Orientalist Solidarity: José Martí and Cuba's Vaccine Internationalism

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Abstract:

Close examination of the names of Cuba's vaccines against COVID-19 and their ideological weight reveals the role of 19th-century discourses—and particularly Orientalism—within post-1959 Cuban cultural politics and specifically 21st-century internationalism and models of patriotism promoted domestically. This analysis of the use of 19th-century cultural ideals and symbols steeped in Orientalism focuses on the ramifications of José Martí's (1853-1895) verse play *Abdala* (1869) in contemporary Cuban cultural politics. It sheds light on, not only the paradoxical Orientalist foundations of Cuban internationalism, but the dark side of South-South solidarity. The Orientalism surrounding one of the vaccine names, Abdala, creates confusion in relations with the Arab world. Moreover, through a shared vocabulary and symbology, Cuban vaccine internationalism is intertwined with nationalist rhetoric and oppressive domestic policies. Analyzing Martí's *Abdala* reveals that this instance of solidarity is a double-edged sword that, in addition to being part of international political alliance-building, creates barriers to South-South dialogue, and is used to contain dissent in the domestic sphere.

Keywords: Cuba; Arab world; José Martí; *Abdala*; Coronavirus Pandemic; COVID-19 Vaccines; Internationalism; Orientalism; Solidarity; South-South Relations

Building on expertise in biotechnology and an established program of medical internationalism, Cuba made headlines during the COVID-19 pandemic due to its launch of vaccine internationalism using homegrown vaccines.[1] Media accounts have included cursory explanations of the names given to these vaccines by Cuban authorities. However, a close examination of the names and their ideological weight reveals the role of 19th-century discourses—including Orientalism—within post-1959 Cuban cultural politics, specifically within 21st-century internationalism and models of patriotism promoted domestically. Both Cuban internationalism and the Cuban COVID-19 vaccine nomenclature are rooted in the legacy of the renowned Cuban poet and independence movement leader José Martí (1853-1895).

José Martí, the most famous *mambí*, or fighter for Cuban independence from Spain, is known among Cubans as "el Maestro" or "el Apóstol," short for "el apóstol de la independencia de Cuba." While these nicknames are readily recognized, what has not yet been fully acknowledged is the role of the Moor in the mythmaking surrounding Martí. This analysis of the use of 19th-century texts,

symbols, and cultural ideals steeped in Orientalism in contemporary Cuba sheds light not only on the paradoxical Orientalist foundations of Cuban internationalism, but also on the shadowy downside—the lingering coloniality, to use Aníbal Quijano's terminology—of South-South solidarity. It demonstrates how the complex Spanish relationship with the Moor persists in Martí's works and Cuban invocations of it, and consequently troubles expressions of South-South solidarity.

Recent scholarly work across various fields calls for an examination of the now often-referenced term "solidarity."[2] As a recognition of common interests and goals, solidarity can take many forms, and, as delineated by Barbara Prainsack and Alena Buyx, can occur at inter-personal, community, and institutional levels (54-57). Amid manifestations of action taken on the basis of the recognition of commonality—that is, cooperation—there are also often rhetorical expressions of solidarity—declarations of sympathies or shared feelings and attitudes. These rhetorical gestures are significant given that the term 'solidarity' is often used strategically to try to bridge differences and/or assert power. Solidarity is based on the recognition of commonalities, thereby distinguishing it, to some extent, from clearly asymmetrical forms of assistance, such as charity and foreign aid. However, verbal declarations of solidarity suggest that that shared situation is not self-evident, and acts of solidarity reflect a greater capacity to act, albeit temporarily, on the part of one party versus the other. Some cases of solidarity are built upon more symmetrical relationships, while others are more asymmetrical. The latter category is particularly susceptible to all the dimensions of power inherent in gift-giving and charity that have been the topic of numerous anthropological studies. For these reasons, perhaps the most important distinction is between solidarities that recognize power differentials versus those that do not. Similarly, it is vital to examine closely the workings of power within declarations and acts of solidarity. Although instances of South-South solidarity offer the promise of separate networks that operate outside of the hegemony of the "Global North," realizing the potential of these South-South links requires attentiveness to how power does operate within them.

José Martí, famous for heading the Cuban independence movement and for having a leading role in 19th-century Latin American literature, has pride of place in Cuban culture as an icon of political engagement and freedom. This iconic status is a particularly amazing achievement given that Martí is subject to radically different ideological interpretations, on the one hand, on the part of the communist regime that was formed after the 1959 revolution, and, on the other hand, on the part of ideologues of the anti-Castro Cuban exile community.[3] This essay examines how the post-1959 Cuban regime has utilized Martí's writings on North Africa, in particular, as the foundation of Cuban internationalism—

a suite of initiatives offering political, military, educational, and medical cooperation and support to other "Third World" countries. In connection with this, it focuses on the Orientalism of Martí's verse play *Abdala* and how Martí's *Abdala* and related icons from the 19th-century independence movement are central to the latest major manifestation of Cuban internationalism: the Cuban COVID-19 vaccine project.[4]

For this significant initiative within Cuban solidarity politics, Cuban authorities chose three names for the leading vaccine candidates: Soberana, Mambisa, and Abdala.[5] These names require glossing for the countries that have received a Cuban vaccine and the international community at large; however, for Cubans, they are well-known references. The three interrelated names activate the vocabulary and symbols that were integral to the 19th-century push for autonomy or independence from Spain, and that were used by Castro to present the 1959 revolution as the culmination of Cuba's struggle for freedom—freedom from colonialism as well as capitalist neocolonialism.[6] What follows is an examination of these interconnected names and how, through them, the vaccines create obstacles to South-South dialogue, thereby damaging solidarity initiatives, and also function as a vehicle for oppressive domestic ideologies.

Orientalism Cuban Style

Within literary history, Martí is considered to have been at the transition between Romanticism and *modernismo*, two literary movements replete with exoticism, and thus he wrote many works that participate in the production of a Hispano-American Orient.[7] Although the scholarly work of Julia Kushigian, Ignacio López-Calvo, Araceli Tinajero (2014), and others analyzes Orientalism in Latin America, it primarily focuses on representations of East Asia and literary relationships with East Asia, or fails to distinguish between East Asia, South Asia, and West Asia/the Arab world. That approach risks reinscribing the problematic discourse of a monolithic "Orient" and does not recognize the specificities of the Hispanophone world's relationship with the Arabophone world, particularly through the history of close contact and shared cultural life in medieval Iberia. In the Cuban context, the lingering historical memory about medieval Iberia is reflected in culinary manifestations, such as the staple Cuban dish known as *moros y cristianos,* as well as in literary manifestations, including references to historical, legendary, and imaginary figures associated with al-Andalus, the Arabic term for Muslim-ruled medieval Iberia.

