



Cafe Tingis in the medina of Tangier, 1953.

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# Juan Goytisolo

## Tangier, Havana and the Treasonous Intellectual

Hisham Aidi

**For over half a century, the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo made Tangier, Morocco his adopted home. Just as Tangier exerted a profound influence on the author and his writing, Goytisolo himself had an effect on Moroccans and their understanding of Spain and of their own history. What was the nature of this relationship and how did it develop?**

For the past 25 years, every evening around sunset, an elderly man could be seen gingerly crossing the Boulevard Pasteur, Tangier's busy main thoroughfare. Shuffling toward the Grand Poste, he would walk slowly down the pavement to Café Maravillosa. Regulars would stand up to shake his hand. "Marhba, Si Juan." Waiters would greet him, "*Ja'izat Nobel d'yalna*, our own Nobel laureate," and set him up at a table with a pot of green tea. For the next two hours, a steady rotation of old acquaintances, students and tourists would stop by to chat or take a photo. Before his death on June 4, 2017, Juan Goytisolo, the acclaimed Spanish novelist, was the last of his breed, the lone survivor of the American and European writers who settled in Tangier in the post-war years, constructing the myth of the northern Moroccan port as a literary and epicurean capital. (The Lower East Side Beat poet Ira Cohen died in 2014, and Larbi Yacoubi, the Tangier-born theater actor who worked with many of these figures, passed away in April 2016.)

Goytisolo was a fixture in Tangier's cafés for over half a century, some of his greatest work inspired by the city's coffee-houses. It was at the storied Café Hafa, on the cliffs overlooking the Straits of Gibraltar, where in 1965 he imagined a Moorish (re)conquest of Franco's Spain, resulting in his classic novel *Don Julian* (1971). It was at the large-windowed café of Sidi Hosni in the casbah where he hand-drew his elaborate maps of the medina and jotted down his observations of the American hippies sitting on straw mats. It was in the medina's cafétines where he immersed himself in North African music, drank mint tea with crumbled hash and tried to "shed his Spanish skin." Goytisolo strictly avoided the cafés frequented by his Spanish compatriots, and claimed that it was this sort of European presence that ultimately drove him south to Marrakesh in 1997. But he always spent his summers in Tangier; as he writes in his memoir, the coastal city was the refuge to which he returned when feeling melancholy.<sup>1</sup> Of the myriad writers and artists who have settled in Morocco over the last century, Goytisolo was clearly the most appreciated by Moroccans. In 2003, he was inducted into the Moroccan Writers Union, the only foreigner ever to be granted that status. No expatriate writer tried as assiduously to integrate into Moroccan society, learning the local vernacular, leading conservationist efforts, even adopting Moroccan children.<sup>2</sup> Yet since his death the Moroccan press and

social media have been abuzz with debate about his relationship to his adopted homeland.

The broad contours of Goytisolo's life are well known. He was born in Barcelona in 1931 to an affluent Catholic family. His great-grandfather had made a fortune through sugar plantations in Cuba. Family life was upended by the Spanish civil war. Juan's mother was killed in a bombing raid sent by Franco's ally Mussolini in 1938 (though Goytisolo *père* told the children that Republican fighters were the culprits). It proved a life-scarring experience. "I am the son not of my mother," Goytisolo would say, "but of the civil war, its messianism, its hatred."<sup>3</sup> After university, Goytisolo left for France and spent the rest of his life blasting Spanish conservatism—Franco's regime and ideology, but also the nationalism, historiography and sexual mores of (post-1975) democratic Spain. Arriving in Paris in 1957, he met his wife-to-be Monique Langue. An influential editor at Gallimard, she introduced him to Jean Genet, who became his mentor. Mandatory military service brought Goytisolo back to Spain, and took him to Andalusia. He published two political travelogues about the poverty and isolation of southern Spain, *Countryside of Nijar* (1960) and *La Chanca* (1962). In love with the Andalusian landscape, but loath to live under Franco's regime, he traveled to Algeria, viewing North Africa as a cultural and topographic extension of southern Spain. In Paris, he had discovered Arab music in the city's Algerian cafés, and also fallen in with the French Communist Party and with members of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) coordinating the war back home against French colonialism. He and Monique kept a suitcase of cash in their apartment, from which they dispensed funds to undercover operatives. Once Algeria gained independence in 1962, he moved to Algiers at the invitation of the FLN government—and from there to Tangier.

In Tangier, Goytisolo penned his famous trilogy of autobiographical novels—*Marks of Identity* (1966), *Count Julian* (1970) and *Juan the Landless* (1975)—that lambast "official Spain." Other novels followed, along with literary essays, memoirs and a volume of dispatches from the wars in Chechnya, Algeria and Sarajevo, titled *Landscapes of War* (2000). By the mid-1980s, a decade after Spain's transition to democracy, he was the country's most renowned and celebrated contemporary writer. Contrary to Tangier lore, Goytisolo never won the

Hisham Aidi is a lecturer at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and Fellow at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.



The Strait of Gibraltar, seen from Cafe Hafa. Tangier, Morocco, 1985.

PIERRE OLIVIER DESCHAMPS/AGENCE VU/REDUX

Nobel, but in 2015, Spain did award its *enfant terrible* the prestigious Miguel de Cervantes literary prize.

## “A Paradise Lost”

Less well known is that Goytisolo settled in Tangier after breaking with the Algerian and Cuban revolutions. The Spanish novelist had thrown in his lot with Fidel Castro’s revolution in hopes of seeing a more egalitarian Cuba, and to purge the guilt he felt over his family’s role in Cuban slavery. Goytisolo had grown up dreaming of Havana’s grandeur; the “tobacco-colored photographs” of the family mansion in Cienfuegos had fired his young imagination. “The colonial images of Cuba, the rebels’ clothes and appearance, mass farewells to the volunteers embarking for Havana are an integral part of a kaleidoscope of memories that are closely linked to my childhood,” he writes in his memoir *Realms of Strife*. “The myth of Cuban adventure would thus assume for me, until adolescence erupted, the form of a paradise lost, of an Eden glowing before my eyes only to vanish afterwards like a mirage.”<sup>4</sup> The chimera of Havana was first lost when, in his early twenties, Goytisolo discovered a trove of letters from the family plantation of slaves pleading for their freedom, and of his great-grandfather Don Agustín bragging to a relative that he had just invested in “50 Negro slaves and 20 Chinese

coolies.” Castro’s revolution was thus a chance to purge ancestral guilt and reconcile with the fabled island.

The Spanish novelist took several reporting trips to Cuba after 1959 and, by happenstance, lived through the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 in Havana. By the mid-1960s, though, Goytisolo began to distance himself from Castro because of the revolutionary government’s suppression of Afro-Cuban religions (the Abakuás and Lukumi, in particular) and persecution of homosexuals. The *jefe maximo* was sending gay men to labor camps. Fidel, Goytisolo would write, had turned the “ex-paradise” of Cuba “into a silent and lugubrious floating concentration camp.”<sup>5</sup> Havana was thus a paradise twice lost. The Spanish novelist would depart Algiers for similar reasons. Both pre-1959 Havana and colonial Algiers were playgrounds for European and American aristocrats, racketeers, artists and writers, with alarming rates of sex tourism and prostitution. And in both Cuba and Algeria, the nationalist movement would denounce sexual exploitation by white settlers and crack down on prostitutes and homosexuals upon assuming power. Goytisolo quit Algiers—for Tangier—shortly after Ahmed Ben Bella, the founding president of Algeria, was deposed in a coup by Gen. Houari Boumedienne in 1965, who began backing a conservative Islamist discourse. In a sign of the times to come, Jean Sénac, the *pied noir* nationalist and openly gay poet, would be refused Algerian citizenship, and in 1973 he was murdered.<sup>6</sup>

And so Goytisolo settled in Tangier. “Tangier is one of the world’s few remaining pleasure cities: and no questions asked,” quips the narrator of *Don Julian*. With their endless beaches, flashy casinos and weak, pro-Western governments that rarely enforced the law on non-natives, Tangier and Havana had both long captivated writers, anarchists, mobsters and the Western jet set. “[P]robably next to Tangiers, Habana was the vice capital of the world,” wrote Amiri Baraka in 1955 when he landed in Cuba.<sup>7</sup> A handful of Westerners—particularly New York left intellectuals—circulated between Tangier and Havana and panicked as it became evident that the “sin cities” were in the crosshairs of nationalist movements.

