stay in Casablanca. After being convinced by a friend to embrace the strangeness of the experience (strange language, food, and customs), however, she finds that she enjoys her excursion into another culture. Yet her relation to race and nation seems to be at the heart of her explanation of why she so enjoys her immersion in Moroccan culture. She had initially wanted to visit Africa to “discover [her] roots” (23), but with choices of

locations limited by the program to Morocco and Egypt, she settled on visiting Morocco. When she arrives, she is informed by the program director in the country that Moroccans are not “Africans” but “Arabs.” Tharps snidely thinks to herself that “the last time I checked, Morocco was still attached to the continent of Africa,” criticizing those who insist on such a distinction for distancing themselves from a concept of Africa because it is related to racial blackness (25). Yet she later does something similar, for she admits to experiencing particular satisfaction when people of Morocco whom she encounters perceive her primarily as American rather than black. Even if being identified as American means being perceived as “easy” and wealthy, she explains her satisfaction with such an identity:

I had experienced a world outside of my reality, where the color of my skin didn't define me. My Americanness did. I liked that much better. Now I knew for sure that I wanted to continue traveling the world. I wanted to see if only in America I would be forced to define myself by a collective history.

(36)

The satisfaction she felt with this trip, and with travel in general, seems at this point in the narrative to depend on the extent to which her racial identity, about which she feels too aware while she is at home, can be eclipsed by something else, including a national identity.

With this separation of Morocco from a “darker” sub-Saharan Africa, which Tharps first resisted, then embraced, Spain comes to be mapped more distantly from “Africa,” and the slipperiness of the designation of African in relation to the racial concept of blackness is revealed. In fact, one of the key facets of the former representations of Spain—prominent, for example, in Hughes, McKay, and Yerby—that seems strikingly absent in the work by Tharps is the figure of the Moor. The absence of the Moor is all the more striking because

several decades of cultural tourism in Spain based on the legacy of the *convivencia* have resulted in their presence in much of the country, cultural artifacts recalling the significant role they played in medieval Spain. Yet despite the migrations of people and the supposed globalization of the world, the line separating an Africa of “Africans” (i.e., sub-Saharan Africa) from Spain, and separating both Africa and Spain from African American space, seems more solidified than before from an American perspective, as articulated by Tharps.

Even if new maps more clearly account for diversity within Africa, the old continental divides seem to have concretized rather than become more porous. For Tharps, Moors are no longer a crucial link to Africanness because Morocco has been distanced from the blackness signified by the term African (a blackness associated with African Americans even though African Americans are also not quite African). Therefore, although the author sees signs of the “Moors” in Spain, she is not seeing Africanness or blackness as the previous writers did. They were willing and anxious for borders to be porous to show the fluidity of people and ideas across those borders. But for Tharps, Spain is largely fixed as a white space, albeit one that needs to be discerned for its perspective on blackness, rather than a location that is marked by a population whose racial identity is the subject of inquiry. Through a large portion of the travel narrative, then, Tharps does not experience Spain as a welcoming site. She is put off by what she calls a lack of political correctness among the Spanish population, and she tires of the attention paid to her blackness. Here Tharps participates in a new Black Legend, not of a racially tainted people, but of a people lacking in racial sensitivity.

Of course, noticing the very different way in which Spain is represented, particularly in relation to race and to the space of Africa, raises historical questions about the cause of

such differences. Why was Spain represented as a far more welcoming site for African Americans in the first six decades of the twentieth century than at the turn of the twenty-first century? Historical and social developments in both nations have contributed to the changes in the geographic imaginary mapping both of these sites.

In contrast to the earlier work that makes Spain a place of revolutionary possibility or a place of an oppressed people under Franco, Tharps assumes Spain to be part of this larger space associated with systems of power in Europe. Such an identity was possible only with the restoration of democracy after the death of Franco in 1975. If the people of Spain are no longer suffering under a totalitarian regime, as Wright portrayed them, then Spain can be restored to its position as the colonizer rather than aligned with the colonized. Without a counter-narrative of oppression (especially given the increased distance from Africa), the Spanish are no longer equated with people of the African Diaspora. Meanwhile, the U.S. embrace of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and culture wars of the 1980s allows Tharps, ironically, to call for “cultural sensitivity” abroad (103). In Tharps’s text we can see how race and racial discourses are still being assigned to specific national spaces.