As noted by various critics (e.g., Lina Jardines del Cueto, "La problemática orientalista," Susannah Rodríguez Drissi, and Ivan Schulman), Martí's writings demonstrate a particular interest in

the traditional Spanish Other, the Moor. The term *moro*, or Moor, is a remnant of al-Andalus and the Reconquista. The term is primarily used to refer to people from North Africa, in reference to their darker skin, and by extension to Muslims.[8] It doesn't distinguish between ethnicities—Amazigh (or Berber) vs. Arab—but instead is vaguely centered on geographic, religious, and cultural origins that are associated with physical appearance.[9] Given the recognized cultural achievements of al-Andalus alongside the struggle for territorial control framed within religious ideology that became known as the Reconquista, and the broader context of European Orientalism, the Moor is an ambivalent figure that at times is associated with artistry, erudition, and elegance, at times with lascivious hedonism and barbarity, and at times with righteous combat.[10]

In the middle of the 19th century, the legacy of the often fraught medieval and early modern contact with Muslim Arabs and North Africans was given new life when Spain sought to assuage the loss of most of its colonies in the Americas—all except for Cuba and Puerto Rico—by starting to expand its holdings in North and West Africa. Given the historical and literary antecedents and the current events of the day, in Spanish America and Spain both Romanticism and *modernismo* produced a body of late 19th- and early 20th-century Orientalist literature. These works are set in or otherwise allude to the imaginary Orient created by both the broader European Orientalist archive as well as the particular Spanish relationship with the so-called Orient: the ambivalent Hispanic relationship to Islam and the Arab world due to the history of Muslim Iberia that results in what Barbara Fuchs terms a mix of maurophobia and maurophilia.

Although how Martí constructed and employed the Moor across his oeuvre is beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to delineate at least in broad strokes the type of Orientalism found in his writings.[11] Martí did not write at the service of imperial domination, as is the case with the classic British and French Orientalisms studied by Edward Said. Yet, given the essentialist, romanticizing tropes Martí (re)produces, knowledge and power are still at work in his writings about the so-called Orient. Thus, I characterize Martí's invocations of Arab and Maghrebian cultures as non-imperial, colonial subject Orientalism. In what follows, by delving into Martí's verse play, *Abdala*, I will address the following questions, which are key to understanding this type of Orientalism: What are the aftereffects of Martí's writings about the Moor? How and why does this figure arise in subsequent periods? And more specifically, how is Martí's Abdala—the Moor and the ideals for which he stands—understood and used today?

Martí's Abdala: A Moorish *Mambí*

The earliest example of Martí's Orientalism is his first literary work, the verse drama *Abdala* (1869), which was published a few days after his first published political essay.[12] This literary work, roughly 150 years later, would play a central role in 21st-century Cuban internationalism. *Abdala* takes place in a vaguely defined "Nubia" and presents the eponymous protagonist as a self-sacrificing hero who fights for the liberty of his country. Nubia, a region along the Nile River that stretches from what is today southern Egypt to central Sudan, was home to one of the earliest civilizations in ancient Africa. Over time, it would be conquered by various Mediterranean powers, which, starting in the 14th century, led to its Islamization and Arabization. The play's setting remains vague because, although there are various references to "Nubia" and references to Arabian steeds and scimitars (the broad, curved, single-edged swords associated with Islamicate regions), there are no references to a specific historical period, kingdom, or civilization and only the protagonist bears a Muslim or Arabic name (Abdala, from ʿAbd Allah, meaning Servant of God).[13] In this way, the play displays the timelessness and general lack of specificity typical of Orientalist cultural production, as established by Said.

Written after the start of Cuba's first war of independence (The Ten Years War, 1868-1878), *Abdala*'s political allegory was immediately clear. Rodríguez Drissi points out that in this play "Martí celebrates the revolutionaries of the 1868 independence movement" (91) and goes on to state that "*Abdala* marks the beginning of the evolution of Martí's political writing and, with it, life-time identification with the figure of the Moor and the Arab world" (91). As I put forth with regard to the case of Domingo F. Sarmiento, Spanish American men of letters' identification with an Arab figure of essentialist construction is part of the process of *criollo* self-fashioning, the formation of a national identity in the context of settler colonialism (Civantos, *Between Argentines and Arabs*, 48-51). This type of positive identification with the Arab leads to the expansion of Said's conception of Orientalism, but nonetheless demonstrates the negative ramifications of discursive power over others. Despite Martí's identification with the *mambí*-like Moor, this figure has problematic consequences that linger into the 21st century.

In the opening scene of Martí's *Abdala*, the title character discusses, with characters listed as "Senador" and "Consejeros," the invasion that threatens their homeland. The Senador, addressing Abdala, opens the scene with:

> Noble caudillo: a nuestro pueblo llega
> Feroz conquistador: necio amenaza.
> Si a su fuerza y poder le resistimos,
> En polvo convertir nuestras murallas:

Fiero pinta a su ejército, que monta
Nobles corceles de la raza arábiga;
[…]
Es tanta la fiereza y arrogancia,
Que envió un emisario reclamando
-¡Rindiese fuego y aire, tierra y agua!

The verses emphasize the invading army's threat by mentioning their use of Arabian *corceles*, which, though typically translated as "steeds," specifically refers to tall, lightweight horses that were used in tournaments and battles (Real Academia Española). Abdala responds to this with a defiant message for that invading "tyrant" and the scene ends with the Senador and Consejeros exclaiming "¡Viva Abdala!," thereby positioning him as the beloved hero and setting the groundwork for the emotions surrounding his glorious sacrifice at the play's conclusion.

In Scene II, Abdala, alone on stage, states as part of his soliloquy:

¡Por fin potente mi robusto brazo
Puede blandir la dura cimitarra,
Y mi noble corcel volar ya puede
ligero entre el fragor de la batalla!
¡Por fin mi frente se orlará de gloria;
Seré quien libre a mi angustiada patria

Then the third scene opens with one of Abdala's soldiers, Un Guerrero, telling him that his army is ready for battle:

Ya la hora
De la lucha sonó: la gente aguarda
Por su noble caudillo: los corceles
Ligeros corren por la extensa plaza
Arde en los pechos el valor, y bulle
En el alma del pueblo la esperanza:
Si vences, noble jefe, el pueblo nubio
Coronas y laureles te prepara,
¡Y si mueres luchando, te concede

La corona del mártir de la patria!

As seen in these passages glorifying war and martyrdom for the motherland, the scimitar is the warrior's primary tool. Rodríguez Drissi, by referencing "the battle in La Demajagua (Oriente)" in connection with "the young Arab warrior on his horse, brandishing a scimitar" (92), suggests that the scimitar in *Abdala* references the machetes that were wielded in the first battle of The Ten Year's War. Indeed, the machete, with its wider, curved tip, is reminiscent of the scimitar and the "carga al machete," or machete-wielding charge, of this battle became the signature attack of the *mambí* forces and a symbol of their uprising.[14] Moreover, the *corcel*, or light warhorse, is not only an implement, but a mirror that reflects the high emotions and virile power of the leader and his people—an extension of the soldier's fighting spirit—at the moment when armed struggle (*lucha*) breaks out. Thus, in this play, the scimitar and the steed function as icons of the noble, valiant, and strong *moro* warrior that Abdala embodies, as well as the *mambí* that he symbolizes. Martí's repeated use of the word "lucha" (combat or struggle) interwoven with these Orientalist icons is noteworthy given the role of armed struggle in Cuban political history, of Martí's day and subsequently, and the use of the term "lucha" in Cuba to this day, as explained by Rafael Tarragó and Antoni Kapcia.[15]

The symbolic Orientalist language persists in Scene VII when Abdala's sister, Elmira, expresses her wish to join the warriors: "¡Con cuánto gozo / Esta humillante veste no trocara / Por el lustroso arnés de los guerreros, / Por un noble corcel, por una lanza!" These symbols continue to function later in the same scene when Elmira, chastising her mother for crying upon Abdala's departure for battle, tells her mother that she should be proud and happy that Abdala is leaving to become a hero. Elmira explains that because of her own "cariño ciego" for her brother,

[¡] en sus robustas manos, madre mía,
Le coloqué al partir la cimitarra,
Le dije adiós, y le besé en la frente!
Y ¡vos lloráis, cuando luchando Abdala
De noble gloria y de esplendor se cubre,
Y el bélico laurel le orna de fama!