Tangier never saw a revolution, but it wasn’t for lack of trying. In the 1950s, the Algerian FLN and the Moroccan Army of Liberation (the latter backed by the exiled Cairo-based Riffian leader Abdelkrim Khattabi) joined forces hoping to drive French and Spanish troops out of Morocco, often coordinating their efforts through the International Zone of Tangier. In May 1957, two ships—the British-owned *Barra* and the Lithuanian-owned *Red Witch*—were blown up in Tangier’s harbor by French ultra-nationalists who believed the vessels were shipping armaments to the FLN in Algeria.<sup>8</sup> In 1958, as the pan-Arabist Istiqlal party, Berber nationalists and monarchists battled for the control of Tangier, an Algerian police chief, the FLN-affiliated Mustapha Cherifi, was appointed to “clean up” the city.<sup>9</sup> Intent on preventing Tangier from becoming a “brothel” like Algiers, Cherifi launched a purge, jailed owners of brothels, shut down gay bars, and arrested Western homosexuals and their associates. Paul Bowles fled to Portugal. Ahmed Yaqubi, his partner, was thrown in prison for months. Less than a year later, the Algerian police chief was removed, and Bowles was back. But the clampdown rattled the expatriate community, and a number of Westerners began leaving, particularly after October 1959, when the Royal Charter guaranteeing a free money market in Tangier was abrogated and the city began to be integrated into the kingdom of Morocco.

When Fidel Castro came to power on January 1, 1959, several tycoons relocated to still-international Tangier, as did a handful of Cubans living in Franco’s Spain, like the singer Antonio Machín, who suddenly found themselves personae non grata. The Beat writers, however, who had made the International Zone a base in the 1950s were lured by the Cuban revolution. The poet Allen Ginsberg left Tangier for the last time in July 1961, a few months after the city was integrated into Morocco, and began visiting Havana. Other Beats who circulated between Tangier and Havana were poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, author Irving Rosenthal, Howard Schulman, who had launched the leftist *Palanté* magazine, and journalist Marc (Abdallah) Schleifer, the editor of *Kulchur* magazine and who had covered the revolution for *The Nation* magazine, before going on to become a reporter for NBC in Cairo.<sup>10</sup> As the Cuban revolution turned dictatorial, the Beats would begin to look elsewhere—some returning to Tangier again. Ginsberg would be deported from Havana to Prague in February 1965

(after protesting the regime’s oppression of homosexuals, and saying he thought Che Guevara was “cute”). Schulman and Schleifer would travel to Tangier.

For a few years, Mohammed V, sultan of the newly independent Morocco, flirted with Bandung and the Afro-Asian solidarity movement, and for a moment communist publications, including the Cuban *Granma*, began appearing at Tangier’s newsstands. But upon his father’s death in 1961, Hassan II would place Morocco in the pro-US camp and make every effort to show the West that, unlike “revolutionary Algeria,” Morocco was “moderate” and welcoming of (non-leftist) foreigners. Leftist and communist agitators were locked up, often at the behest of the US government. In late November 1963, shortly after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the FBI appeared in Tangier looking for Schulman and Schleifer because of their association with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a group founded in New York in 1960 to support the Cuban revolution, and to which Lee Harvey Oswald had claimed a connection.<sup>11</sup> Schleifer, who had joined Cuba’s National Revolutionary Militia, had returned to Havana, but the Moroccan police did manage to locate Schulman at a café in the medina, and arrested him for “peddling pro-Communist propaganda” and inciting Moroccans to revolution.<sup>12</sup> As the monarchy steeled its control over the former International Zone, bureaucrats from southern Morocco assumed top positions in the city government, and the dirham became the currency of the city. But Tangier’s social hierarchy remained intact, with the British, Americans and French occupying the upper rungs, and Moroccans at the bottom (and the centuries-old Spanish community a notch above the natives). The city—and the kingdom—remained a playground for white Westerners. The jet-set crowd around Barbara Hutton, and the writers’ colony headed by Bowles and David Herbert on the “Old Mountain” continued to hold their *Arabian Nights*-themed soirées with full state protection (and in the 1970s would be joined by a new Gulf elite that settled in the villas around the city.)

Goytisolo thus arrived in Tangier with the Cold War well underway, and relations between Cuba and Morocco deteriorating. Radio Havana was beaming Communist propaganda directly to Tangier in an effort to liberate northern Morocco and Spain from Franco. (The US had set up a Voice of America relay station in Tangier in 1949.) As border disputes broke out between Morocco and newly independent Algeria, Cuba backed the revolutionary republic. Amidst the intrigue, Goytisolo seemed to be still searching for the Havana of his boyhood reveries, hoping the North African town would be the paradise he had lost. Places in Tangier evoked the Cuban capital. In his early writing about Tangier, he moves poignantly across the Atlantic, interweaving the two cities, segueing from Havana’s *malecon* to Tangier’s Avenida de España, from Verdado to the Hotel de Cuba just off the medina. He would invite prominent Cuban writers, such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Severo Sarduy, to Tangier. The blend of Spanish colonial

and *mudéjar* architecture, the religious and musical syncretism, the constant hum of Spanish radio all reminded him of Havana. One anecdote Goytisolo enjoyed telling—to illustrate his love of cultural mixing, or “Babelization”—was upon arriving to Tangier in 1965, he saw two boys walking up a hill singing the old Cuban *guajira*, “Guantanamera.” Except the Moroccan kids, not knowing what a *guajira* or “Guantanamera” was, had changed the lyrics to, “*Levante la nevera! Juanita, levante la nevera* (Lift the fridge, Juanita, lift the fridge).”

