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GLOBAL DESIRES: [RE]CREATION, SEX, AND SURVIVAL
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GLOBAL DESIRES: [RE]CREATION, SEX, AND SURVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVE OF THE HISPANOPHONE CARIBBEAN

By

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ABSTRACT

GLOBAL DESIRES: [RE]CREATION, SEX, AND SURVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVE OF THE HISPANOPHONE CARIBBEAN

By

Christopher Alan McGrath

This study considers recent narrative fiction of the Hispanophone Caribbean to analyze how several authors are constructing the area's emergent cultural imaginary by textually mapping "contact zones" created through transnational flows of capital and human bodies—especially as these are articulated through tourism and, in particular, sex tourism. The specific texts under consideration include several short stories by Dominican author Aurora Arias taken from her collections *Fin de mundo* (2000), *Invi's Paradise y otros cuentos* (1998), and *Emoticons* (2007); the literary autoethnography "De un pájaro las dos alas" (2009) by Puerto Rican author Larry La Fountain-Stokes; the short story "La causa que refresca" (1998) by Cuban writer José Miguel Sánchez (Yoss); the short story "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" (2000) by Cuban author Angel Santiesteban; the *testimonio Jineteras* (2006) and the novel *Tatuajes* (2007) by Cuban writer Amir Valle.

This study uses an interdisciplinary approach that draws from literary analysis, sociology, anthropology, postcolonial studies, gender studies, and discourse theory to demonstrate how these works explore multiple social forces, daily life events, and historical processes that make up contemporary vital experience within the region. As they sketch the spaces where local and foreign social actors meet in the context of commodified sexuality, these texts show those places to be constituted by structural and personalized forms of domination, resistance, negotiation, gain, loss, potential, and risk

within conditions of marked socioeconomic disparity. These settings ultimately become discursive sites by which the authors treated in this study construct a dialogics of sexualized encounter through which local selves articulate their relation to their foreign Other and to national power structures.

In chapter one, I contend that Arias's works attempt to textually apprehend the ephemeral male tourist Other and the forces which his presence sets in motion—forces rooted in, indeed, reiterative of, colonial practice and discourse that continue to shape contemporary Dominican social experience and space. Ultimately, I argue that these texts offer themselves as counter-narratives to hegemonic representations of the Caribbean and the praxis that accompanies and reinforces it. In chapter two, I analyze the works of La Fountain-Stokes, Sánchez, and Santiesteban to argue that, while concerned with the interplay of discursive structures and social processes in shaping local experience, their primary focus is on the constitution of subjects in the places where such social forces converge. Specifically, I argue that these texts, responding to a fundamental tension increasingly felt at both the social and the discursive levels within Cuba of the special period, take as their central theme the constitution of particular types of subjectivities indicative of that sociohistorical moment. In chapter three, I focus on how Valle's texts constitute a discursive project that examines the most sordid side of what it terms the "human putrefaction" that comprises *jineterismo*, seeking to cleanse the Cuban nation. In spite of their express attempts at discursive purification however, Valle's texts, driven by the impulse of abjection, ultimately reify the *jinetera* as a simultaneous object of repulsion and desire, their discourse a fragmenting and misogynistic *pornographos*.

In loving memory to my father Thomas J. McGrath, whose labor is still bearing fruit.

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Introduction: Global Processes, Colonial Legacies

Y [las islas]son fertilísimas en demasiado grado, ésta en extremo[...] La gente [...] son tanto sin engaño y tan liberales de lo que tienen, que [...] de cosa que tengan, pidiéndosela, jamás dicen que no, antes convidan la persona con ello, y muestran tanto amor que darían los corazones [...] Y por ende se harán cristianos, que se inclinan al amor y servicio de Sus Altezas y de toda la nación castellana [...]Esta [isla] es para desear, y vista, es para nunca dejar [...] toda la Cristiandad debe tomar alegría y hacer grandes fiestas y dar gracias [...] por los bienes temporales que no solamente a la España, mas a todos los cristianos tendrán aquí refrigerio y ganancia.[1]

~Cristóbal Colón "Carta a Luis de Santangel"[2]

-¡Diablo, papi, tú sí tá bueno, buen perro!—grita una de las tres mujeres, la más joven. Un solo grito a plena voz y sin miedo, consciente de su poder. [Ella tiene] cara de 'ven papi, buen perro, cómeme, que quiero ver cómo tú me pones, ven, que todo esto es tuyo, y es más, me lo voy a afeitar y me le voy a poner tu nombre para que veas que he estado esperándote la vida entera y ya no puedo vivir más sin ti.[3]

~Aurora Arias "Novia del Atlántico"

This study considers recent narrative fiction of the Hispanophone Caribbean to analyze how several authors are textually mapping local sociocultural space and experience in the "contact zones" created within the region by transnational flows of capital and human bodies, especially as articulated through tourism and, in particular, sex

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[1] "And [the islands] are abundantly fertile, this one extremely so [...] The people [...] are so lacking in guile and so generous with what they have, that [...] whatever they may possess, if asked for it, never say no, but rather offer it to the person who asked, and they demonstrate so much love that they would give their hearts [...] Therefore they will become Christians, inclined to the love and service of your Royal Highnesses and of the whole Castilian nation [...] This [island] is highly desirable, and, once having seen it, one does not wish to leave it behind [...] all of Christendom should take joy and celebrate with great festivities and give thanks [...] for the temporal wealth, refreshment, and gain that not only Spain, but all of Christendom will enjoy here." Translation mine as are all translations throughout this study, unless otherwise noted.