One can see this in a story Tharps tells of imagining her children with her Spanish husband before they were born. “Our kids will basically be Cuban,” she tells him, “half Black and half Spanish” (158). In an effort to imagine a black Spanishness, she must imagine an alternative state—Cuba. At one point in the narrative she had rejected the idea of associating herself with a collective history, turning away from an African diasporic identity after her trip to Morocco. And now, in this conversation with her husband, she has difficulty imagining her children in a transnational context, without a specific state identity. This view is in stark contrast to Schomburg, born a black Puerto Rican, who emphasized his

transnational diasporic identity even as his fluency in Spanish was central to his studies and perspective. At the start of Tharps's narrative, it seems that national affiliations are even stronger and more bounded than in the first half of the twentieth century, at least for the African American writers considered in this study.

This travel narrative's perspective on the relation of African American identity to Spain by way of concepts of race and nation does exhibit some changes towards the end as the author continues to probe her relationship to Spain and the Spanish culture's supposed attitude towards blackness (something that by the end she admits could hardly be determined as a clear, unified reaction). Despite her initial attempt to present a fixed and bounded perspective on Spain, to find out if "Spaniards love or hate black people" (201), she eventually allows Spain to confound the stable white European space she had created for it. The global imaginary and mapping of Spain that results from her engagement, despite a starting place so different from the previous travel narratives, does bear a resemblance to the others' by the end.

#### Tharps's Remapping of Spain

Tharps's representation of Spain changes as the desires with which she approaches her travel change. She initially wanted to escape race and be welcomed by the culture without reference to it. This, she finds, is impossible in Spain. Even if from ignorance rather than disdain, the Spanish have a way of reminding her of her blackness. After finishing the first academic year in Spain she comments,

Spain hadn't embraced me, hadn't welcomed me with open arms and allowed me to forget about the color of my skin. If anything, being in Spain had made

me more aware of being Black, but that wasn't a bad thing, I realized, because once I got past the irritating stares and comments, I was allowed to redefine Black for Spaniards who really cared to listen and learn. (126)

Her experience in Spain thus raises the very issue she had wished to escape. Yet, through trying to understand their responses to her blackness, she must investigate and define her own relationship to it. This proves to be a positive experience for her because, in Spain, she is able to define blackness as she would like rather than being forced into a limited construction of it. She suggests that Spain provides the opportunity for a kind of self-determination—in contrast to limited opportunities in the U.S. She later expresses a concern about how her husband-to-be will respond to the American version of blackness conjured in the media.

When Tharps does marry a Spaniard and begins raising children who travel with her to Spain, her relationship with the country changes yet again. She expresses a desire to connect to the country in another way, “to find some part of [her]self in [her] husband’s culture” (177); she hopes to no longer feel like a “stranger” in Spain. Tharps’s way of finding herself in Spanish culture is to research and reveal what she regards as a latent blackness in its history—the history of black slavery in Spain. Ironically, however, this is precisely what Kristeva’s concept of the stranger does, reveal the otherness within the self:<sup>3</sup> “It’s so strange because Spanish people do not recognize Black as something familiar,” says Tharps, “But there is something about the Spanish soul, perhaps its own Black past, that welcomes Black people into the country” (193). Again, here we can see Tharps willing to reshape the boundaries of what had been portrayed as a white colonial space.

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<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of Kristeva’s notion of the stranger in Chapter 4 above.

To conceive of a Spain to which she feels connected, however, Tharps places it in a Black Atlantic context of slavery. This helps explain an otherwise odd final section of the book in which she decides to research and visit sites associated with enslaved blacks and black communities, searching for signs of blackness there. She turns towards the Black Atlantic, particularly in her interest in Cádiz, in order to map Spain in relation to her African American experience. This also echoes her devotion to her Cuban Spanish teacher in school, whom she believed secretly preferred her because of her dark skin. The Cuban teacher's brownness becomes her own link to Spanishness through the racial history of the Americas.