## The City Palimpsest

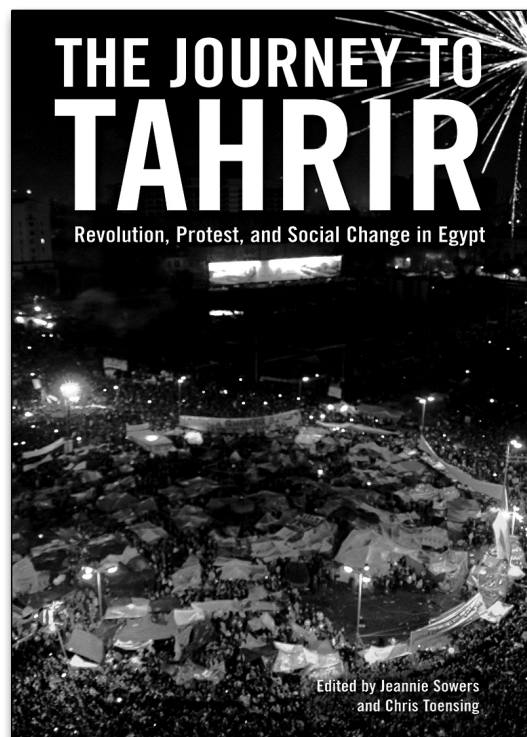
At the northern entrance of Tangier’s medina, directly across from the old port, sits what tourists call the Terrace Café (and what we Tanjawi call the Fishermen’s Café). On the establishment’s western flank is a wall decorated with floral carvings, at the center of which is a red and yellow plaque with a crown and a black eagle. The plaque is Franco’s coat of arms, complete with St John’s eagle and the Yoke and Arrows, the symbols of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. It is framed by the motto, “*Una, Grande y Libre*” (One, Great and Free). Placed on the wall after the *generalísimo*’s forces conquered Tangier in June 1940, when soldiers built the Spanish public library on the beachfront, the coat of arms stands as a quiet reminder of the subsequent occupation. The great powers had been competing for influence in Tangier for generations. The contest had escalated in 1923, when the city became an International Zone ruled by a committee of Western powers. Franco seized Tangier shortly after France, his main rival in North Africa, fell to the Nazis in May 1940. As Hitler’s army blitzed across Europe, Franco’s officers changed Tangier’s street names from French and English to Spanish. The wall with the coat of arms is all that is left of the public library that Franco built. But it is these steps, just off Rue de Portugal, that Goytisolo’s narrator in *Don Julian* climbs, before stealthily entering the library, working his way into shelves of “classics,” and inserting insects between the pages of a book, thus defiling the Spanish literary canon.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when I was in my teens, Goytisolo spoke often at local bookstores and the Instituto Cervantes. Terse, soft-spoken, poker-faced, he would move from topic to topic, book to book, and then tell a joke—and the audience would sit quietly, until he would inform them, “*C’était une blague*,” then people would laugh. “I have always believed that the role of the intellectual is the critique of ‘your own,’ and the respect of the ‘other,’” he would say, “and that is the opposite of nationalism, which is about promoting ‘us’ and rejecting the ‘other’—and if that is treason, then so be it, *que así sea*.”<sup>13</sup> It was from these appearances that I learned about the plaque in the medina and so much more about Tangier’s Spanish past. To us, Ali Bey was just another dirt-poor, mud-caked street in the south of town, until Goytisolo explained that it was named after Ali Bey (né Domingo Badia), the famed Spanish Arabist and explorer who had traveled to Mecca, and

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that a statue of Badia had stood in the neighborhood until the 1930s, when it was knocked down by the Istiqlal party, when it was discovered that he had worked as a spy for France. From Si Juan, we also learned that the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí had come to Tangier in 1892 and drew up plans to build a majestic, multi-spiraled religious building named the Catholic Missions of Africa—similar to La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona—but it was never realized because an insurrection in Melilla, the Spanish enclave in northeastern Morocco, disrupted Spanish-Moroccan relations.

Northern Morocco, coveted by many empires and states, has long been restive. In 1921, the revolutionary Abdelkrim Al Khattabi launched a revolt against Spanish rule and declared the independent Republic of the Rif in the country's northeast. France and Spain joined forces, crushing the newborn state in 1926. In 1956, when Morocco gained independence, Spanish Morocco was handed over to Mohammed V. In late 1958, another revolt erupted in the Rif against the Arab nationalist Istiqlal party, and the region was bombed into capitulation by Crown Prince Hassan. Along with Tangier, the Rif would become the target of decades of economically punitive policies. In 1975, King Hassan laid claim to the formerly Spanish Sahara. To this day, the formerly Spanish parts of Morocco have a tense relationship with the government: The conflict with the Polisario movement in the Western Sahara is ongoing, and the northeastern Rif region has been racked with protest and unrest for almost a year now.

Until recently, the north's particular history was not taught in schools or portrayed in the media. The official version was that the ruling Alawite dynasty had liberated northern Morocco from Spanish and French domination. The truth is that, from the 1970s to 1990s, King Hassan II ran a brutally repressive state that liquidated adversaries and was particularly punishing of Berber nationalism. An Arabization policy was put in place, and as Rabat gained control over Tangier, state officials began to erase the Spanish colonial past, knocking down colonial buildings—streets named after Spanish figures like Cervantes and Quevedo would now bear the names of Arab caliphs or Saudi rulers. People would joke that as soon as a street was given an Arab name, it would deteriorate (*'uribat, khuribat*). From the 1970s onward Tangier went into decline: tourism dried up, infrastructure deteriorated, water shortages became routine and criminal gangs emerged in the city's *bidonvilles* doing battle with Islamists. Soon clandestine immigration to Europe started, with people boarding boats at night (or the occasional jet ski), trying to cross the Strait to the Spanish coast.

For those of us growing up in Tangier, Spain was Eldorado—its trajectory seemed the exact opposite of Morocco's. As our former colonizer made the transition to democracy, took off economically and joined the European Union, Tangier youth dreamed of España. A perverse nostalgia took hold as well, as our elders pined for the "International Zone" days when the streets were cleaner and safer. We would spend hours

watching Spanish television picked up by makeshift antennae at home or in cafés. Youth in Tangier have elaborate seasonal café routines; there were the cafés on the Boulevard where we sat with our fathers for breakfast, the cafés to play cards or checkers, the rowdy spots in the medina to watch Spanish soccer, the quieter center-town cafés where we sat to watch Spanish news or American television series dubbed in Spanish (we knew *Baywatch* as *Los Vigilantes de la Playa*). It was in these late-night café sessions that many of us discovered Si Juan. On Friday nights, as we waited for TVE2 to begin its live broadcast of NBA games, Goytisolo would appear on the screen, introducing that week's episode of his documentary series "Alquiblah," which ran from 1989 to 1993, and was his attempt to introduce newly democratic Spain to the cultures of the Islamic world. There was the Spanish author in his crewneck sweater, standing in a cemetery in Cairo's City of the Dead, or in a Sufi *zurkhaneh* club in Tehran, or outside a mosque in Timbuktu. The first time we ever saw an image of Abdelkrim, the great Riffian leader, or learned that Spain had used poison gas against Riffian soldiers in 1923, was when Goytisolo broadcast an episode titled "Abdelkrim and the Epic of the Rif."

Once the coffeehouses closed around midnight, we would go out to the straw *chabolas* (shacks) on the cliffs, light up *kif* cigarettes, and gaze at the lights of the Spanish coast twinkling at us. The ramshackle shanties where we sat were often named after the corresponding Spanish town right across the water. So when we said, "Let's go hang out in Tarifa," we meant the hillside cabin near the Roman tombs where we could see the Spanish town of Tarifa; the same with Cadiz, and the Portuguese town of Faro, which we could discern from the R'milat terrace. There were no televisions at these shacks, but every table gathered around a transistor radio. And sometimes Goytisolo's voice would come on the radio as well, on Radio Nacional de España or our local Medi 1 station, talking about Cervantes, Bosnia or Algeria. In short, Goytisolo was a larger-than-life figure in 1980s and 1990s Tangier. He was the first "intellectual" I met. Many expatriate writers had made Tangier their home, but few sat in the cafés with locals. Often, we did not understand what he was talking about ("always view your language in light of other languages"<sup>14</sup>), but we admired him for his vast erudition, humility and equipoise. He was so solidly pro-Muslim, so invested in the legacy of Moorish Spain. He viewed al-Andalus, particularly in its later years, as a metaphor for the human self—fluid, fragile, kaleidoscopic.<sup>15</sup> Unlike most Westerners studying Arabic, he had taken the time to learn our Hispano-Arabic-Berber vernacular, probably the most looked-down upon of dialects in the Arab world.<sup>16</sup> And he was keenly aware of our socio-economic precarity. We absorbed Spain daily through television and radio, and dreamed of crossing the Strait, but needed a *laissez-passer* to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta an hour east of Tangier, a visa to enter Tarifa, and two visas—one Spanish and one British—to reach Gibraltar, eight miles across the water. He



Juan Goytisolo with Spain's King Felipe and Queen Letizia, after they awarded Goytisolo the "Premio Cervantes" literary award, 2015.