[2] "Carta a Luis de Santangel." Modernized Spanish version taken from Chang-Rodríguez and Filer, 13-4 except for the lines "La gente...toda la nación castellana," which were rendered into modernized Spanish by the author of the present study based on the original text as found in Varela, 141-2.

[3] "'Hell, *papi*, you sure are hot, hot stud!' shouts the youngest of the three women. A single shout at full force and without fear, conscious of her power. [She has] a face that says "come on *papi*, hot stud, eat me, I want to see what you do to me, come on, all of this is yours, and what's more, I'm going to shave it and I'm going to put your name on it so that you'll see that I've been waiting for you my whole life and I can't live any longer without you.'"

tourism. The specific texts under consideration include: the short stories by Dominican author Aurora Arias "Hotel Radiante" (*Fin de mundo* 2000), "Invi's Paradise" and "¡Oh, Bavaria!" (*Invi's Paradise y otros cuentos* 1998); "Bachata," "Novia del Atlántico," and "Emoticons" (*Emoticons* 2007); the literary autoethnography "De un pájaro las dos alas" by Puerto Rican author Larry La Fountain-Stokes (*Uñas pintadas de azul/Blue Fingernails* 2009); the short story "La causa que refresca" by Cuban writer José Miguel Sánchez (Yoss) (*Encuentro de la cultura cubana* (1998); the short story "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" by Cuban author Angel Santiesteban (*Los nuevos caníbales: Antología de la más reciente cuentística del Caribe hispano* 2000); the testimonio *Jineteras* (2006) and the novel *Tatuajes* (2007) by Cuban writer Amir Valle.

Selection of the above texts was based on two main criteria: the first of these was their taking as their central theme some aspect of the relations between local and foreign social actors in the context of commodified sexuality—i.e. that which attaches itself in particular to tourism, either incidentally or as part of the express purpose of travel (sex tourism); second of all was the choice to use a representative selection of the most recent texts to treat the theme, as these correspond to a marked upsurge of the phenomenon within the region during roughly the last twenty years. This, as we shall see, corresponds to the increasing growth and economic centrality of tourism within Caribbean societies. Thus, although there is a literary tradition that treats the theme of commodified sexuality within the Hispanophone Caribbean, some texts fall outside the parameters of this study. For example, texts such as Cuban authors Tomás Fernández Robaína's *Historias de mujeres públicas* (1998), Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres Triste Tigres*, Miguel Barnet's *Canción de Rachel* (1969), Zoé Valdés's *La nada cotidiana* (1995), Pedro Juan

Gutiérrez's *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* (1998) and *El Rey de La Habana* (1999) either deal with an earlier sociohistorical period, treat the theme merely as a motif, or focus principally on sex work involving local social actors. The same holds true for Puerto Rican authors Mayra Santos Febres' *Nuestra Señora de la noche* (2006) and *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* (2000), Francisco Font Acevedo's *La belleza bruta* (2008), and Dominican author Rey Emmanuel Andújar's *Candela* (2006) and *El hombre triángulo* (2005). While such texts as Jordi Sierra I. Fabra's *Cuba: La noche de la jinetera* (1997), Olga Consuegra's *La noche parió una jinetera* (2008), Lisette Bustamante's *Jineteras: La explotación sexual en Cuba, de la revolución al revolcón* (2003), and Zoé Valdés's short story "Traficante de marfil, melones rojos" (1998) fall within the established parameters, they all primarily deal with Cuba and would thus cause a marked imbalance in the countries represented within this project.[4]

Thus, while focusing on a representative sample of texts, the present study argues that, through their portrayals of localized encounters between foreign sex tourists and members of local society, these works generate a discourse that attempts, in a variety of ways, to come to terms not only with the area's experience of colonial legacies, but also with the impact of the intensified global processes that characterize the region's recent experience, especially as they are articulated through sex tourism.

While there is a growing amount of scholarly writing on the subject of sex tourism in the region, it has been almost exclusively a product of the social sciences—i.e. anthropology, sociology, tourism studies. While drawing on such material as secondary

[4] The emerging importance of the phenomenon as a theme within contemporary Caribbean cultural production is not only limited to literary texts. It is also seen in recent films from the region such as *¿Quién diablos es Juliette?* (1997), *Princesas* (2005), *Azúcar amarga* (1996), *Sanky Panky* (2007), *Heading South 'Vers le sud'* (2005), and *Flores de otro mundo* (1999).

resources, mine constitutes the first systematic study of locally produced literary representations of the phenomenon and allows me to analyze a key discursive element of the region's evolving cultural imaginary as it has emerged at the close of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

In order to contextualize the settings in which these works take place, in the following section I develop a sociohistorical framework of the Hispanophone Caribbean with particular emphasis on the Dominican Republic and Cuba and the historical development of tourism and sex tourism within the area. This will be followed by a delineation of the theoretical framework by which I approach and analyze these texts. Finally, I provide a brief chapter summary.

Socio-historical Overview

As the authors treated in this study produce a cultural imaginary through their portrayals of the [sexualized] encounters between local subjects and foreigners, they construct "ethnoscapes," Arjun Appadurai's term for one of the "imagined worlds" born of recent human mobilities and "global cultural flows" that he theorizes thus:

> By 'ethnoscape', I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world [...] This is not to say that there are not anywhere relatively stable communities and networks, of kinship, of friendship, of work and of leisure, as well as of birth, residence and other filiative forms. But it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more

> persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move, or the fantasies of wanting to move. (Modernity at Large 33-4)

Indeed, the "ethnoscapes" of tourism reflect the very mobility of which Appadurai speaks. In the Caribbean, where, as we shall see, governments have drastically restructured their economies by placing tourism as a central strategy for development, these same restructurings have triggered a double movement as tourist influx and local emigration—when possible—have increased exponentially. When unable to leave and escape deteriorating economic conditions, increasing numbers of local Caribbean residents seek to plug themselves into tourist flows as these intersect the island, looking to benefit from their participation in the formal and/or informal tourist economy, usually performing service-oriented labor.[5]