In the next and final scene, warriors carry in the wounded Abdala, who declares that he is dying happy knowing that Nubia's brave warriors have triumphed and that he has helped defend his homeland: "¡Oh, qué dulce es morir cuando se muere / Luchando audaz por defender la patria!" The

verse play *Abdala* established the North African warrior as a symbol of the just fight for the sovereignty of the homeland, that is, the independence of Cuba from Spain. Given the hero's fatal destiny, retrospectively the play has also been understood as a harbinger of Martí's own death for *la patria*, a prophesy-like message that has contributed to Martí's image as a saintly martyr for the Cuban cause, in short: el Apóstol.

In *Abdala* and later works by Martí, Martí identifies with the Arab and his imputed liberty via the horse—*el corcel arábigo*—as a figure for unfettered, irrepressible strength and freedom, as well as exquisite beauty. Although Schulman, in reference to Martí's oeuvre, points to "motivos orientales de índole decorativa, como […] el empleo frecuente del símbolo 'caballo árabe'" (39), the Arab horse in Martí's works is not simply ornamental. On the one hand, the Arab horse is a symbol of Martí's ideals of freedom, nobility, and unyielding valor in the face of oppression, and also of the *mambí* himself as the quintessential Cuban expression of these ideals. On the other hand, the Arab horse is, rather than simply a form of décor, an object of desire and a site of aesthetics. As Rodríguez Drissi explains, "much like the figure of the Moor in French orientalist constructions, Marti's 'Moor,' as we find him or her in his poetic work, is an object of desire, whether that desire is in the form of a pearl, a Spanish dancer with the eyes of a treacherous moor [sic], hashish or a noble Arab on his steed" (95). I would like to specify further that *lo moro*—Moorishness—is an object of desire because it is understood as a preeminent site of aesthetics. In this way, Martí's Moor is a central figure in the tension between aesthetics, on the one hand, and political and military action, on the other, that is often present in Martí's writings. Martí's Moorish *mambí*, whether as a symbol of freedom and self-sacrifice or as a site of aesthetics, manifests the paradox of anti-imperial Orientalism. In the process of decrying Spanish colonialism, Martí drew on essentialist images of the Moor created by European Orientalism, including its more literary and imperial manifestations.

Martí and the *Moros* in Cuban Internationalism

Within months of taking power, Fidel Castro implemented an internationalist policy, with military, medical, and educational branches providing aid to countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In a famous speech that Castro delivered on September 2, 1960, he announced that "La Asamblea General Nacional del Pueblo de Cuba postula: […] el deber de cada pueblo a la solidaridad con todos los pueblos oprimidos, colonizados" (Castro, "Primera Declaración"). Jardines del Cueto explains that "socialist internationalism as an ideological perspective was—at the beginning—the main drive behind Cuba's missions in Africa and the Middle East, yet it did not take long before these activities became

part of a more pragmatic and strategically oriented Cuban diplomacy" ("The New Barbudos," 68).[16] Indeed, Bert Hoffmann states that "Authoritarian solidarity has been at the heart of the survival story of Cuba's revolutionary government since the early 1960s [….] It was this international insertion that made the Cuban regime immune to the democratization processes that swept the continent in the 1980s" (119). Hoffmann explains that Cuba's initiatives in other parts of the Third World had both "hard power" (military and intelligence) and "soft power" dimensions (122).

To successfully wield the soft power dimensions of Cuban internationalism in the international arena, the Castro regime needed to inspire a commitment to internationalism domestically. The regime sought to accomplish this by developing a 19th-century genealogy for the policy, one tied to Martí himself. In particular, officialist Cuban discourses utilize Martí's essays about the Spanish colonial possessions in North Africa to position Martí as the intellectual and spiritual source of Cuba's post-1959 internationalism policy. Furthermore, the ideals that Martí's *Abdala* promotes—primarily *la lucha por la patria*—are integral to the post-1959 Cuban concepts of the necessity of violent revolution, self-sacrificing patriotism, and internationalism. Thus, Martí's Orientalism is vital to understanding how solidarity, the foundation of internationalism, functions in Cuban culture and politics.

In the first half of the 20th century, Cubans' realization that independence from Spain had left the island in a neo-colonial relationship with the United States led to a series of political upheavals that culminated in the 1959 revolution. The post-1959 Cuban regime has embraced the figure of the *mambí* as an anti-colonial forerunner to the rebels of 1959. More specifically, into the 21st century, Martí, as the *mambí* par excellence, is often invoked as the intellectual and spiritual leader of communist Cuba. As Lillian Guerra has demonstrated, Cuban leaders have strategically deployed Martí as a national icon since the inception of the Cuban Republic in 1902. As noted by Emilio Bejel (3) and others, this trend reached its apex with Fidel Castro and the post-1959 socialist regime. In his analysis of the regime's use of images of Martí, Bejel establishes that "the institutions of the Cuban state have been very active in trying to affect a specific devotion to Martí that uses his images as instruments of hegemonic control, of making *martinianismo* a form of cultural and patriotic common sense that it is very difficult to question" (5). Indeed, as argued by Guerra (117), Martí has been imbued with a quasi-religious status as a Christ-like martyr for the nation, a figure who can only be revered and not questioned.

When Fidel Castro was taken to trial for leading the 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks, his first attempt to overthrow the Batista dictatorship, he declared that Martí was the "intellectual author" of the armed rebellion (Bourne 91-92). After the 1959 revolution, Cuban authorities used slogans

invoking Martí or drawing from Martí's own aphorisms in pro-regime signage and school curricula. The "hombre nuevo" that Che Guevara promoted on the island as the model anti-imperialist also drew from Martí's writings and the image of him that was crafted by the regime. Given that the *hombre nuevo* was to be selfless, cooperative, hardworking, unprejudiced, and non-materialistic, Guevara sought to establish an educational system that was both Marxist and *martiana*. Indeed, the Cuban revolution as a whole came to be characterized in official discourses as "marxista, leninista y martiana."

The *hombre nuevo*, through his selflessness, cooperativeness, and anti-imperialism, was meant to participate in the Marxist concept of proletarian internationalism, and given Martí's role in Cuba's revolutionary ideology, Martí has been celebrated as a proponent of solidarity and internationalism by the post-1959 regime and its supporters. The Castro regime employs Martí's aphorism "Patria es humanidad" as a key element of solidarity discourses and the cornerstone of Cuba's internationalism policy. The phrase not only greets travelers as they arrive at the Havana airport via a sign painted on the side of the terminal building, but can be seen in murals elsewhere on the island. Indeed, Fidel Castro underscores its importance in one of his 2010 "Reflections." After stating that his deep interest in Martí began when he was a schoolboy, he proclaims: "A [Martí] le debo en realidad mis sentimientos patrióticos y el concepto profundo de que 'Patria es humanidad.' La audacia, la belleza, el valor y la ética de su pensamiento me ayudaron a convertirme en lo que creo que soy: un revolucionario" (Castro, "La Revolución Bolivariana").