SERGIO PEREZ/REUTERS

advised us to study, saying that Tangier ("the city palimpsest") was built on layers of writing that we could burrow into, and that when he was a teenager he had found freedom in reading. "You can travel without moving."<sup>17</sup>

Goytisolo's writing gained a special significance once I came to boarding school in the United States on a scholarship. In March 1990, my Spanish literature class took a trip to Querétaro, Mexico, and we visited the Casa de la Marquesa, a stunning historic building (now a hotel) in the city center. I recall looking up in awe at the Moorish arches, the Arabesque stucco calligraphy, the bright *alzulejo* tiles, the fountain in the middle of the courtyard. This Mexican edifice was the exact replica of Dar Niyaba, the Moorish-style building on the Rue Siaghines in the medina of Tangier, where my grandfather worked as a notary for decades. I could almost see my grandfather's office in the Casa de la Marquesa. Our literature professor, Aleyda, mentioned something about the building being an example of *mudéjar* architecture, and I recalled Goytisolo's talk of social and literary *mudéjarismo* (the amalgam of Islamic, Gothic and Romanesque styles that emerged in twelfth century Iberia).

As the Gulf War began in 1991, and "clash of civilizations" rhetoric mounted in the US, Goytisolo's warnings about the dangers of nationalism and "petro-crusades" proved prescient. And so I immersed myself in his work and the literature of Latin

American authoritarianism by authors he recommended and knew personally—García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Octavio Paz. In any Latin American city I would visit, I would seek out the places mentioned in Goytisolo's writing. The first time I went to Havana I visited the Centro Andaluz. I even had a drink at the Hotel Habana Libre's bar, the spot where in July 1967 the author Virgilio Piñera quietly passed a note to Goytisolo informing him of the location of a concentration camp where 6,000 prisoners were being held (Piñera then burned the bit of paper). At the José Martí Library, I was delighted to find Spanish translations of the works of Edmond El Maleh, the Moroccan novelist, blurbed and prefaced by Goytisolo (who had pushed for the translations). I went on to write my dissertation comparing Arab and Latin American authoritarianism.

## Ghettos and Mudéjarism

For all his savaging of Spain's literary canon—particularly the Generation of 1898, who neglected the voices of moriscos, Jews, atheists and other *intocables*—Goytisolo saw himself as a descendant of Cervantes. Held captive by the Ottomans in Algiers (1575–1580), Cervantes had not returned to Spain with a hatred of Muslims, but rather transfigured by North Africa's heterogeneity and linguistic diversity, and inspired

to produce his magnum opus *Don Quixote*. Goytisolo saw himself in *El Quixote*'s protagonist Alonso Quijano, a border-hopping, slightly mad idealist in an unjust world. He also admired Cervantes' novel as the epitome of literary *mudéjarism*—evident in the text's familiarity with Muslim life, the variety of subaltern voices represented (the morisco, the Turk, the Jew), and the playful interweaving of texts. Goytisolo was convinced that Cervantes, like Fernando de Rojas, author of *La Celestina*, was a converted Jew, a *converso*, hence his sharp, "peripheral" view of Spain.

If one had to distill Goytisolo's large corpus of work into three words, it would be: *mudéjarism*, periphery and anti-orthodoxy. "I have the periphery under my skin," he would say to explain his obsession with the international periphery—the "Third World"—which he saw, with its polyglot, heterogeneous societies, as an antidote to the white West. He was also fascinated with Europe and America's diverse and chaotic "urban periphery"; the ghetto, the barrio, the *banlieue*. He coined the verb *medinear* to describe his border crossing, his meandering through the ghettos and *banlieues* of New York, Barcelona and Paris—the "medinas of the West," as he called them. Goytisolo was one of the first to write about what we now call "global cities" and "transnationalism," claiming that the cultural and human flow from the Third World and the subsequent "babelization" of Western cities was "the sign of unmistakable modernity."<sup>18</sup> In 1982, 25 years before Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* (2015), Goytisolo published his absurdist *Landscapes After the Battle* (1982), imagining his own neighborhood in Paris taken over by Turks and Arabs.

As a champion of the underdog, Goytisolo would skewer the nationalism and other orthodoxies of the left and right, but like Cervantes, he would deploy the denizens and tales of the periphery. For instance, in *Don Julian*, he lampoons the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood, replacing the grandmother with an Arab with a handlebar moustache ("Oh granny, what big arms you have! The better to hug you with / Oh Granny, what big ears you have / The better to hear you with, my little sweetheart / ... Oh Granny, what a big snake you have! The better to penetrate you with, you stupid little idiot"). This rendition is rather reminiscent of the American "ghetto version" of Little Red Riding Hood: "Oh Grandma, what big eyes you have... What big teeth you have." "Just then the wolf jumps up in the granny attire and says, "Little Red, Little Red, I'm gonna pull up your little dress and pull down your little panties and screw you." "Little Red pulls out a silver gun and says "AW HELL NO!! You're gonna eat me like the book said you would!?"<sup>19</sup>

## Serpents and Grottos

When Goytisolo arrived in Tangier in the fall of 1965, he was (as he put it) in a "destructive mood," disillusioned by the Cuban and Algerian revolutions, and the Spanish communist party, and filled with rage against Franco's regime. Sitting in the Café

Hafa, contemplating the coastline of the "filthy stepmother" that is Spain, he felt a sudden identification with Don Julian, the Count of Ceuta, who had helped the Arabs seize Tangier and then facilitated Tariq ibn Ziyad's conquest of Spain in 711. For Goytisolo, Julian—the most famous traitor in Spanish history—was a hero who had helped usher in a glorious period of *mudéjarism*, terminated by Queen Isabel the Catholic. In the novel, Julian—the narrator's alter-ego—wanders through Tangier's streets with his friend Tariq (a reference to Tariq ibn Ziyad) and imagines another Moorish invasion from Tangier. The Muslim hordes will sack *la España sagrada*, but first they will storm the vagina of the fair-skinned Isabel the Catholic, her "cavern" being "the national emblem of the country of stupid cuntry." The Moors will "savagely lash the blood-stained body of the damsel," and then repeat this act of sexual aggression "on a national scale" across the peninsula. Says the narrator: "Virgins made by centuries of modesty and decency are impatiently awaiting...crying out to be attacked, to be beaten... violate the sanctuary and grotto, the citadel and cavern, the bastion and alcazar." The assault on Spanish women is akin to a retaking of the country's fortresses and citadels. "You will liberate the mosque of Cordoba, the Giralda and the Alhambra." This act of collective rape will taint and infect Spanish blood, eventually "improving the circulation of Hispanos."

The imagery is disturbingly vivid: as Isabel's "Stupid Vagina" is cleaned out by Don Julian's "serpent," Moors overrun Spain, everything turns to green and Arabic overwhelms Spanish. The sounds of Arabic will then thunder across the Atlantic to Latin America, everywhere that Hispanic *caudillismo* (dictatorship) reigns—"in the *pulque*-bars of Lagunilla in Mexico City, in the Calle de Corrientes of Buenos Aires, in the Jesús María district of Havana." An Islamic *reconquista*, Goytisolo believed, would pull Spain out of its "prehistoric" place and cure its general cultural and demographic anomie. Yet throughout this massive bacchanal of violence, women are mute. The women of Spain, whose reproductive organs are invariably described as "grottos," "mires" and "abysses," are portrayed as silent housewives "shitting" babies here and there. In the early 1970s, Goytisolo's silencing of women—and recurrent negative references to women as cavernous plants, spiders spinning lethal webs, foul stepmothers with a "mire" or "abyss" between their legs—began to draw criticism.<sup>20</sup> By the 1980s, critics were asking why femininity is almost always portrayed negatively in Goytisolo's fiction—whether it is through "feminine" Catholic Spain, wild Moroccan prostitutes or overweight American women roaming North Africa.