The dynamics of an "ethnoscape" of transnational mobility are well exemplified by a series of commercials of the early 1990s through which the privately-owned Dominican rum company Brugal sought to position itself within the increased transnational flows triggered by neoliberal economic restructurings of the island economy. The series consists of three commercials which form a series known as "La americana de Ron Brugal."[6]

The first ad starts in the middle of a sunny downtown Manhattan of the 1990s as a scene unfolds under the gaze of the Twin Towers of The World Trade Center. After dropping off some fares, a Dominican cab driver is called by the sounds of some live music being played across the street. He is so absorbed that he doesn't notice the thirty-

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[5] I use the term "informal economy" and its related terms as defined by Steven Gregory in The Devil Behind the Mirror: "economic activities outside formal wage-labor relations and unregulated by the state" (7).

[6] I take the titles from their assignation as such on the *youtube.com* website where they are labeled "La americana de Ron Brugal," "La americana de Ron Brugal pt 2," etc.

something blond woman who enters the taxi asking "Sir, are you on duty?" Seemingly unaware of her presence, he continues to gaze upon a scene of a musical group playing a traditional Dominican music form, *merengue,* replete with typical musical instruments associated with it: a Dominican *marimba*, a saxophone, a *güira*, a *tambora*, and a *conga.* As the music continues, the dancing crowd surrounding the musicians continues to grow, a mix of Whites, Asians, Hispanics/Latinos, most of whom appear to be in their twenties and thirties, all smiling in this moment of impromptu celebration of cross-cultural interaction under the continued vigilance of the icons of the newly triumphant global capitalism, the Twin Towers. As the camera alternates between the cab driver's face and the scene he beholds, it highlights his facial expressions, which convey fond memories and nostalgic longing; almost as if he were caught between desire for home and his reality of being in the United States. It is only after an almost defiant or determined downward turn of the mouth that appears to reflect a decision taken, an affirmation to self, that he is able to emerge from his reverie and finally respond to the repeated "Sir?"of the blond woman seated in his back seat, waiting expectantly. He responds: "Sí, perdón, mi músi...", abruptly correcting himself when he sees the *rubia* 'blond woman': "My music..." He seductively raises his eyebrows in emphasis as he identifies: "*merengue.*" The woman responds, eyes narrowed and smiles knowingly with a sassy, slightly seductive air of her own: "Ah, merengue...Mucho buena!" indicating to the driver, if in stereotypical *gringa* mispronunciation and grammatical assassination of his language, that she perhaps knows something of his culture and finds it exciting and pleasurable. As they laugh together, the taxi driver pulls away, proclaiming with a smile and a knowing air of friendly superiority "y eso, que tú no sabes nada, americana" ("You don't know

anything, *Americana*"). As the music continues, the camera zooms out, panning over the impromptu party celebrants and the official logo of Brugal Rum appears on the screen as a voiceover announces: "Brugal, contigo en todo lo nuestro" ("Brugal, with you in everything that is ours").

"Todo lo nuestro" 'Everything that is ours' is, of course, all the cultural capital that follow the flows of human movement and the circuits of consumption and production, the "authentic"—music, food, and laboring bodies, and, of course Brugal rum—commodified to cross the same borders as its primary consumers, Dominican citizens. Here, in transnational space, Brugal will serve as an iconic link to home even as it celebrates those transnational flows and seeks to position itself accordingly within rapidly expanding new circuits.

This commercialized ethnoscape would be more specifically identified within Appadurai's theorization as a "mediascape," which refers to both the distinct media for the production and distribution of images as well as the actual "images of the world created by these media" (35). As he continues: "What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and 'ethnoscapes' to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of 'news' and politics are profoundly mixed" (35) Thus, as broadcast throughout the Dominican Republic, the Brugal ad reflects back to the nation's citizens a growing fact of their everyday lives—transnational flows—while pointing to how some might and do position themselves under the auspices of transnational capital, participating, like the taxi driver and the rum which is pitched as subsuming all that is authentically Dominican, in spaces

of economic commodification, labor, and material goods which may be consumed transnationally.

It will be consumption which will be the point of connection for intercultural relationships also, as the second commercial offers a glimpse of the blond *americana* in her adventures throughout the island, consuming "authentic" Dominican food, enjoying the company of several Dominican men with whom she dines, dances, and, of course, imbibes *Ron Brugal.* At the end of the commercial, we find her once again back in New York, recently arrived and in search of a taxi. When asked from where she is returning by the taxi driver, whose back is to her, she responds "Paradise," upon which he turns to see the "authentic" Dominican *tambora* drum upon which is painted a Dominican flag and, recognizing her, exclaims joyously, "Americana!" As they celebrate this happy reunion with much laughter and excitement, each of them holding one end of the *tambora*, new lyrics for the jingle are heard: "Somos uno juntos / somos el corazón de lo nuestro" ("We are one together / we are the heart of that which is ours"). In this way, the commercial joins together the *americana* and the Dominican male in a harmonious union of consumption and service.

Once again, the commercial conforms to the functions Appadurai describes as pertaining to the "mediascape":

> 'Mediascapes', whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image- centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others

> living in other places. These scripts can and do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live as they help to constitute narratives of the Other and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prologemena [*sic*] to the desire for acquisition and movement" (35-6).