Supporters of the Castro regime have connected Martí's interest in North Africa to the concept of solidarity. Bernabé López García may have been the first to do so in his 1981 essay on Martí's political writings supporting North African resistance to Spanish colonization, which closes by classifying Martí's stance as one of solidarity. Exuding the official Cuban conception of Martí as the spiritual and ideological visionary of the 1959 revolution's anti-imperialism, López García writes: "Profundo visionario, supo ver […] la revuelta anticolonial de la que sería protagonista nuestro actual siglo. […] se proclamará solidario de la lucha rifeña [of the North African Rif], [….] Y tras comprobar que, desde siglos, 'donde hay pelea injusta, allí está España,' invitará: 'Seamos moros […]'" (297). Later in 1981, in "Martí, antimperialista e internacionalista" the prominent Cuban historian José Cantón Navarro asserts that Martí's verse play *Abdala*, given the fact that the protagonist with whom Martí identifies dies defending his homeland against a foreign invader, offers Martí's belief statement regarding patriotism, and, given "la nacionalidad árabe" of the protagonist, presents the possible seeds of internationalist consciousness (117). Cantón Navarro, after quoting from one of Martí's essays that states that "el patriotismo es un deber santo" (118) and from another text by Martí that depicts an

Arab freedom fighter literally armed to the teeth (119), goes on to remark that "se solidariza Martí con la lucha de los moros del norte de África contra los ocupantes españoles" (120), and concludes by linking Martí to Fidel Castro and the self-sacrificing patriotism of communist Cuba (133-135).

Roberto Fernández Retamar, longtime President of the Casa de las Américas, in an address entitled "Del anticolonialismo al antimperialismo" originally presented in 1992, also links Martí to solidarity. Fernández Retamar affirms that "las advertencias y los combates de José Martí están vivos y encendidos. Su entrega a los pobres de la tierra, su prédica y su conducta auténticamente democráticas, su concepto de la verdadera libertad, su eticismo sin fisuras, su desafiante e inconmovible antirracismo, su solidaridad con los oprimidos del mundo, su apasionado amor a la justicia y a la belleza, la genuinidad y universalidad de sus análisis y planteos constituyen partes inmarcesibles de su legado" (317). Here Fernández Retamar crystalized the understanding of Martí as a champion of third world solidarity that emerged from the post-1959 political orientation toward Tricontinental cooperation and internationalism. In sum, in an effort to provide a genealogy for the post-1959 government's solidarity-based internationalism program, official and officialist discourses have positioned Martí as the ideologue, or patron saint, of Cuban internationalism, highlighting in the Martí "prayer card" his interest in the Arab world.

The Embedding of Martí's *Abdala* and Related 19th-Century Icons in Cuba's Vaccine Internationalism

The COVID-19 pandemic, together with the George Floyd protests, brought the term "solidarity" into wider circulation.[17] As statements about the need to stand with each other in this time of global suffering abounded, the ability versus inability to develop a vaccine against the coronavirus, and then to have access to vaccination, reinforced global disparities. Amid this climate, in the summer of 2020, the Cuban government announced that it was working on its own vaccines. Since the early 1990s, after the disappearance of Soviet economic support, Cuba had ended or curtailed almost all its internationalist programs, except for its medical missions.[18] The coronavirus pandemic crisis, exacerbated by the high price of U.S. and European vaccines and the pre-ordering of these by the wealthiest North American and European countries, led Cuba to develop its own COVID-19 vaccines, linked to the remaining branch of Cuban internationalism. Through these vaccines, Cuba, the first and so far only Latin American country to create its own primary COVID-19 vaccine, expanded its medical internationalism program.[19]

Given that the Cuban government had begun investing in the medical sector decades ago, it was not surprising when it announced its development of its own vaccines. What was surprising were the names given to the vaccines: Soberana, Mambisa, and Abdala. The names, which Abraham Jiménez Enoa refers to as "nombres patrioteros," tap into the 19th-century ethos of autonomy, armed revolution, and the freedom-fighting, self-sacrificing Moor, as well as the 20th-century interpretation of Martí as the source of Cuban internationalism and of Abdala and the *mambí* as revered symbols of unquestioning, self-sacrificing solidarity. In this way, the names of the vaccines bring us back full circle to Martí's Orientalism-infused vision of Cuban sovereignty, and the narrative about it that Communist Cuba has created.

The name "Soberana" seems to have been the first one selected. Meaning "sovereign" in the feminine, singular form, and thus referring to a sovereign Cuba, the term evokes both the 19th-century struggle for independence from Spain and the post-1959 Cuban struggle for autonomy from the capitalist system. An article in *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Cuba, cites that "Naturaleza Secreta," a *Facebook* page established in 2017 that posts about Cuba's flora, fauna, and people, explained that the name "Soberana" was proposed by Dr. Meiby de la Caridad Rodríguez González, Director of Clinical Research at Cuba's Instituto Finlay de Vacunas, who was in charge of registering the clinical trial, the first step that requires an official name. The scientists in the team that created the vaccine immediately agreed to the name and later cited the request of President Miguel Díaz-Canel, made the previous May, regarding the necessity of Cuba creating its own vaccine "porque ello nos daría soberanía," as the inspiration behind the chosen name (Rodríguez Milán). The name "Soberana" taps into historical memory regarding the motivation for the successive 19th-century independence wars, while evoking, on the one hand, the anti-colonial thrust of the Cuban Revolution, and, on the other, a constellation of related 19th-century symbols.

Another Cuban vaccine candidate's name comes from the main human symbol of the Cuban wars of independence: the *mambí* (plural: *mambises*). This term is used by Spaniards, Cubans, and Dominicans to refer to someone who fought for independence from Spain. The term has various etymologies pointing either (1) to African origins (the Bantu: -mbi meaning "rebel"), (2) to Juan Ethnnius Mamby ("Eutimio Mambí"), an official of African origin who deserted the Spanish army to fight for independence in Santo Domingo, or (3) to an indigenous word that referred to rebellion against leaders. Although the term's etymological ambiguity allows for various origin stories that all counter Spanish control with a subaltern *criollo* connection, the centrality of the *mambí* as a national hero is unambiguous. A soldier of guerrilla-type warfare, the machete-wielding *mambí* is a symbol of

the scrappy underdog who valiantly fights for freedom and, as such, has been embraced in post-1959 iconography as the direct forebear of Fidel and his *barbudos*, or bearded revolutionaries. Among the Cuban *mambises* there were also women who either cooked for the rebel soldiers, tended to the wounded, or took up arms themselves. The most famous of these is the mother of the independence war hero Antonio Maceo Grajales, Mariana Grajales Coello (1815-1893), who has been positioned by later generations as the model of the nationalist, self-sacrificing Cuban woman. Thus, the vaccine candidate named Mambisa (the feminine singular of *mambí*) serves as either a reference to Grajales Coello or, more directly, as an adjective for the word *vaccine*. In that sense, the vaccine itself is presented as a freedom fighter.

The third name used within the set of Cuban vaccine candidates further strengthens the evocation of the self-sacrificing 19th-century freedom fighter by evoking José Martí and his literary hero, Abdala. As discussed earlier, the title character in Martí's verse play *Abdala* is a North African hero who embraces martyrdom for his homeland. In brief, Abdala stands for the *mambí* and his struggle for sovereignty. In what follows, I will consider the implications of the ideals and symbolic language associated with Martí's *Abdala*, particularly the figure of the 'Oriental' warrior that the play crafts, in the internationalism program that continues, albeit in new forms, to this day.