On her journey to document black slavery in Spain, ostensibly for herself and her black reading audience (she had pitched this as a story to be published in a black travel magazine), Tharps unknowingly repeats part of the journey with which this dissertation began, Schomburg's travels in Spain. Tharps visits Sevilla to locate the part of the city that was inhabited by black people in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, visiting the same Capilla de los Negritos and examining art by and about black subjects. And like Schomburg, she contemplates the "disappearance" of black people into the general population of the country. The statues of black saints and brown Jesuses that she finds when back in Cádiz bring her comfort as they help her reconfigure both her relationship to Spain and its relation to blackness.

To this point in her narrative, Tharps's orientation to the spaces in her travel writing has been based on the national boundaries that developed from the early modern European maps, albeit updated ones, attributing discrete attributes to discrete locations. The pull of the old geographic imaginary is still strong. Yet in the end, it is still unsatisfactory. The section in which Tharps rewrites Schomburg's journey reflects a need to create a sense of belonging

in that world, which has been significantly shaped by colonialism, migrations, and racism, similar to that expressed by Schomburg. Her starting place is significantly different from the other writers in this study because of the suggested relation to race through nationality. Tharps, writing in the twenty-first century, is far more comfortable with an American identity but reveals a discomfort with a specific black identity given her childhood experiences—she is too “black” for her private white suburban school and not “black” enough in her year in public school. This contrasts, for example, with Schomburg’s complicated relation to nation, which made his reliance on a diasporic identity understandable. And his Puerto Rican ancestry in Harlem can help us also understand his insistence on a global perspective for that identity. While Schomburg’s tenuous national affiliations heightened a sense of diasporic identity, Tharps’s comfort with an American identity masks her discomfort with a black identity, one she appears to be working out by tracking Spanish responses to blackness as she moves from desiring an escape from blackness, to focusing completely on race, and finally to accepting a less clearly defined diasporic identity. Spain still seems to have the power to contest the firmness of categories delineated in the old geographic imaginary.

The curious result of Tharps’s journey, however, is that despite starting with such a different map, she does in fact move in a direction similar to the other writers—towards a less bounded conception of spaces around the world, and one that is based on encounters with the other. To be sure, her book develops a more personal story, conforming more closely to the traditional modern travel narrative of self-discovery than to the deliberate political engagement that the other authors in the study pursue. Yet even so, it still shows the political uses of the transformative effects of travel. Through reflections on travel, the author is able to debate and remap the context that her own transnational family demands. It is,

therefore, worthwhile to consider what kinds of moments provide the transformation that she undergoes.

### Dialogue and Relations

To account for the change Tharps experiences, it is useful to examine the final episode of the book in relation to the considerations Wright raises for us as a result of his own travels, that is, a consideration of the type of dialogue that makes travel useful. Throughout the book, Tharps comments several times on her fears of what her new family will think or feel about her blackness or the research she is completing about blackness in Spain. Yet only at the end, once she has herself decided that one cannot clearly and easily summarize the racial thinking of a nation (both because racial thinking is far too complex and because one cannot arbitrarily decide on the bounds and single identity of a “nation”), is she able to hear the individuals with whom she is engaged in conversation. As Wright’s work about First World relations to the Third World suggests, one’s identity is a function not only of his or her relation to a variety of concepts, but also of how the other sees the self. If identity is created in relation to others, then conversation with the other requires hearing how the other sees oneself on the other’s own terms. This means understanding one’s relation to the concepts defined by the other.