In a sense, one could argue that the story being told in these commercials serves a hegemonic didactic function originating with members of the country's economic elites. It not only describes the transnational and local experience of many Dominicans, but also seeks to interpellate local consumers at the same time it proposes a desirable and "natural" order of things within the global tourist economy, positing an ideal relationship between "Self" and "Other." Here, smiling, friendly, and helpful Dominicans cater to smiling, hungry, and consuming tourists. That it suggests the wedding of the (trans)local male to the foreign female may also be understood as not only an attempt at libidinal stimulation toward the sale of the product, but also an attempt to play to real desires and fantasies of many Dominicans for a way off the island. As we will see in the course of this study, this also constitutes a primary motivation for many who place themselves within the transnational flows of the sexual economy as they enter into sexual labor with tourists, be these male or female, desirous to capitalize on their contact with the mobilities those tourists embody.

Thus, one of the more salient features of this commercial is precisely its representations of the Dominican "Self" and his/her cultural "Other" and how their social experience—indeed, how each of them—is constituted through their relationship with one another. In this way, they illustrate Tevtzan Todorov's "problematics of alterity"

which he developed to explore the dynamics at play in the encounters between selves and others within the context of the "discovery" and conquest of America:

> "We can discover the other in ourselves, realize we are not a homogenous substance, radically alien to whatever is not us [...] But *others* are also *"I"s*: subjects just as I am, whom only my point of view—according to which all of them are *out there* and I alone am *in here*—separates and authentically distinguishes from myself. I can conceive of these others as an abstraction [...] as the Other—other in relation to myself, to me; or else as a specific social group to which *we* do not belong. (3)

As told from the local Dominican perspective these commercials show multiple ways in which individuals and/or groups from different cultures of origin perceive, interact, identify, and "know" each other. In so doing, these commercials reveal the complexity of identitarian categories within the context of contact and encounter, simultaneously proposing both stasis and flux as constituent components of them. For example, there is a sense in which the commercials seek to promote an image of fixity to cultural identity so as to posit the product they wish to sell as one of many constitutive elements that will maintain the "authentic" Dominican "Self" when in the transnational space of the American "Other." Cultural elements from "home" such as music, food, dance, and rum will be the anchors of authenticity there. But what of all the others who are united together through consuming such products. Are they then also Dominican? Or do they maintain their difference? Consider the *americana*. Throughout the series of commercials she progressively becomes, as the lyrics of the jingle suggest, united and identified with Dominicans and they with her—both at home and abroad—while at the

same time, the viewer is constantly reminded of her fundamental difference, not only phenotypically, but also by her consistent mispronunciation of the extremely limited Spanish vocabulary she possesses. She is objectified and parodied; a stereotype, yet economically necessary, desired and catered to. Yet it is claimed that she is one of "us." On the other hand, who is the Dominican? He is the New York taxi driver, the local flirtatious bartender, the smiling dance and dining partner. Where is he? He is on the island. He is in New York, the territory of the *gringo/a* "Other." Yet there, in New York, *he* is the "Other." In fact there are many others—Latinos, Asians, African Americans and other Dominicans—yet "we are all one together / we are the heart of that which is ours." We are bound together, same, yet distinct within transnational spaces, be these on the island or in a foreign land.

The commercial and its representations of the harmonious relations between Dominicans and white tourists from the North, is a product of and reflects, of course, the ever growing move toward tourism which has, since 1967, marked the Caribbean region as local governments and international organizations have promoted and expanded tourism as a central development strategy in the economic structures of the region's countries[7]. Steven Gregory points out, for example, the form this development took in the Dominican Republic:

> Beginning in the late 1960s and spurred by the aggressive promotion of tourism as an economic panacea by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and other international agencies, the administration of President Joaquín Balaguer began an

[7] For more information on the Caribbean in general, see Crick. For more information on the Dominican Republic, see Cabezas and Padilla .

> aggressive campaign to promote tourism. Tourism was presented by his international boosters as a means to advance from a primary sector-based economy to one based on services, without passing through a phase of industrialization, as had been attempted through earlier import substitution policies. (Devil Behind the Mirror 23)

Indeed throughout since the 1970s, the Dominican Republic has experienced, as Gregory affirms: "a transition from the production of primary agricultural exports to international tourism and export-oriented manufacturing and services" (7). By the 1990s, when these commercials were filmed and circulated, these structural forms had become more deeply enmeshed in the national economy.

The imagery of commercials like those discussed here that market the Caribbean as a type of paradise and an idyllic place for refreshment, consumption, and fun among friendly local populations, predisposed to service and gentleness, articulate versions of imagery with a long history in the Caribbean. As Polly Pattullo describes:

> It is the fortune, and the misfortune, of the Caribbean to conjure up the idea of "heaven on earth" or "a little bit of paradise" in the collective European imagination... the region, whatever the brutality of its history, kept its reputation as a Garden of Eden before the fall. The idea of a tropical island was a further seductive image: small, a "jewel" and a necklace chain, far from centres of industry and pollution, a simple place, straight out of Robinson Crusoe. Not only the place, but the people too, are required to conform to the stereotype" (Pattullo 1996: 142)" (qtd. in Sheller Consuming the Caribbean 5-6).

These images, of course, find their prototype in the portrait of the lands and people of the New World quoted in the epigraph from Christopher Columbus with which this study begins.