In 1981, Goytisolo published *Saracen Chronicles*, a volume of essays on Spanish and Latin American Orientalism, intended as a sequel to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), which had not addressed Hispanic Orientalism.<sup>21</sup> Goytisolo had befriended Said while teaching at NYU in the 1970s. The resultant book was a tour de force, exploring literary *mudéjarism* in Latin America, and tracing the influence of Cervantes on authors from Quevedo in Spain to the Mexican and Cuban writers

Carlos Fuentes and José Lezama Lima, and authors of the Latin American literary boom of 1960s.<sup>22</sup> Yet the book was also a preemptive move: Orientalism had become a political issue in American and Spanish academe, with scholars increasingly noting Goytisolo's rather cliché representations of the Orient as a world of liberating chaos and carnality.<sup>23</sup>

In *Chronicles*, Goytisolo responded to critics saying that he had fought for Arab freedom “for years,” since his days in Paris. He explained that while his literary criticism and political essays about Morocco were written from a clearly “anti-colonial, democratic and emancipatory perspective,” his novels maintain the age-old “Europe/Islam” binary, and do not use “flesh-and-blood” Moroccans as characters, but rather deploy the age-old “shadows” and “freak[s]” created by the “white imagination.”<sup>24</sup> The aim of this approach was to destroy the anti-Islam discourse that runs through Spanish history; thus, the assault on Queen Isabel was meant as an attack on the myth of the “pitiless” Moorish rapist. Finally, he said, his fiction was meant for Spanish, not Moroccan, readers: “the mental staging” that he was contriving in his fiction was “for Spain and only Spain.” Simply put, if in *Don Julian* the narrator fantasizes about “the undulations of a young boy’s body” to the sound of a flute, and sees Tangier’s “hallucinatory geometry” as being “entirely foreign to both the laws of logic and European common sense,” in his documentary about the city,

Goytisolo dismisses the “mystery of Tangier” as the “fantasy” of nostalgic Westerners, who have a superficial, stereotypical view of the city, saying “I had the opposite experience.”<sup>25</sup> The charge of Orientalism never went away; but unlike with Paul Bowles—with Goytisolo, it never stuck. In 2006, the *New York Times Magazine* ran a cover story about the novelist titled “The Anti-Orientalist.”

## “The Anti-Orientalist”

What a wretched misfortune to be born in Catholic Spain...

If only our own mothers had shat us a thousand leagues from there,  
in Ottoman lands or tranquil Africa?

There we’d have grown up free and lush,  
and nobody would have interfered with our lives  
or terrorized us with punishments and threats!<sup>26</sup>

—*A Cock-Eyed Comedy* (2005)

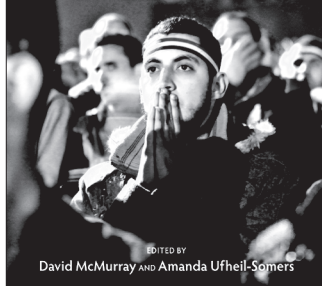
Although friendly with Paul Bowles, Goytisolo was careful to distance himself from Morocco’s most famous expatriate writer. He also insisted that it was Jean Genet who had inspired him to come to Tangier, and that it was the Frenchman, not the American, who had popularized the idea of Tangier as sanctuary, and had in 1948 christened the city as a “den of traitors” (*un repaire de traîtres*), a place of “subtle, skilled harmony,” and the “very symbol of treason.”<sup>27</sup> After Genet’s death in 1986, when Bowles and Goytisolo remained the last literary giants standing in Tangier, the Spaniard often seemed to be trying to one-up his American neighbor. The two had a lot in common. Both saw themselves as “outsiders” and liked to wander through North African cities—often in a drug-fueled state—in order to escape a world of Western order and rationality and enter a world of myth and chaos. (In *Juan the Landless*, the narrator advises the reader to “lose your bearings in Fez,” “rid yourself of the oppressive space-time binomial” and “make love voraciously with the first person you stumble upon.”<sup>28</sup>) Both Goytisolo and Bowles were homosexuals, but rejected the label claiming that a practice does not make an identity. Both discovered North Africa—specifically Algeria—in the cafes of Paris. Both landed in Tangier after a dalliance with Latin American communism and breaking with the Communist Party: Bowles returned to settle in Tangier after a detour through Mexico where he was trying to locate Leon Trotsky for the American Communist party. Both lamented the Westernization of Moroccan culture, and tried to preserve it. Both liked illiterate, working-class men, though Bowles preferred the violent or criminally inclined, like Larbi Layachi and Mohammed Mrabet, with whom he got into personal and legal disputes.

Yet there were also crucial differences. Bowles, while contemptuous of French colonialism, was not opposed to other forms of imperialism; he called for a greater American presence in Tangier in the 1950s, and was rather sympathetic to the Spanish colonialism in Morocco, seeing it as the continuation of a centuries-old Hispano-Muslim encounter.

## FROM INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

### THE ARAB REVOLTS

Dispatches on Militant Democracy  
in the Middle East



EDITED BY  
David McMurray and Amanda Ufheil-Somers

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Goytisolo, on the other hand, loathed Spanish imperialism. In fact, he often seemed to position himself as a progressive Spanish version of Bowles and a counter to the Beat writers, as an unswerving anti-imperialist, someone who understood and tried to repent for his country's crimes in Morocco—and deigned to sit in cafes with the locals. (Bowles, after 1960, famously stopped sitting in Tangier's cafes, claiming that they were crawling with regime informants.) Goytisolo would call out the Beats' superficial takes on Tangier, especially William Burroughs' prejudiced attitudes, noting the latter's tendency to walk through the medina with a machete under his overcoat.<sup>29</sup>

The most critical difference between Goytisolo and Bowles is that while the American's writing, fiction and non-fiction, is speckled with negative references to Moroccans as "primitive," "purely predatory" and "essentially barbarous," and he hated the Moroccan anti-colonial movement, saying Muslims aim for world domination through "the sword and the bomb," Goytisolo's journalism and travel writing is remarkably free of such antipathy.

Goytisolo shared Bowles' fascination with gore and sexual violence, inflicted by "Moors" on weak white Westerners. For Bowles, the violence showed the depravity of humanity and the futility of cross-cultural dialogue. For Goytisolo, the violence was redemptive and emancipatory. In his fiction, images abound of emancipatory rape, such as when the Moors re-enter Spain: "Women of every sort, all of whom reject the pricks as limp as lettuce leaves offered them by Spanish males and dream of Arab serpents and the leisurely, sumptuous feasts they offer." In *Don Julian*, Goytisolo imagines himself as a child—"Alvarito, blond blue-eyed child with curly eyelashes"—being raped by a Moroccan dock worker, as a way of "liquidating" his Francoist upbringing and Spanish identity.<sup>30</sup> Goytisolo's linking of sexual aggression with liberation suppresses women but also does no service to Muslim men. Critics would see his depictions of Moroccan men as "savage untamed warriors," "instinctively cruel Arabs" "horsemen with coarse lips, jugular veins" with "savage Arab virility," as perpetuating the worst stereotypes at a time of mounting hostility in Spain and Europe to North African migration. His satire was lost on many. While Goytisolo may have been defending the rights of Moroccan migrants in Spain in his *El Pais* columns, his fiction was giving fodder to more nefarious currents in Spain.