Cuba's health authority (CECMED) approved three of the Cuban COVID-19 vaccine candidates, Soberana 2, Soberana Plus, and Abdala, which are currently being used in Cuba and have been exported to various countries.[20] Although Cuba has submitted these vaccines for emergency use listing by the World Health Organization (WHO), thus far, none have been approved.[21] However, the WHO's approval is not necessary for bilateral agreements, and this has allowed Cuba to donate and sell their vaccines to any country interested in acquiring them.[22] By fall 2022, in addition to donating its COVID-19 vaccines to Syria, the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Cuba had exported the vaccines at low cost to Iran, Venezuela, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Vietnam.[23] In more extensive South-South collaborations, Iran cooperated with Cuba on clinical trials and began manufacturing the Cuban vaccine Soberana 2, while China and Cuba cooperated on the creation of a vaccine called "Pan-Corona" for the new variants.[24]

Like internationalism in general, the Cuban vaccine initiative serves multiple goals. Six primary potential purposes stand out for vaccine internationalism: 1) containing the spread of COVID-19 on the island, 2) expressing solidarity by helping other countries that are similarly priced out of the vaccine market created by European and North American pharmaceutical companies, 3) gaining financial benefit from the sale of the vaccines, 4) exercising the same soft-power diplomacy referenced earlier,

whereby favor is gained from countries that receive the Cuban vaccines as a donation or at a low price, 5) boosting in a broader sense Cuba's public image, and 6) the bolstering of Cuban nationalism, or support for domestic ideologies.[25]

The acts of solidarity and interwoven soft power diplomacy and image-enhancement that are part of Cuba's vaccine initiative are core elements of Cuba's relations with other countries in the Global South.

However, the Orientalist thrust of the name chosen for one of the vaccines—Abdala—befuddles Cuban relations with the Arab world. In Arabic-language media coverage, puzzlement over why one of the Cuban vaccines bears an Arab name has led to jokes and the circulation of apocryphal explanations. In various Arab news outlets, Martí's penchant for all things Arab was the answer provided, but, rather than dig deeper into the sources of this Arab inclination, it was greatly exaggerated: "The name of the vaccine is derived from the play *ʿAbd Allah* [*Abdala*] written by the most famous Cuban poet, José Martí […], who is known for his predilection toward Arabs and praise of them in many of his poems, to the extent that he made most of the heroes of his poems Arabs" (Qubaisi).[26] This overstatement about the predominance of Arabs in Martí's poetry was repeated in a news show of the Egyptian channel DMC, where the newscaster poked fun at the name chosen for the vaccine. He opens the segment by referring to the race to create new vaccines and, after mentioning the Cuban experimental vaccine, he points out that "the story here isn't about the vaccine, the story is the name of the vaccine." He mentions that the name had caught people's attention on social media, where the question was "'who's ʿAbd Allah?'" The broadcaster then echoes this, asking "So what's ʿAbd Allah's story? Who is ʿAbd Allah?" as a segue to his answer based on Martí's love of Arabs and the "Egyptian-Nubian" identity of the hero in Martí's *Abdala*. The show host then closes the segment by saying with amused perplexity: "Why of all things did Cuba decide to take the name ʿAbd Allah from this play to be the name of the vaccine? So far nobody knows!"[27]

A news show of Egyptian TV channel El Mehwar takes the humor even further with a segment that opens with the show host saying an Egyptian proverb about heeding fellow humans who offer solutions while still putting one's trust in God, a proverb that includes the name ʿAbd Allah to create the end rhyme.[28] The show host then jokes that Cuba followed this saying. She immediately insists, though, that "this name is serious, it's not a joke" and asks her team to show the vaccine with the name on the vial onscreen because otherwise "some people might not believe this." But this is only a setup for a joke in which she imagines the dialogue that would ensue upon walking into the lab and asking for this vaccine: "Do you have ʿAbd Allah? No, there's no ʿAbd Allah. Ok, when is ʿAbd Allah

getting here?" The broadcaster then mockingly asks, "What's your story Uncle ʿAbd Allah?" and responds with references to José Martí and his play featuring an "Egyptian-Nubian" protagonist.[29] Here, Martí's Orientalism is seen as so ludicrous that it is the source of laughs.

Another news source not only stayed serious but produced a Romanticized story about Arab and Cuban brothers in arms. The well-established news source *al-Ahram*, the most widely circulating Egyptian daily newspaper and the country's newspaper of record, presented an incorrect summary of the play in which Abdala and his Arab companions literally help the Cubans in their fight against the Spanish colonizers (Diyab). This apocryphal version has been circulated by at least ten other Arabic-language news sources and has made the rounds, mixed in with humor, on social media.[30] Indeed, this bogus explanation of the origins of the vaccine name gained so much traction that in the YouTube comments on the DMC channel's segment on the Cuban vaccine, one commentator criticizes the newscaster's ignorance and attempts to set the record straight by repeating a version of Mahmud Diyab's account in *al-Ahram*: ʿAbd Allah was an Egyptian who gave his life fighting for Cuba's independence. The Arab reception of Martí's Orientalism either creates distance by making fun of the vaccine's name or is great adulatory material for alliance building, but either way it is threaded with Egyptian and Arab nationalism and does not allow for meaningful cross-cultural dialogue that raises awareness regarding power differentials and relationships with the Global North, the type of dialogue that would pave the way to more robust solidarity.

Regarding purpose (3), the pursuit of financial benefits, various commentators have pointed to the island nation's dire need for hard currency as an economic motivation behind the development of COVID-19 vaccines.[31] Cuban authorities have noted the low price of the Cuban vaccines. For instance, Rolando Pérez Rodríguez, Director of Science and Innovation at BioCubaFarma, the island's state-run pharmaceutical conglomerate, said that the vaccines were sold at a "'price of solidarity' comparable to the Covax scheme" (Taylor). However, in spite of the 'solidarity-based' price, the fact that there is a monetary exchange can destabilize Cuba's platform as anti-capitalist and raise questions domestically. The shift from internationalism without any material compensation to in-kind exchanges and the sale of various forms of support is part of a broader trend that Jardines del Cueto describes as "the change from a policy of internationalism to one of transnationalism, a policy that leaves behind the opposition to capitalism in search of new financial support" and a change that "can make the government uncomfortable because it points precisely to the contradictions of the regime" ("The New Barbudos," 200-201). The perspectives being expressed in alternative and diaspora news outlets, together with the record number of Cubans leaving the island, reflect awareness of contradictions in

the government's socialist, nationalist rhetoric.[32] Cuba's current crisis, in turn, makes the general boosting of Cuba's public image, soft power diplomacy, and domestic messaging even more important to the regime. In reference to the image and soft power aspects of Cuba's vaccine internationalism, Jiménez Enoa describes the vaccines as "una estrategia dirigida a alcanzar, como resultado, un capital simbólico del mismo alcance que el humano." Moreover, Cuban authorities have used the vaccines to create symbolic capital not only internationally, but also domestically. The official slogan for the set of vaccines, included in media announcements and prominently displayed at Cuban vaccination sites, reflects the soft-power function of the vaccine names: "Más que una vacuna, es un país" (Figure 1). Although the phrase is enigmatic (in keeping with Martí's aphoristic style), it figuratively connects the idea of the hope provided by the vaccine to pride in Cuban nationalism, and specifically in the current regime.