Excerpted from the oft-cited letter of Columbus to Luis de Santángel, this passage offers the first European description of the island of Hispaniola and underscores its highly desirable fertility ripe for European development and exploitation. As goes the land, so too its people, whose generosity and lack of deceit are proposed as an indicator of their likely servility within the system that would soon be imposed upon them. Thus, one finds here the seminal vision of the Caribbean which would inform the European imaginary, inscribing and positioning both land and people relative to what would become modern European empire. This document thus serves as a blueprint not only for the idyllic imagery that would eventually evolve into the mass tourism industry's discourse, but also for the global expansion of modern empire and set the discursive groundwork for practices still operative in that island space some 500 years later as would-be adventurers—A.K.A. tourists—follow in the footsteps of the Admiral, protagonists in their own voyages of discovery and impelled by the very desire for refreshment, festivities and gain recommended and prophesied by Columbus. Indeed, as Mimi Sheller contends in Consuming the Caribbean, the Caribbean represents within the "West" a 'global icon', that is, a place within the West's imaginary and set of practices that "encapsulates modernity, enfolding within itself a deep history of relations of consumption, luxury and privilege for some"(37) as will be illustrated below.

Indeed, it is not only at the level of discursive renderings but also at that of the practices these guide and by which they are, in turn, shaped, that the "West" implemented

within the Caribbean the two primary uses for that region and its peoples indicated by Columbus—refreshment and gain. Indeed, Amalia L. Cabezas locates Caribbean tourism within a geopolitical and economic structural framework that she sees as an extension and outcome of colonial patterns:

> Although the world has changed significantly since the 16th century, the basic political and economic relationships between colonies and empires remain largely structured along a colonial axis of domination. The enormous transfer of raw materials and labor power from the Caribbean to Europe and North America continues to follow the fundamental patterns established during the colonial era. The underlying relationships between features of the industrial countries in the North and poor countries in the South have remained constant. Patterns in the circulation and distribution of commerce, money, and migration were established during the colonial period and have continued to the present. For instance, air jet travel revolutionized transportation after World War II, following previously established navigational travel routes from the global North to the South [...] As in the colonial period, most travelers continue to be Western European and North American men (51-2).

Thus, circuits of travel, production, consumption and flow of goods, services and human beings are those that were established during the colonial period and basically repeat the power differentials between former metropolitan centers and peripheries (Cabezas 52). Steven Gregory argues that "the uneven manner in which transnational

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flows of capital, culture, and people" that mark local areas of the Dominican Republic are the results of "key asymmetries in the sovereignty, economic influence, and, indeed, military power among contemporary nation-states—disparities that are effects, in the main, of the enduring legacies of imperialism and colonialism [Mishra 2001; Mutman 2001; Petras and Weltmeyer 2001]" (4).

And so it is that tourism both at the level of discourse and the level of systemic material processes and supporting structures is enmeshed in dynamics with clear roots in the period of discovery, conquest, and colonization. Several authors have cited such phenomena as the self-contained "all-inclusive" enclave tourism which benefits primarily foreign owners with little real economic benefit to local populations who find themselves excluded from the facilities except to serve as a source of labor (Gregory 26; Cabezas 29). They thus posit this as following some of the basic structural dynamics of the plantation in as much as "it is structurally a part of an overseas economy [and] is held together by law and order directed by the local elites" (Hall and Tucker 4)[8].

The impact of the devastation wreaked by the plantation system continues into the present and has left indelible scars upon the Caribbean experience as etched deeply within the memory of local cultural producers such as Martinican author Eduard Glissant, who, in *Poetics of Relation*, points to the hermetically sealed plantation as a precursor and a basis for the type of relations that the islands would maintain with their exteriority, the latter making of the Caribbean a site for continued metropolitan exploitation. For Glissant, the plantation comprises, "one of the focal points for the development of present-day modes of Relation [, a] universe of domination and oppression, of silent or professed dehumanization [where] the tendencies of our modernity begin to be

[8] See also Crick, 317, 319-23; Gregory, 26; Padilla, 1-8.

detectable" (65).[9] Antonio Benítez Rojo in *The Repeating Island*, for his part, refers to the "giant sucking machine" introduced by Columbus and those who would follow him and the subsequent imposition of the plantation system with its totalizing and destructive presence. The plantation violently and forcefully destroyed, brought together, and mixed many cultures and peoples, even as it supplied Europe with the capital necessary to fuel the Industrial Revolution, which leads Benítez Rojo to affirm, "the history of the Caribbean is one of the main strands in the history of capitalism, and vice-versa" (5; 8-9; 33-81)[10].

Central to the plantation was the slavery system and the hierarchical structure of power exerted by the minority class over the slave populations, organizing human capital along gendered and racialized lines within its division of labor—a division which touched upon sexual relations between the white master and the black slave. As Beckles points out, the structure of slave systems entailed "'not only the compulsory extraction of labor from the blacks but also, in theory at least, slave owners' right to total sexual access to slaves'" (qtd in Kempadoo 5). As Kempadoo states: "White slave owners made ample use of this 'right': rape and sexual abuse were commonplace, and concubinage and prostitution quickly became an institutional part of Caribbean societies" (5). The sexualized labor of slave property extended beyond the master's personal use inasmuch as the latter could also hire their slaves out to other men as another source of income (Kempadoo 6). As Kempadoo further states: "Within the context of slavery, prostitution

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[9] *Relation* is a term Glissant uses, in part, to distinguish the interconnectedness between "geocultural entities" (142)—e.g. between nations and territories, including current and former metropolitan centers and their peripheries—such that "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11).

[10] See also Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* for a further discussion on the colonial impact on contemporary experiences of modernity, especially as the latter was effected through the flows of culture and bodies generated by the institutionalized slavery which powered the plantation.

was lodged at the nexus of at least two areas of women's existence: as an extension of sexual relations (forced or otherwise) with white men and of labor relations for both slave and 'free colored women'" (6).