The truth is that the same memes that run through Goytisolo's fiction—of the "Orient," Morocco specifically, as a land of freedom, sexual bliss, egalitarianism; and Arab culture as an antidote to Spanish and European parochialism—also ran through his journalism and travel writing. In his novels, essays and documentary work, Islam is consistently preferable to Christendom: The world of Islam is more tolerant of ethnic and sexual diversity; more sensuous (because of the Quranic conceptions of paradise); people are cleaner (because of the tradition of public baths); even the Muslim creed is lighter, less cumbersome than that of Christianity. His insistence notwithstanding, the boundary between Goytisolo's fiction

and journalism is hazy and rather porous. In his essays, he speaks of the public square of Marrakech, Jamaa El Fna as a pluralistic, liberating, fraternal medieval space that disappeared from the West centuries ago;<sup>31</sup> in his novel *Makbara*, about a storyteller from Jamaa El Fna who migrates to France, the square is again characterized by an "anonymous freedom and permissiveness" and a "temporary suspension of hierarchies, joyful equality of bodies."<sup>32</sup>

The demeaning of Moroccan men also cuts across genre. In *Makbara*, a "leprous" Moroccan migrant whose ears have been gnawed off by rats and who has a colossal penis, roams the streets of Paris sowing horror; he lives in the city's subterranean metro system surrounded by rats who masturbate him. The same hyper-sexualization exists in more prosaic form in Goytisolo's non-fiction. In his memoir *Realms of Strife*, the Spaniard relates how in April 1963, he wandered up to the North African neighborhood of Barbès in Paris, where he ends up meeting an illiterate man named Mohammed. The novelist states that his knowledge of French, and overall "cultural superiority," led him to become a scribe, "a good Samaritan," to Mohammed and his friends, helping them fill out Social Security forms or write letters home, and they would pay him back with sex and Arabic lessons. As he writes: "I have loved or had an interest throughout my life in illiterate men or in men with only a rough elementary education. ... [T]he primordial factor in my friendships with hillsmen, peasants or Moroccan infantry soldiers whose features corresponded to darkly ancestral tastes was my need to compensate for the mental refinement required in the act of writing with their exhilarating, pervasive rawness: possessed by them and their rough pleasure, I instinctively looked for a way to counterbalance my physical submission with an intellectual domination capable of establishing an equilibrium between both scales."<sup>33</sup> Thus, by his own admission for "darkly ancestral reasons," Goytisolo liked to be around illiterate, impoverished types that he could write about even if they would never understand what he was saying.<sup>34</sup> In the novel *Makbara*, he notes that the freakish Moroccan migrant roaming Paris is "still good-looking despite the liberating lopping-off of his useless, botherless ears," while the novel is dedicated to "those who inspired it and will not read it," meaning his culturally inferior associates who cannot read.

Most of the criticism of Goytisolo's depiction of the Muslim men and Morocco came from scholars in Europe and America. In the Arab world, he was still celebrated as a sharp critic of Spanish Orientalism. This was because it was largely his essays and war reporting that were translated into Arabic. He was best known for *Saracen Chronicles*, translated as "*On Spanish Orientalism*" (*Fi al-Istishraq al-Isbani*). Only two of his novels were translated, *Arba'inat* (1994) [*La Cuarentena* 1991, *The Quarantine* (1994)]<sup>35</sup> and *Mashahid Ma Ba'da al-Ma'raka* (2013) [*Paisajes después de la batalla* (1982), *Landscapes after the Battle* (1982)]. His best-known novels, *Marks of Identity*, *Count Julian* and *Juan the Landless*—the "trilogy of treason"—and *Makbara*, were never translated.<sup>36</sup> As college students, we were engaged by his political writing and generally indifferent to his



On an official visit, Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro walks with Algerian Colonel Boumedienne in Algiers, 1972. KEYSTONE-FRANCE/GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES

fictional representations of Moroccans (there are worse things a celebrity author could say about a troubled country's youth than that they had "stout scepters"). But we were perplexed by his representations of Morocco as a land of freedom and Spain as an incurably benighted place.

## "Years of Lead"

In 1959, it was not just the FLN that was trying to liberate Tangier from colonialism and feudal rule. Fidel Castro would also turn his attention to the port city. The Rif had been part of the Cuban nationalist imagination for almost a century. In 1893, the Cuban poet and nationalist José Martí, had famously written in support of the Berber uprising against Spanish rule in northern Morocco: "*Seamos moros!* Let us be Moors...we who will probably die by the hand of Spain."<sup>37</sup> Likewise Abdelkrim's historic defeat of the Spanish at the Battle of Annoual in 1921 riveted Castro and his associates. When in November 1956, Fidel and his fighters set up camp in the Sierra Maestra mountain range and launched a guerrilla war against Batista's army, they were taking a page from

Abdelkrim's playbook. They were trained by Cuban-born Spanish colonel Alberto Bayo, a veteran of the Rif war who later fought on the Republican side of the Spanish civil war. As Castro notes in his biography, Bayo (whose "best student" was Che Guevara) essentially applied lessons from the Rif war, particularly the tactics of "the Moroccan guerrillas of Abdelkrim, in the war of the Rif, [who] broke the Spanish sieges,"<sup>38</sup> which enabled Castro's fighters to push out of Sierra Maestra and seize Oriente and Las Villas.

Upon assuming power in June 1959, Guevara, now Cuba's ambassador-at-large, flew to Cairo and met with Abdelkrim twice at the Moroccan embassy to discuss guerrilla warfare. ("Flying over the Rif by airplane, I looked out from the window," Guevara wrote, "The region is an ideal zone for guerrillas."<sup>39</sup>) It was a moment when newly independent Morocco was dallying with socialism and the Non-Aligned Movement. Radio Havana began broadcasting anti-Franco propaganda directly to northern Morocco and Spain, as Cuba extended its support to the FLN in Algeria and various other African liberation movements. When Hassan II ascended the throne, the Cuban-Moroccan romance came to a quick end,

as the young monarch placed the kingdom in Washington's orbit, and Cuban troops would join forces with Algeria and fight Morocco in the border war of October 1963. The Moroccan revolutionary Mehdi Ben Barka who supported Cuba as it came under an American embargo, and organized the Tricontinental Conference of Havana in 1966, was exiled and assassinated in Paris. Morocco would subsequently break off diplomatic ties with Cuba after the Castro regime recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (with ties only reestablished in April 2017).

Yet Castro would continue his efforts to gain influence over Tangier, seen as a depraved colony akin to Havana under Batista. He began to woo the expatriate writers, including Paul Bowles and Jean Genet, inviting them for a two-month paid holiday in Cuba. Both would rebuff the overtures. Goytisolo was in Tangier as the Moroccan regime tightened its grip upon the formerly Spanish provinces, and as Tangier went from a Latin city to an Arab city. He closely followed the repression in Morocco and Cuba. In March 1971, Goytisolo, Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa and Argentine novelist Julio Cortázar launched the quarterly magazine *Libré* in Paris to promote writers banned in Latin America, particularly Cuba; the first issue contained pieces by Octavio Paz, Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and Che Guevara. That same month, Goytisolo was riding in a taxi from Tetouan to Tangier when he read in the paper that Cuban writer Heberto Padilla had been arrested, and had written a public confession letter to Castro saying that he was "eternally repentant." In *Forbidden Territory*, Goytisolo notes that he and Cortázar scrambled to draft a letter to Castro—sent privately to the *jefe maximo*—that included the signatures of a bevy of intellectuals including Jean-Paul Sartre, Susan Sontag, Simon de Beauvoir and Gabriel García Márquez. But as Goytisolo would wryly note, the author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a close friend of Castro, was a "genial strategist" and "with his consummate skill of wriggling out of tight corners" quickly distanced himself from the letter, saying he had not given his approval.<sup>40</sup> Yet the Spanish novelist himself would prove a consummate strategist when dealing with Arab authoritarianism. *Saracen Chronicles* concludes with a survey of countries in Latin America and the Soviet bloc where literature can constitute a crime, and where authors can face death and imprisonment, yet oddly there is no mention of the same phenomenon in the Arabic-speaking world.

