

## An Ineffable Presence

In the late winter of 2016, Gina and I arrived in a small quiet coastal town in Cuba. We found a well-appointed room in a casa particular. The food at a nearby restaurant was fresh and organic. We decided to stay a while, relax, explore locally and get into the reading we had packed.

A few days into our sojourn we came across a natural history museum just off the town square. The cool interior of the colonial architecture offered a relief from the midday sun. It contained desiccated examples of local flora and fauna placed on crumbling dioramas in an attempt to categorize interrelated species. There was also the odd deformed farm animal and mutated aquatic creature from the nearby waters. Dusty taxidermy.

Slowly winding our way deeper into the museum through a labyrinth of display cases, we were silently amused at this the sincere attempt to depict the natural surrounds of that out-of-the way town. When we finally got to the gloom beyond the daylight flooding in from the porticos onto the square, an attendant threw a switch to light the deeper recesses.

We were overcome.

Flashes of jewel-like colors in intricate pattern and texture: pearl-black, amethyst, ruby, silky blues, velvet browns hovered in glass boxes. Moths. Even in death pinned to identification cards, that assemblage of nocturnal creatures held the command of an oratorio, an ineffable presence.