Social media posts and official announcements illustrate how the Cuban government and its supporters use the vaccines to reinforce the image of contemporary Cuba as an independent rebel fighting the good fight, that is, as a Moorish *mambí* who is a champion of solidarity. For instance, pro-government tweets often pair references to the vaccines with

Figure 1

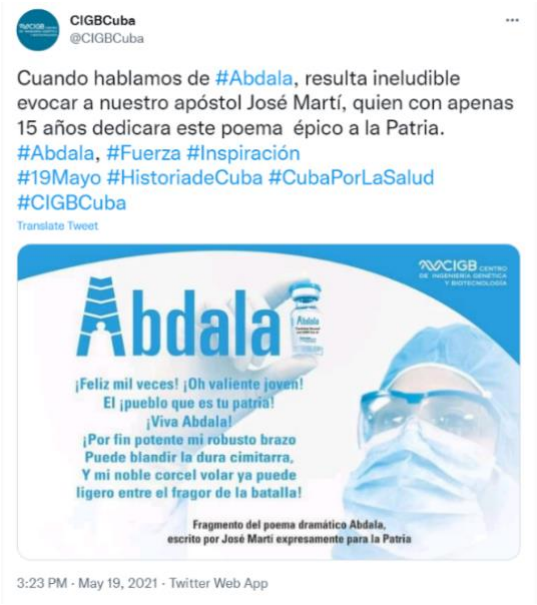

Figure 2

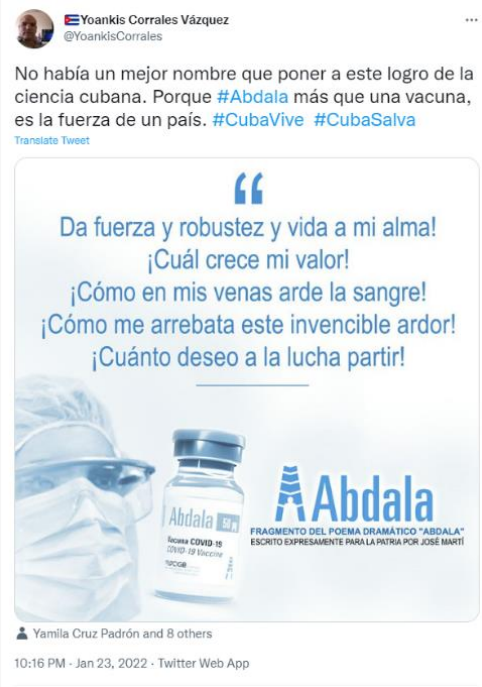

Figure 3

references to solidarity and the hashtags #MásQueUnaVacunaEsUnPais and #IslaRebelde. While the set of vaccines as a whole promotes an image of Cuba as fiercely independent and committed to solidarity, the Abdala vaccine itself brings in Orientalist literature. Given Martí's centrality to the communist regime, stagings of his *Abdala* have continued over the years.[33] But in case a Cuban, or someone from the broader Spanish-speaking public, needed a refresher, Cuban government announcements for the vaccine included the logo of a stylized, broad-shouldered human silhouette and a quote from *Abdala*. On May 19, 2021, the Cuban research institute CIGB (Centro de Ingeniería Genética y Biotecnología) tweeted a quote from the play highlighting Abdala's armed patriotism that features the scimitar and Arabian steed (Figure 2). A similar tweet quotes verses from *Abdala* that emphasize the desire to be part of "la lucha," the struggle to defend the homeland (Figure 3). This positioning of Abdala is echoed in the article "En Abdala: respirar a Martí," published in *Invasor,* the official communist party newspaper of the city of Ciego de Ávila. The piece suggests that Martí lives on via the vaccine named after his heroic protagonist Abdala (Rojas Rosales). Thus, these vaccines, while serving a public health and internationalist humanitarian purpose, are also a vehicle for ideological messages directed at the Cuban people.

Building on the romanticized figure of the Arab freedom fighter, the promotional materials for the vaccines encourage Cubans to give their lives for the homeland, while simultaneously justifying the loss of life in the name of the revolution. The imposition of self-sacrifice, with no tolerance for

questioning or critique, is a top-down conception of solidarity, similar to Orientalism's externally constructed representations of 'the Other' which, instead of dialogue, produce fixed ideas that claim to be authoritative and generate figurative as well as physical violence. Here, solidarity is part of a double-sided soft power strategy, one side of which exerts power in the domestic sphere. The Cuban vaccines, as occurs with other internationalist initiatives, have certainly benefited the recipients, in this case by helping to contain the spread and death toll of the coronavirus. However, the specific names of the vaccines go beyond this by exerting power, and not always so softly, over the Cuban people themselves.

Conclusion: The Broader Implications of Martí's *Abdala* in Cuban Cultural Politics

Before the coronavirus pandemic, Cuba specialists such as Margaret Randall and Helen Yaffe (*We Are Cuba!*) highlighted the accomplishments of Cuba's South-South cooperation initiatives. As the COVID-19 vaccine race highlighted global socio-economic disparities, Yaffe praised Cuba's response to the pandemic in a London School of Economics blogpost ("Cuba's five COVID-19 vaccines"). Yaffe closes her blogpost with a section entitled "A Vaccine for the Global South," in which she states that "Cuba's international assistance during the pandemic shows the benefits of global cooperation and solidarity in addressing global problems" ("Cuba's five COVID-19 vaccines"). Similarly, the international leftist organization The Progressive International called for "vaccine internationalism" and lauded Cuba for its response to the COVID pandemic.[34] However, the role of Martí's Moorish *mambí* in Cuban vaccine internationalism calls into question attempts to celebrate Cuba's South-South cooperation as necessarily anti-hegemonic because it reveals both the lingering Orientalism and ultimately oppressive messaging directed at the domestic population that is part of some South-South initiatives.

Martí's engagement with the figure of the Moor and North Africa points to the complexities of relations within the Global South. On the one hand, Martí's texts demonstrate the paradox of anti-imperial Orientalism and the degree to which expressions of solidarity are infused with essentialisms tied to imperialism, that is, the essentialisms of the Orientalist archive. Through Martí's Moorish *mambí* we can see the role of coloniality in even post-1959 Cuban discourses and how South-South relations are often still triangulated via the colonial center. On the other hand, the evaluation of Martí's role within Cuban cultural politics demonstrates that not only is an Orientalist image of the *moro* at the heart of Cuban discourses about solidarity, but solidarity initiatives linked to Martí's *moro* are used to legitimate and maintain the post-1959 regime and its authoritarian power.

While Cuba's COVID-19 vaccines themselves are part of the medical branch of *internacionalismo*, and thereby part of both offering help and performing solidarity to build political alliances, the names chosen for the vaccines are aimed at the Cuban populace: they serve to encourage Cubans to emulate Marti's form of patriotism and maintain a blind nationalism, making sacrifices for the regime without questioning it. Via Martí's protagonist Abdala, a model of nationalism and self-sacrifice, there is a latent Orientalism in Cuban culture that informs the hypermasculine figure of the freedom fighter and martyr, and thus the nationalist ideology of "guerra necesaria" or justified violence, in the pursuit of sovereignty. While Martí instrumentalizes a literary Moor produced through essentialist discourses to support Cuban independence, official Cuban *internacionalismo*, at least in part a strategy for creating an alternate system of geopolitical and economic ties, uses Martí's Moor as part of a constellation of 19th-century icons that bolster authoritarian control on the island. In this sense, Cuban officials use historical memory regarding the symbols of the 19th century, and in particular Martí's Orientalism, as a form of domestic coercion.