Goytisolo arrived in Tangier at the beginning of the "years of lead," a period of attempted coups and horrific state violence against dissidents, as King Hassan II imprisoned leftists, burying opponents and their children in the notorious underground prison of Tazmamart. Yet for Goytisolo, right up until his death, Morocco was always represented as a hybrid, diverse, sexually tolerant country, juxtaposed to a parochial, historically stuck Spain. Claudia Schaeffer-Rodriguez observed decades ago that for Goytisolo's literary

characters, the Arabs never seem to inhabit a "social reality." They are simply a foil, "the image of the other," upon which a character (like Alvaro Mendiola) can project his rage against Spain; and the Orient/Occident division is maintained so that the characters "can hop over to the other side" whenever it suits them.<sup>41</sup> This seems like an apt description of Goytisolo himself. Like his idol Cervantes, he praised the "Orient" for being diverse and polyglot, a reverse image of the modern West where nation-states had extirpated minorities from their midst and imposed a dominant language and identity. Goytisolo, however, lived and traveled in an Arab world undergoing a violent process of war and state formation, with regimes cracking down routinely on minorities and imposing Arabic on non-Arabic speaking populations, all in the name of nationalism. Yet even as the Moroccan state killed off dissidents, oppressed Amazigh movements, criminalized homosexuality (with the anti-gay legislation applied to Moroccans, rarely to foreigners), the brutality of state formation rarely figured in his writing, as he continued to quixotically portray the Orient as superior to the Occident. It is not clear if Goytisolo was simply over-generalizing from his privileged status as a regime-approved European writer living in Marrakesh, or if his idea of Spain remained stuck in Queen Isabella-qua-Franco's messianic, exclusionary periods—just as his description of North Africa remained anchored in the fifteenth century (lauded by Cervantes), or perhaps the mythical 1950s Tangier (when foreigners enjoyed extra-territorial rights).

At any rate, Cuba and Algeria in the 1970s shifted their attention from liberating northern Morocco to backing the Polisario movement in the Western Sahara, and this conflict would in some ways become Goytisolo's Achilles heel, compromising his relationship with the Moroccan, Spanish and Latin American left. In November 1975, as Franco was dying, King Hassan II launched the Green March sending 350,000 Moroccans and 20,000 troops to claim the province of the Spanish Sahara. Fearing a new colonial war that could destabilize the regime in Madrid, Spain hastily withdrew, ceding the province to Morocco and Mauritania. War broke out between Morocco and the Sahrawi Polisario Front, gaining an international dimension as Western states and their allies supported the Moroccan position, and Non-Aligned states—led by Algeria—backed Sahrawi self-determination.

The Western Sahara conflict, a product of Francoist colonialism, would become a political cudgel between the Spanish left and right. In May 1978, Goytisolo published a series of articles in *El País* clearly identifying himself with the Moroccan position: He excoriated the Spanish left's kneejerk solidarity with "progressive Algeria," writing that Spanish public opinion was shot through with colonial anti-Moroccan prejudice, talking up Morocco's "historic rights" and highlighting the hypocrisy of Algeria's "hegemonic maneuvering"—noting that Algiers wanted

self-determination for Sahrawis in the Western Sahara but not for the Sahrawi population within its borders.<sup>42</sup> These columns, reproduced in the Moroccan publication *al-‘Alam* in 1979, made the Spaniard a star in Moroccan nationalist circles, and set in motion initiatives to translate his work. But it drew the ire of the Spanish left. One international relations scholar called him a wannabe Don Julián, who did not tell the truth for fear of losing his beautiful “perch” in Tangier.<sup>43</sup> The socialist politician Pedro Costa Morata denounced Goytisolo’s “selective” humanitarianism, his silence regarding repression under King Hassan II. He noted Goytisolo’s reluctance to sign manifestos in support of Moroccan political prisoners, stating that an “anti-repression stance would liquidate the writer’s enthusiastic Moroccan experience.”<sup>44</sup> In the early 1990s, Goytisolo would start writing critically of the regimes in Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Algeria (and in 2009, famously refused Qaddafi’s literary prize), but Morocco still figured more prominently in his fiction than in his journalistic writing.

## “Homecoming”

On June 5, 2017, Juan Goytisolo was buried in the Spanish cemetery of Larache in northern Morocco, his tomb overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and right next to that of Jean Genet. Spanish and Moroccan officials, and local writers and artists paid homage to the Spanish author, reading extracts of his work. The Moroccan media celebrated the novelist who had shown the world that the “spirit of al-Andalus” was alive in Morocco, and who had mobilized renowned intellectuals—like Carlos Fuentes—in his (successful) campaign to have Jamaa El Fna declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, Goytisolo passed away during a period of protests in Morocco which had started in the Rif region and spread south, and when talk of the “betrayal of the intellectuals” was in the air. As the regime cracked down, arresting bloggers, artists and youth activists en masse, journalists pondered which of the celebrity intellectuals who lived in Morocco would back the *hirak* movement—and a stocktaking of Goytisolo’s career began.<sup>46</sup> His defenders claimed that while he may have not defended the Marxist-Leninist group Ila al-Amam and similar groups crushed during the 1970s, he did—along with other Spanish intellectuals—sign a letter following the 1981 strike and crackdown in Casablanca that appeared in *El País*, and that as recently as 2015, he had signed a letter in defense of Ali Lmrabet, the Moroccan journalist exiled in Spain. Goytisolo’s detractors, on the other hand, pointed out that, manifestos aside, in a series of columns the novelist had denounced the “political-financial mafia” ruling Algeria at the height of that country’s civil war,<sup>47</sup> and excoriated Ben Ali’s “omnipresent” secret police in Tunisia,<sup>48</sup> but he rarely called out Moroccan authorities. Moreover, his silence throughout 2011, as protests rocked the kingdom, and his failure to support that year’s February 20 movement, also struck many as calculated and

“deliberate.”<sup>49</sup> Activists were similarly bewildered when, in August 2013, he did not support a protest against the palace’s Crown Day pardon of a notorious Spanish pedophile who had barely served two years of a 30-year prison sentence. Sex tourism and child prostitution have become huge political issues in Morocco in recent years, and Goytisolo’s silence on this was deafening.