The aforementioned practices and the sexualized imaginary that arose concerning the Caribbean as a space of easy access for the Western male, laid the groundwork of today's sex tourism (Kempadoo 6). As Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor state: "The demand for sex tourism is inextricably linked to discourses that naturalize and celebrate inequalities structured along lines of class, gender, and race/Otherness; in other words, discourses that reflect and helped to reproduce a profoundly hierarchical model of human sociality" (52). Indeed, as Steven Gregory points out in reference to the Dominican Republic:

> The rapid growth of the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic relied on the mobilization and reconfiguration of social hierarchies and ideologies based on gender, class, and racial distinctions. As many researchers have pointed out, the international tourism industry constructs, commodifies, and markets exoticized and deeply gendered images of the non-European host societies that stress the passivity and enduring "otherness" of their peoples (Enloe 1989; Truong 1990; Bolles 1992; Mullings 1999; O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor 1999). These representations, rooted in centuries-old fantasies of male European travelers and colonizers, construct tourist destinations such as the Dominican Republic as sites of hedonistic license and consumption

> that recapitulate the historic prerogatives of imperial elites among colonized peoples (Kempadoo 1999). (136-7)

In this way, relational positioning between the island and its exteriority, as mediated through current [sexualized] practice, repeats discursive as well as deep structural distinctions in which some local persons are at the lower end of a gendered, racialized, and sexualized hierarchy, a phenomenon with a lengthy historical precedent in transCaribbean experience.

Thus, on material, structural, and discursive levels, the contemporary experience of tourism and sex tourism evidences continuity between the present and the past, what Mark Padilla points to as the simultaneity of colonial and current dynamics located at the site of sexuality:

> "[...] contemporary Caribbean sexualities *simultaneously* express certain colonial institutions while also reflecting more recent postcolonial formations. Therefore, the important question to ask is not *whether* Caribbean sex work is related to the users of sexuality during colonialism—since this is the unavoidable historical reality of the Caribbean—but rather how the historical context of colonialism converges with more recent transformations in *neo*colonial political economy to shape the social organization of Caribbean sex work as it presently unfolds on the ground" (2).

For the majority of the texts examined in the present study, the continuity of the past and its convergence with the present at the site of sexual encounter forms an important concern.

Thus far we have considered at some length the sociohistorical processes that have shaped the Caribbean in general while focusing in on the Dominican Republic in particular. Even though, as Amalia L. Cabezas observes, there is a similarity that exists between the Dominican Republic and Cuba due to similar experiences of colonialism and the recent tourist phenomenon as it "integrates Cuba and the Dominican Republic into a transnationalization of production that generates the unification and homogenization of both countries" (53), Cuban history and experience has its own specificity and it is from that and to that specificity that the Cuban authors treated within this study write. Therefore, I now turn to a brief consideration of the Cuban experience as it has unfolded since the triumph of the 26 July Movement in 1959.

One of the first tasks that the new revolutionary government assigned itself after assuming control of the Cuban nation was to "cleanse" the country of mafia-run casinos, drug trafficking, and prostitution that had grown vertiginously on the island under the Batista regime and the former sway of the U.S. which had held a hegemonic presence on the island since the Spanish-American War of 1898. By 1965 the country was considered officially to be free of prostitution, the revolutionary government having exerted a concentrated effort to reeducate prostitutes for entry into society (Kummels 15).

Whereas in the Dominican Republic tourism came to take an ever-increasing centrality in the nation's economic life as part of its development strategy as the country transitioned away from being a sugar economy due to the latter's decreasing value on the world market (Gregory 22), Cuba, sheltered by Soviet subsidies and favorable trade arrangements (Pérez 270), enjoyed, from the 1960s to the 1980s, mostly domestic tourism for Cuban citizens and "solidarity" tourism in which foreigners interested and/or

sympathetic to the socialist cause came to the island, at times participating in work projects while there (Cabezas 48).[11] Beginning in the early 1980s, however, the government began to open the country up slowly to foreign investment and joint ventures in the tourism industry, passing a law in 1982 that ultimately benefited government coffers and foreign investors to the exclusion of direct participation of citizens in such ventures (Cabezas 63).[12]

It wasn't until the 1990s, however, that the nation would turn ever increasingly to tourism as the main development strategy in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its allied countries, which had formed Cuba's principal trading partners. The ensuing crisis, the severity of which the revolutionary government had not faced before, drove the government to put into place the "special period in times of peace," which as Louis Pérez Jr. points out, was "a series of contingency plans conceived originally as a response to conditions of war. The *período especial* established a framework within which to implement a new series of austerity measures and new rationing schedules to meet deteriorating economic conditions" (293). These conditions were marked above all by scarcity. As Pérez continues: "Scarcities increased and shortages of almost every kind became commonplace. Goods and services previously plentiful became scarce; what had earlier been scarce disappeared altogether" (293). Carrying out the normal tasks of daily living became extremely difficult to such a degree that, "days were frequently filled with

[11] As Cabezas points out: "Solidarity groups such as the Venceremos Brigade—composed of Chicano and Black nationalists, along with others in the U.S. Left—and the Antonio Maceo Brigades, made up of young, radical Cuban émigrés, came to harvest coffee and tobacco, cut sugar cane, and build schools" (48).

[12] Cabezas states: "Joint ventures and tourism quickly attracted foreign investment. The law on joint ventures, passed in 1982, eased restrictions on foreign investors (Glazer and Hollander 1992). The law for investments, which had been on the books since the 1980s, allowed the repatriation of profits and the importation of management teams. Although privatization and joint ventures enticed capitalists from all over the world to invest in Cuba, the law does not allow Cuban citizens to invest, profit, or benefit directly from capitalism" (63).

unrelieved hardship and adversity in the pursuit of even the most minimal needs of everyday life, day after day" (Pérez 295).