The final anecdote in the book by Tharps suggests the value of such an action. After voicing her anxiety about how her husband’s family has felt about her blackness (and her research project) throughout the book, she finally hears a bit of their perspective on their own terms. Knowing that she has been hunting for evidence of black slavery in Spain’s past, her sister-in-law and mother-in-law greet her excitedly one day when she comes home from

work. They present to her a black baby doll that the sister-in-law has had in her room among her other dolls, one that had been her mother's when she was a girl, and one that Tharps had never noticed in the house. "Why did you have a black baby doll?" Tharps asks. "I don't know," answers her mother-in-law. "I guess because she was the prettiest one. And I wanted the prettiest doll" (206). Tharps recalls tears of emotion in response to their presentation of the doll, and reports that it "flipped a switch in [her] brain" (206). She enthusiastically thanks her mother-in-law, and when asked "for what," she thinks,

For giving me the freedom to just be and to strip away all of the racial baggage I've been hauling back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean all these years. For making me think about Spain in individual instances instead of broad strokes . . . . But since I didn't know how to translate 'racial baggage,' I just said, "Because you think I'm pretty." (206)

Hearing her mother-in-law discuss the doll in her own terms allows Tharps to imagine their relationship through her mother-in-law's perspective, that is, seeing herself through the other's eyes. This moment gives her the ability to rethink her relation to Spain, and consequently to herself, as a product of "individual instances" rather than in "broad strokes," freeing her from the national and racial boundaries she had originally constructed.

### *Conclusions and Further Questions*

Contemporary discussions of globalization often imply that national borders are fairly porous since they track the migration of ideas and people across such borders. Indeed, the idea of a "flat world" suggests that the internet and commerce have pulled diverse areas of the globe into the same flat playing field. Yet the geographic imaginary formed during the

early modern period, with the rise of colonialism and the nation state itself, still informs the ways in which we think of ourselves in relation to people in other spaces around the world (as we can see in the beginning of Tharps's book). Even if people cross borders, the perception of other places and the people associated with them are stubbornly persistent, as contemporary U.S. debates about immigration, the "developing" world, and the "Muslim" world show. How we relate to others (which is, of course, a reflection of how we see ourselves) is often based on these perceptions, and this is important for both how we approach others personally (as in Tharps's text) and how we approach them politically (as Wright stresses).

Travel literature is both an exceptionally useful and a difficult literature to examine when considering how we articulate such perceptions. Because travel often elicits a heightened awareness of nation and race, African American travel writing, for example, is useful for understanding the intersecting roles of race and nation in the articulation of a diasporic identity. In the texts that are the subject of this narrative, one can see how race and nation vary in their importance and in their contributions to constructed identities as individuals change location. We can also see the impact of the changing set of variables contributing to identity construction as people with diasporic identities attempt to build coalitions with others. The activity of travel can encourage the critical self-reflection necessary in mapping out the roles that a variety of categories (race, gender, class, nation, etc.) play in how we evaluate our own culture and that of others. The writers that are the focus of this dissertation use their travel writing to attempt a reformulation of our global imaginary in ways that help us revise colonial European ideas about the West as separate and

superior space to others, to whom it would have much to teach and from whom it would have little to learn.

Yet travel writing also presents problems. Such writing has as a goal the production of difference; we read travel writing to read about an other place or people. With such an agenda, is it possible to create a travel writing that can serve one's one purposes (critical self-reflection) without creating the other as, in fact, the other—a stereotype? Even the authors in this dissertation, so sensitive to discourses of difference, at times project orientalized fantasies of Spanishness onto the people of Spain. If travel writing is to avoid this problem, how can it represent other people and places in ways that do not repeat colonial versions of travel tales yet still allow for difference? With attention being paid to popular travel books, for example the popularity of both the book and movie version of Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*, it is important to think about the role of travel writing in our culture and in popular imaginings of the rest of the world.

In addition to the questions about travel writing raised here, this set of texts also asks us to think about questions related to the processes of identity being suggested in these texts. The texts suggest a model of identity that is always in process and is constituted through interactions with others. In other words, identity is produced as the individual reconfigures his or her relation to spaces and people. If interaction with the other forms a basic constituent part of one's identity, then how does one govern those interactions? How does one develop an ethical and productive method of relating to others when difference is encountered? What role, as Wright's work seems to ask, will translation need to play in responsible, ethical interaction? And how can this be transferred from a personal context to a political one?

The African American travel writing examined in this dissertation leads us to these questions as these writers attempt to help us imagine systems of global relations that could challenge the colonial European order they see still operating beneath the surface of interactions in the early twentieth century. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these questions still need answers.

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