Since 2018, the San Isidro Movement has been protesting the Cuban government's censorship of artistic expression. The song "Patria y Vida," in support of the San Isidro Movement, and the July 11, 2021, protests brought to the fore one of the most prominent mottos of communist Cuba: "¡Patria o muerte!"[35] When Fidel Castro first uttered this phrase as part of the memorial service for Cubans who died in a 1960 explosion understood as sabotage, he was drawing from various Cuban sources that express this same sentiment, though not so succinctly.[36] Most notably, the Cuban national anthem ("La Bayamesa") and the writings of José Martí, most prominently among them *Abdala*, in which, as we have seen, the protagonist is glorified for sacrificing himself to defend his country. In that sense, Martí's Orientalist writings are also part of the current crisis. Government responses to these protests (e.g., use of force and arbitrary detentions) are a reminder of how enmeshed soft power is with hard power and thus of the negative reach of "soft" power.

Although "Patria o Muerte" has been re-signified by the song "Patria y Vida," efforts within Cuban culture at re-interpreting the *moro* warrior offered by Martí's *Abdala* remain ambiguous.[37] Thus far, instead of clear resignification, Cuban internationalism is fused with the island's authoritarian nationalism. In the classic Cuban dish *moros y cristianos*, the black beans and white rice are cooked together in the same pot and it is texture, more than flavor, that allows one to distinguish between the beans and the rice. Similarly, through a shared vocabulary and symbology, the triumphs of Cuban internationalism are 'cooked in the same pot' with nationalist rhetoric and oppressive domestic policies. How Cuban discourses and acts of solidarity are understood locally and globally depends on

closer attention to this cooked-in bond. Analyzing one of Martí's key texts about fictional Moors and tracing its 20th and 21st-century afterlives reveals that Cuban solidarity is a double-edged sword that, in addition to being part of international political alliance-building, creates barriers to South-South dialogue and is used to contain dissent in the domestic sphere.

Notes

* Many thanks to Eman Morsi and the participants in the Fall 2024 Dartmouth South-South Forum workshop for their suggestions and encouragement.

[1]On Cuba's medical internationalism, see Erisman and Kirk, Kirk, *Healthcare without Borders*, and Yaffe, *We Are Cuba!*

[2] In the 1990s, in the wake of Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, North American scholars of various humanities disciplines became interested in the concept of "solidarity." This converged with growing attention to solidarity in the feminist movement, African American Studies, ethnic studies, Latin American subaltern studies, and Global South studies. More recently, scholars in fields such as bioethics and international relations have studied the concept. See, for instance, Daley, DuFord, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Hoelzl, Mohanty, Prainsack and Buyx, Roediger, and Stites Mor.

[3] On these different interpretations and instrumentalizations of Martí see Estrade, Kirk, "From 'Inadaptado Sublime' to 'Lider Revolucionario'" and Ponte.

[4] Another Orientalist work by Martí, the poetry collection *Ismaelillo* (1882) is invoked in the pediatric clinical trial of the vaccine Abdala, which was given the name "Ismaelillo" by Cuban authorities. Martí's *Ismaelillo*, considered to have been his first expression of *modernismo* (see note 7), uses the name "Ismaelillo," diminutive of "Ismael" (Spanish for "Ishmael"), to allude to the Biblical Ishmael, the exiled patriarch of the Arabs. In these poems replete with Orientalist references, Martí evokes his three-year-old son, from whom he was separated due to Martí's political exile in New York.

[5] The work on Soberana yielded variations named Soberana 1 and 2 and Soberana Plus.

[6] See Fidel Castro's 1968 "Cien Años de Lucha" speech and Pérez.

[7] The term "modernismo" refers to the Hispanic literary movement started by writers in the Americas who, inspired by French Parnassianism and symbolism, used aestheticism, the display of erudition, and exoticism to redefine the role of the arts in the face of modernity. On Orientalism within *modernismo*, see Tinajero (2003).

[8] Etymologically, *moro* comes from the Latin term *maurus*, meaning Mauritanian, which, in turn, comes from the Greek term for "dark" (Real Academia Española).

[9] The common term in English for the indigenous peoples of North Africa is "Berber"; however, this term carries a negative connotation of barbarism. In fact, the term "barbarian" is etymologically related to "Berber" and the region of the Barbary coast. As a result, the term "Berber" is rejected by many of those to whom it refers and is often replaced with the autochthonous term that was revived in the 1940s: Amazigh.

[10] On Spain's relationship with Islam and Arabophone cultures, see Martin-Márquez and Fuchs. On the historical memory of al-Andalus in 20th- and 21st-century Hispanic and Arab cultural production, see Civantos, *The Afterlife of al-Andalus*.

[11]Rodríguez Drissi (ii, iii, and 113) and Jardines del Cueto ("La problemática Orientalista," 97) consider Martí's invocation of the Moor as completely benign and even decolonial given Martí's positive characterization of the Moor and identification with this figure as an anticolonial rebel. The present essay is connected to a work in progress in which I counter these interpretations of Martí's Orientalism by analyzing Martí's 1893 essay "Los moros en España," which calls for solidarity with North Africans as fellow Spanish colonial subjects. Interestingly, Marti's call for international cooperation was likely partly inspired by his interest in South Asia. Martí, during his period of exile in Spain (1871-74), studied law and learned about the ideas of the German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781–1832). The doctrine of Krausism, which was highly influential in Spain at the time of the Bourbon Restoration of 1874, states that individuals must take personal responsibility and an active role in the betterment of society. García de la Torre mentions that Martí's contact with *krausismo* led to the Cuban's interest in Hindu philosophy (70, 83, and 175), but does not address the connection between German idealism and Orientalism.

[12] On January 19, 1869, the newspaper *El Diablo Cojuelo* published an article by Martí in support of Cuban political rights and on January 23, 1869, *La Patria Libre* published *Abdala* in its first and only issue.

[13] The term "Islamicate" (coined by Hodgson) refers to societies in which Muslims are culturally dominant and, thus, makes a distinction between cultures that, even among non-Muslims within the culture, are strongly influenced by Islam (i.e., Islamicate cultures), and the practice of Islam itself.

[14] Rodríguez Drissi also links the scimitar to Santiago Matamoros (Saint James the Moor-Slayer, patron saint of the Christian Reconquista of Iberia, who was prevalent in medieval Iberian Christian art) and the deity he represents in the syncretic Afro-Cuban pantheon: Ogún the warrior (2012, 88 and 92). Although the horseback-riding soldier portrayed in the iconography of Santiago Matamoros brandishes a sword that is slender, tapered, and completely straight, representations of Ogún often feature a sword that has the same shape as a machete or scimitar.

[15] Tarragó traces the 20th-century Cuban manifestation of the ideology of the need for violence to achieve political and social aims and Kapcia discusses the tradition of "lucha"—combat or struggle—that is part of the Cuban revolutionary regime to this day.

[16] On the role of Cuban cultural products and programming within its diplomacy with the Middle East, and intertwined

with this Cuban converts to Islam, see Jardines del Cueto ("The New Barbudos").