Aside from increasingly austere rationing, the Cuban government responded by implementing a series of reforms which were capitalist in nature and designed to steer the country through the crisis while allowing the country to retain its socialist character. Some of these included "de-penalizing the dollar, opening free markets for agricultural products, allowing certain forms of self-employment, increasing foreign investment, and emphasizing tourism as the most important means of rebuilding the Cuban economy" (Weinreb 22). The first of the reforms listed here—the depenalization of the dollar, which had been illegal to possess prior to 1993—was an attempt on the part of the revolutionary government to obtain much needed foreign cash,[13] but had the effect of creating a dual economy and new social divisions within Cuban society. As Esther Whitfield observes:

> [T]he dollar's superiority over the Cuban peso set a pattern for social inequalities that the revolutionary project had sought to eliminate. Salaries continued to be paid in pesos while material goods were sold in dollars, so that labor hierarchies were distorted and service work that could earn dollars (waiting tables, guiding tours, driving taxis, prostitution) was valued over specialist professions" (5).

Indeed, to recoup some of the money lost to a burgeoning black market, the government instituted the *tienda de recuperación de divisas* 'foreign currency recuperation store," the TRD, where much needed items were sold only in dollars at inflated prices (Weinreb

[13] See Gott, 291.

22).[14] In the midst of the scarcity of everyday life, obtaining dollars became the goal of many citizens. Amalia Cabezas explains the situation:

> [M]ost Cubans needed US dollars to provide for a household's survival on a daily basis [...] Rationed goods were in scarce supply in the state stores, with the *libreta* [a government rationing coupon book] providing at most 10 days of food supplies. Essential provisions could be purchased only in dollars or through the underground economy and at very high prices, thereby establishing universal dependence on dollars to obtain necessary items, such as soap, cooking oil, and foodstuffs. (Cabezas 64)

As mentioned above, a primary way of obtaining these dollars was through some sort of attachment to service-related work, which was increasingly tied to service within the tourism industry, either formally or informally at the margins of tourism and/or the black market.[15] Indeed, the special period saw a marked rise of a phenomenon which came to be known as *jineterismo*.

Although commonly associated with sexual labor in contact with foreign tourists, *jineterismo*, and its associated terms *jinetero* and *jinetera*—which refer to male and female practitioners respectively—applies to a broad range of activities in the informal economy, all of which principally have to do with tourists. As Cabezas states:

> "*jineterismo* is a colloquial term that refers to the broad range of activities and behaviors associated with hustling, including, but not limited to, tourist-oriented sex work. *Jineteros* [a plural form encompassing both genders] trade on the margins of the tourist economy; they are

[14] See also Gott, 291-2 and Cabezas, 65.
[15] See p. 5, note 5.

> often seen soliciting foreigners in the streets of Havana, peddling everything from cigars and rum to sexual services. They act as tourist guides, escorts, brokers of sexual services, and romantic companions" (169-70).

Although first making their appearance during the late 1980s as the tourist economy began to expand (Kummels), it wasn't until the crisis of the special period and the rapid expansion of capitalist practices and policies—chief amongst them, tourism—that the phenomenon of *jineterismo* became an ever more integral part of daily life, especially in the areas of heaviest tourist concentration: Havana and the beach resort area of Varadero as impoverished people in increasingly desperate times sought ways to access the hard currency that tourists carried.

The informal economy in the Dominican Republic has followed a similar trajectory as that of Cuba and attaches itself in a similar way to the tourist economy, primarily being the result of such neoliberal policies as the devaluation of Dominican currency, deregulation of labor, increasing privatization of the public sector, a decrease in public sector employment, and the increase in foreign investment, especially in the tourism industry (Gregory 7, 30; Cabezas 41-3). These gave rise to unemployment and underemployment and triggered the growth of informal economic activities similar to those engaged in in Cuba. Steven Gregory explains the case of one young man from the resort town of Boca Chica who, having lost his job, "turned to the tourism economy, improvising a living as an unlicensed tourist guide, marijuana dealer, and occasional pimp" (31). Among those activities not related to sexual labor, but still attached to tourism, Gregory found that: "Men mostly sold a variety of products, ranging from

clothing, crafts, and cigars to shellfish, fruits, and other foods. Women mostly worked on the beaches as masseuses, manicurists and pedicurists, and hair braiders, catering largely to foreign tourists" (31). Of course, as in Cuba, so too in the Dominican Republic, a prominent feature of informal work within the tourist economy is related to sexual labor, "targeting the largely European and North American tourists who visited the area" (Gregory 33). Indeed, it was such that the town of Boca Chica, one of Gregory's sites of investigation, was structurally affected by sex tourism: "Much of the town's tourism infrastructure—small and midsized hotels, restaurants, bars, and discotheques—owed their livelihood to [...] predominantly male, sex-oriented tourism" (33).

Thus, distinct, yet similar colonial and contemporary histories and social processes have marked both Cuba and the Dominican Republic, processes that have produced a long history of relationship between the residents of the islands and travelers from former metropolitan centers. Such processes have produced not only the white, "Western" discoverer, conqueror, colonist, owner, master, and, as of late, tourist, but also the Indian, the slave, the racialized, gendered, and classed local social actors at the shallow side of a power divide, yet who, as we will see in the present study, exercise an agency of their own in spite of overarching socio-economic inequalities between themselves and the clients they seek to serve...and take advantage of as they look for ways to position themselves advantageously within current flows and networks of power. Thus, the Cuban *jinetero* and *jinetera* walk a strikingly similar landscape of transnational capital as that of their Dominican counterpart quoted in the epigraph with which this dissertation opens. There, juxtaposed in answer to Columbus's idealization of the island and its people, a Dominican *cuero* 'whore' calls out to her white, foreign, and male Other

