

## **The Travelogue and the Fellow Traveler: The Chronicle of a Pakistani Poet in Cuba**

In 1962 in Sochi, USSR, the renowned Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz found himself in a private, impromptu, transnational poetry recitation with the Chilean poet and future Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda. Both men were in town because of the Lenin prize, fellow travelers in the political, as well as the literal sense of the word. Although neither man spoke the language in which the other composed, according to witnesses, they seemed to understand each other's poetry perfectly. Eleven years after his meeting with Neruda, Faiz was called upon to dust off his apparently preternatural abilities in Spanish, this time for a two-week invited tour of post-revolutionary Cuba. This talk concerns the travelogue, or *safarnama*, Faiz wrote in the wake of that trip. Unlike the "perfect understanding" of his exchange with Neruda, the *safarnama* exemplifies the practical limits of Faiz's desire for socialist internationalism, cross-cultural understanding, and South-South solidarity. At the same time, Faiz's story can tell us as much about his view of Pakistan as about the "*dūr darāz gher-marūf jazīra*" (far off, unknown island) it claims to represent. This talk makes sense of the *Safarnama-e Cuba* in light of Faiz's other *safarname*, especially his USSR travelogue *Mah-o-sal-e ashnai*, as well as other post-revolutionary Cuban travelogues such as Gabriel García Márquez's "Cuba de cabo a rabo."