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Moro or Congrí

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Moro or Congrí
(Or Why I Consider Myself to be From Marianao, Where My Mother is from, Instead of Matanzas, Where My Father was Born)

Though I have not been, and at this rate will never be, in Cuba, I have certain allegiances already forged in my head. I am a fan of Marianao, for instance. That’s where my mother’s family is from. In Cuban baseball, I back the Tigers of Marianao, even though my mother’s family, who actually lived there, cheer for Almendares, the Scorpions, who play God knows where. The other, more important reason I think of myself as being from Marianao has to do with food (Of course! Doesn’t everything, you’re probably thinking, This guy must weigh about a thousand pounds. I do.) Growing up mostly around my mother’s family, we called black beans and rice moros y cristianos, or moro, for short, and red beans and rice we called arroz congri, though my father always pointed out that it didn’t make much sense. Congri sounds like con gris—with gray—the color of the rice cooked with black, not red beans; los moros, the Moors, weren’t black but dark,
reddish-skinned people. Wouldn’t it make sense if *moro* was red beans and rice, and *congrí* rice with black beans and I say Yes, echoing my aunt: *but so what, who cares, I call it what we call it in Marianao.*