In late March 2015, a few weeks before traveling to Spain to accept the Miguel de Cervantes prize for lifetime achievement in literature in the Spanish language, Goytisolo returned to Tangier to speak at the Spanish public library, which in 2007 was named for him. Before an audience of students and dignitaries, he apologized for speaking a more Marrakshi than Tanjawi dialect of *darja*, explained how the medina of Tangier had enraptured him in the early 1960s, and then launched into one of his favorite topics—the Spanish words and proverbs that had made their way via Tangier into Moroccan Arabic, and the Moroccan proverbs that over the centuries had found their way into Spanish. During the question-and-answer session, a student asked why his works of fiction were not better known in Morocco. The Spaniard answered that his style of writing—experimental, collage-like, stream-of-consciousness—was very difficult to translate into Arabic.<sup>50</sup> A more accurate answer would be that Goytisolo’s fiction simply has not aged well. Scenes of a “Nubian domestic slave” creeping in to rape a little Spanish boy, or extolling Tangier as a city of traitors at a time when police were arresting activists in the north and accusing them of being “traitors” (*khawana*) and “Spain’s children,” would not sit well with readers. Moreover, his representations of Spain as hidebound and ignorant, and of Morocco as tolerant and mixed, while the Moroccan regime has for decades clamped down on freedom of assembly, religion and expression, and restricted the rights of women, minorities and homosexuals, were starkly at odds with political reality. Some months earlier, while speaking at Bilbao’s Gutun Zuria festival, the largest book fair in Spain’s Basque country (a region with historic sympathy for the Western Sahara and the Rif), an audience member asked Goytisolo how he could live for so long in a country where there was no freedom. The novelist responded, “People have reproached me, asked me, ‘How can you live in a country with no human rights?’ And I say the only countries where human rights are fully respected are Finland and Iceland—and I have no desire to live in any of those countries.”<sup>51</sup> Pressed on the Western Sahara, he said, “It’s a very difficult situation,” and placed the onus on Morocco’s neighbor: “Algeria is run by a military junta that needs a strategic enemy to justify heavy military spending. Algerians have no interest in decreasing tensions.” Asked again about the absence of freedom in Morocco, he deadpanned, “A writer chooses to write in a country that provides creative possibilities.”

Why did this lover of freedom not raise his voice for the freedom of his adopted homeland? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that like the other celebrity intellectuals who profess

love for Morocco and spend extended periods there—such as Bernard-Henri Levi, Dominique Strauss Kahn and Tariq Ramadan, all shrill proponents of freedom, albeit from disparate ideological positions—Goytisolo had made a bargain with the Moroccan regime. As long as he described the *makhzen* as “tolerant,” they would view him as “moderate.” The Moroccan regime has an unparalleled capacity to coopt intellectual firebrands, with a combination of intimidation and lavish treatment (villas, tajines, chauffeurs), and to welcome writers who are admired around the world but are quietly resented in the kingdom. By the early 1990s, Goytisolo had—wittingly or unwittingly—become part of a coalition of actors (domestic and international) who have portrayed Morocco as tolerant, “forward-looking,” “a feast for the senses,” a model of reform. The writer who built his reputation lashing the mythology of fascist Spain was now burnishing the image of another authoritarian regime. He found freedom in Tangier—and Morocco more broadly—but was silent about our (Moroccan) unfreedom so as not to jeopardize his. It is hard to shake the impression that Goytisolo’s liberty and eminence in effect rested on our disenfranchisement.

In recent years, Goytisolo’s café itinerary in Tangier had become fairly conservative. Avoiding the hash-smoking places in the medina and on the cliffsides, he stuck to the tea parlors in downtown Tangier—Hotel Chellah, Madame Porte, El Dorado and Maravillosa. The last time I saw Si Juan was in August 2015. I was standing outside Madame Porte—availing myself of the free wifi—when I felt an older man walk up to me. “*Se me olvido decirte*,” he said, “I forgot to tell you.” I had seen him a few days earlier at the Chellah café. “You should watch the episode I did on rai music. I got to meet Cheikha Rmitti,” he smiled. I told him I had watched the episode on VHS in Washington Heights, New York, almost 20 years before. It was beautifully done, especially the links drawn between Puerto Rican salsa and Nuyorican identity, and rai as an expression of Franco-Maghrebi (Beur) identity. He nodded, turned and walked off. I watched him cross to Calle Quevedo and disappear down the hill toward Cinema Goya. He had spent his life trying to cut down the “tree” of Spanish literature, as he called it, but had ended up becoming a vital branch. He had so desperately sought to shed his Spanish identity and to become one of us. He almost did. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 Juan Goytisolo, *The Memoirs of Juan Goytisolo: Forbidden Territory and Realms of Strife* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), p. 88.
- 2 Yasin ‘Adnan, “Juan Goytisolo, ‘al-Isbani ‘ala al-Madad,’ Asbaha Katiban Maghribiyyan,” *al-Hayat*, January 3, 2003.
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- 25 “Esta es mi tierra: Paisaje después de la batalla, por Juan Goytisolo” October 23, 2005. Aired on TVE2: <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/esta-es-mi-tierra/esta-tierra-paisaje-despues-batalla-juan-goytisolo/685046/>
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- 28 Juan Goytisolo, *Juan the Landless* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1990), p. 118.
- 29 Juan Goytisolo, “Tanger, Burroughs y la ‘beat generation,’” *El País*, July 5, 2014.
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- 31 *Saracen Chronicles*, pp. 97–98.
- 32 Juan Goytisolo, *Makbara* (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008), p. 242.
- 33 *Realms of Strife*, p. 349.
- 34 See Enright’s discussion (pp. 21–26) of this passage from *Realms of Strife*.
- 35 Published by Toubkal in Morocco.
- 36 In the mid-1980s, Kadhim Jihad began to translate Goytisolo’s travel writing and political essays: *Yawmiyat Falastiniya (Palestinian Diaries)*, *Mugarabat al Gaudi ila Capadocia (Aproximaciones a Gaudi en Capadocia)* and *Fi al Istishraq al-Isbani (Saracen Chronicles)*. Talaat Shaheen later translated *Daftar Sarajevo (Sarajevo Notebook)*, *Jazair Fi Mahab Al Rih (Algeria in the Wind)*, *La Harb wa la salam (No War, No Peace)*—on Palestine after the Oslo accords—and *Mashahid harb al Shishan wa khalfiyatiba (Scenes from the Chechnya War and Its Background)*. In terms of literature, a few excerpts and short stories were translated in literary magazines, but the first novel translated in toto was *Arbainat (La Cuarentena 1991, The Quarantine, 1994)* by the Moroccan scholar, Ibrahim Khatib, followed in 2013 by *Mashahid Ma Ba’ada al-Ma’araka (Paisajes después de la batalla, 1982, Landscapes after the Battle, 1982)*. The most recent translation is of Goytisolo’s short story collection *Para vivir aquí (Li Naish Huma: majma’a qisasiyya)* (Tangier: Editions Slaiki Frères, 2014), translated by Mezouar El Idriissi.
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- 38 Ignacio Ramonet, *Fidel Castro: Biografía a dos voces* (Madrid: Debate 2006).
- 39 “Guevara face au génie tactique d’Abdelkrim El Khattabi,” *Libération Maroc*, February 7, 2009; Mevilyar Er, “Abd-el-Krim al-Khattabi: The Unknown Mentor of Che Guevara,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1/29 (2017), pp.137–159.
- 40 *Forbidden Territory*, p. 317.
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- 43 Emilio Menéndez del Valle, *Triunfo*, January 23, 1971.
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- 46 Ali Lmrabet, “Mouvement du Rif: La Trahison des Clercs,” *Middle East Eye*, June 12, 2017.
- 47 “Argelia en el vendaval,” *El País*, March 31, 1994.
- 48 “El Maghreb a vuelo de pajar,” *El País*, January 18, 2000.
- 49 Bernabé López García, “Juan Goytisolo y Marruecos,” *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos*, 22 (June 2017), pp. 187–201.
- 50 Goytisolo had made this argument before. See Ahmed Berremdane, “Reflexiones sobre los textos de Juan Goytisolo, traducidos en la prensa árabe y marroquí en particular,” in Fernando de Agreda, *La traducción y la crítica literaria: actas de las jornadas de Hispanismo árabe, Madrid mayo 24–27, 1988* (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1990), pp. 235–238.
- 51 “En conversación: Juan Goytisolo con Ifñaki Esteban,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2lTVHbtgd8>.