[17] On an institutional level, this is reflected in the fact that the World Health Organization named its international trials for treatments and then vaccines for COVID-19 "Solidarity" (https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/global-research-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/solidarity-clinical-trial-for-covid-19-treatments).

[18] Cuba's medical missions have sparked great controversy because of the nature of the medical personnel's participation and the financial gains involved. See, for instance, "Cuba: Repressive Rules for Doctors" and Primera.

[19] Mexico's "Patria," Brazil's "Butanvac," and Argentina's "ARVAC-Cecilia Grierson" are COVID-19 vaccine candidates that, at the time of writing, had not made it past their clinical trials. In October 2023, Argentine health authorities approved Argentina's "ARVAC-Cecilia Grierson" as a booster COVID-19 vaccine. Chile, rather than attempt to develop its own vaccine, has produced the "CoronaVac" vaccine developed by the Chinese company Sinovac. Similarly, early in the pandemic Argentina produced the Russian "Sputnik V" vaccine.

[20] The vaccine candidates were created as follows: Cuba's Instituto Finlay de Vacunas created Soberana 1 and 2, as well as the booster dose Soberana Plus, while its Centro de Ingeniería Genética y Biotecnología created Abdala and the nasal spray Mambisa. All the Cuban COVID vaccines "are what are known as protein subunit conjugate vaccines" (Beaubien). These vaccines do not require deep freezing, making them more feasible for developing countries (Meredith).
Soberana 2, Soberana Plus, and Abdala have been approved for use in Cuba and a few other countries.

[21] For updated approval status and more technical information on the Cuban vaccines, see: https://covid19.trackvaccines.org/country/cuba/ and https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines.

[22] The *Connectas* article "El destino incumplido de las vacunas cubanas" details the lack of confidence in the efficacy or safety of the Cuban vaccines on the part of medical authorities in various Latin American countries.

[23] For more details see: Beaubien, Carrillo, "Cuba sends," Harrison et al., "La RASD recibe," Reardon, and Taylor.

[24] On collaboration with Iran, see "Irán, primer país" and "Irán inaugura." On collaboration with China, see Liu et al.

[25] Regarding function (1), containing the spread of COVID-19 in Cuba, the Cuban government had other options that it chose not to pursue. Cuba is the only Latin American country to choose to not receive vaccines from the Covax program, which supplies vaccines to low-to-middle-income countries. The Cuban government, instead of participating in this program, decided to position itself as a producer and provider of vaccines ("Cuba queda fuera"). Also, in November 2021, Cuba rejected the U.S. offer to donate to the island one million vaccine doses (Harrison et al.), which is not surprising, given the decades-old ideological struggle between the two countries. However, Cuba could have obtained vaccines from its allies, China and Russia.

[26] See also, for instance, Abu al-Rubb. Only one of these articles, citing the work of Rodríguez Drissi, addressed the anti-colonial bond that drew Martí to North Africans, but without mentioning Orientalism (ʿAbd Allah).

[27] This segment of Egyptian channel DMC's "Masaʾ" [Evening] program was originally aired on June 23, 2021 and can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SoDw22iCGiY.

[28] The traditional saying in question is: Take from ʿAbd Allah and trust in God [Allah]. In this context, "ʿAbd Allah" functions like "so-and-so" or "Joe Schmoe."

[29] This segment of Egyptian channel El Mehwar's show "90 Daqiqa" [90 Minutes] was originally aired on February 14, 2022 and can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExM1ODDXcEQ.

[30] For example, see the new article "Ma sabab tasmiyyat Kuba liqahaha" from the website of *Watan FM*, an independent radio station established in Damascus in 2011, and the article by Shaʿban in *al-Ittihad*, the daily newspaper of the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the spurious summary of Martí's play, as part of the explanation of the vaccine's name, recirculated via social media: for instance, a Moroccan Facebook user, on their personal blog "Iktashif al-Maghrib/Discover Morocco," posted the erroneous summary of the play, preceded by a joke about ʿAbd Allah/Abdala being Moroccan (based on how popular the name is in Morocco and the ambiguity created by the Arabic word for vaccine being masculine singular): "Maybe he/it is Moroccan." This Facebook blog not only reaches 42,000 followers, but is geared to a Moroccan audience, that is, an audience in a country that also fought for independence from Spanish colonization, making the false version of the play all the more compelling.

[31] See Jiménez Enoa, Matos and Sesi, and "El destino incumplido de las vacunas cubanas."

[32] For instance, an article ran in Miami-based *Periódico Cubano* decrying Cuba's exportation of medicines while there are shortages of medicines on the island ("El pueblo cubano") and reader comments on related articles in Havana-based *14ymedio* include complaints that the government has prioritized monetary gain over early vaccination ("Cuba envía a Irán 100.000 dosis de Soberana 02 para ensayos clínicos") and questions about how it is that there are enough vaccines to export them when the inhabitants of the island are not yet fully vaccinated ("BioCubaFarma atribuye sus apuros financieros a la inversión en las vacunas contra el covid"). Regarding migration patterns, see Vicent.

[33] Outside of the island, some 20th-century Cubans continued to invoke the protagonist of *Abdala* in counter-revolutionary activities. An anti-communist group of US-based Cuban exiles that was active from 1968 through the mid-1980's and believed in using violent means to bring about change on the island took the name Agrupación Abdala. See Bustamante.

[34] The Progressive International held a June 2021 Summit for Vaccine Internationalism, in which the governments of Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, Bolivia and Venezuela as well as political leaders from scores of countries participated (https://progressive.international/wire/2021-06-21-progressive-international-hails-the-beginning-of-a-new-international-health-order-as-global-south-states-commit-to-share-covid-19-vaccine-technology-and-production/en).

[35] The February 2021 reggaetón song "Patria y Vida" was a collaboration between Yotuel, Beatriz Luengo, Descemer Bueno, Gente de Zona, Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, Maykel Osorbo, and DJ El Funky.

[36] On March 4, 1960, the French freighter La Coubre exploded in Havana harbor killing approximately 100 people. Castro declared that it was an act of US sabotage and in the speech he delivered at the March 5 funeral service he stated "Y no solo que sabremos vencer cualquier agresión, y que nuevamente no tendríamos otra disyuntiva que aquella con que iniciamos la lucha revolucionaria: la de la libertad o la muerte. Solo que ahora libertad quiere decir algo más todavía: libertad quiere decir patria. Y la disyuntiva nuestra sería Patria o Muerte" (Castro, "La disyuntiva nuestra sería Patria o Muerte").

[37] Adrián López Morín's 2011 animated film "Abdala, El retorno de los señores de Xibalbá," as a sci-fi/fantasy version of *Abdala* set in Aztlán and infused with Meso-American mythology, takes the 19th-century play's exoticism and runs with it while the messaging about patriotic self-sacrifice is maintained. Freddy Núñez Estenoz's *Abdala un héroe del XXI* (2015), a version of Martí's *Abdala* set in contemporary Havana, was first performed by the Teatro del Viento theater company (Camagüey), at Sala José Luis Tassende on May 30, 2015 and has been performed in Havana's Sala Raquel Revuelta (October 29-30, 2015), among other venues. Núñez Estenoz's play strips Martí's play of Orientalist and exoticist symbols, but maintains the theme of the struggle to defend the homeland—*la lucha por la patria*.

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