from a position of personal power that derives from her geographic, discursive, and corporal locus—that is, her exoticized Caribbeanness and eroticized body which she uses to her own advantage. In her sexualized performance, her body becomes the site for the negotiation of mutual desire even as she seeks to allure her interlocutor. Her look commands him to partake of an anthropophagic feast on her body and sex, above which she promises to inscribe his name, thus rehearsing and playing on the dynamics of exotic objectification, ownership, subjugation and dependency first set in motion some 500 years earlier, converting them into tools and conduits to connect with transnational capital and mobilities. It is precisely this type of dialectical interplay of present and past, of foreign and local, embodied and enacted by the men and women of separate yet interrelated cultures who enter into contact in a space of mutual desire, that serves as the raw material out of which the Caribbean authors whose works comprise the focus of the present study weave their narratives, representing the social experiences and dynamics at work within local island spaces [re]configured by contemporary processes of globalization, processes rooted in colonial structurations of transatlantic interactions.

Theoretical Approach

As we have seen in the previous section, tourism operates according to the foundational logic of refreshment and gain established some five hundred years ago. This logic, in turn, was predicated upon the basic relational dynamic between island selves and their geographic and cultural others—a dynamic that continues to govern both tourism and sex tourism. Indeed, as the commercials for Brugal rum analyzed earlier demonstrate, even though the *americana* is identified as "one of us" and, thus, implicated in dominicanness and Dominican experience, the commercials repeatedly come back to

and insist on her difference. This suggests that the binary distinction and separateness of self/other is a persistent and necessary categorical condition that drives tourism. Indeed, it is based on that distinction and the parameters it sets in place that the local social actors depicted in the works treated in this study find their possibilities and means for agency and action. For example, sex workers such as the Dominican woman described at the close of the preceding section actively appropriate and utilize their difference and "otherness" as a form of cultural capital to their own advantage. Thus, even though ultimately, the "Self" and "Other" are not fixed, essentialist identitarian categories, the Self/Other binary distinction serves as the primary optic through which these Caribbean authors tell the story of the myriad ways local social experience and space are shaped by the sexualized encounters attendant on tourism.

Therefore, although throughout this dissertation I use traditional methods of literary analysis (e.g. the close reading of texts) and draw on other fields of research and scholarship such as sociology, anthropology, history, postcolonial studies, gender studies, and discourse theory to study specific works and the contexts from which and to which they speak, I utilize and adapt a cluster of primary theoretical constructs as a general framework by which to conceptualize and approach the texts collectively, the phenomena represented in them, and the discursive work they carry out. Given the coloniality evident in the sexualized encounters represented in these texts, I turn primarily to Diana Taylor's "scenario" and "repertoire" and Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zone."

As we see from the example with which I closed the previous section, tourism, from a local perspective, enacts performance, and the performance that local subjects as well as the tourists with whom they come into contact restage in daily practice, is a

contemporization of what Diana Taylor has described in the context of performance studies as a "scenario of encounter." Also called a scenario of "discovery," within Taylor's theory this functions as a type of master plot and rehearses or reenacts the historic scene of colonial encounter. Taylor describes it as "a theatrical scenario structured in a predictable, formulaic, hence repeatable fashion [...] No matter who restages the colonial encounter from the West's perspective—the novelist, the playwright, the discoverer, or the government official—it stars the same white male protagonist-subject and the same brown, found 'object'" (Archive and Repertoire 13). As we see portrayed in the scene from the epigraph above, however—and, in the socio-historical overview we gave in section two—as experienced and perceived locally, the [re]enactment of the scenario of encounter in its most recent sociological and discursive permutation of [sex] tourism reaches down into everyday vital experience, into the very livelihood of subjects, and inscribes the phallocentric, penetrating act of discovery, encounter, possession, and consumption on and *in* the body. Indeed, this particular scenario at the heart of tourism structures whole lives and economies. Yet, again, as we have seen, it is within these circumstances that local social actors show agency within the overarching inequities of power which shape and structure their experience. Therefore, the works analyzed in this study, in their portrayals of contemporary social dynamics constitutive of tourism and sex tourism, produce the "scenario of encounter" as a tool to construct various facets of their regional, national, and cultural discourses in a manner consistent with the discursive function of scenarios: "scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries--sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution--activated with more or less theatricality" (13). Staging scenarios specific to their cultural

milieu, these texts construct their imaginaries based on the embodied performances constitutive of the specific encounters that they represent. Furthermore, the social scenarios that they portray textually are enacted in, and, in turn, produce certain [re]configurations of social space referred to by another theorist's terminology as "contact zones."

According to Mary Louise Pratt, "contact zones" refer to "the space of colonial encounters" (6), and are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today"(Imperial Eyes 4). Here we see Pratt's recognition of the continuance of coloniality within present-day structures. However, although former metropolitan centers still exert hegemony and occupy the privileged position within transatlantic networks, questions of domination and subordination are not—with the notable exception of Puerto Rico—as geopolitically direct nor of the same character as they were during the colonial historical period that forms the focus of her study. Nevertheless, as I have argued thus far and as will be seen in my analysis of several works, tourism and sex tourism do, indeed, repeat and continue colonial patterns, primarily as manifested in the area of relationships facilitated through processes of globalization.[16] At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, we find the contact zones of sexualized

[16] James Clifford recognizes the applicability of several "contact approaches" throughout his book Routes and underscores the temporal nexus of the past and the present contained within current systems of relations: "Contact approaches presuppose not sociocultural wholes subsequently brought into relationship, but rather systems already constituted relationally, entering new relations through historical processes of displacement" (7). Thus, in a region like the Caribbean whose current system is an outcome of relations first established five hundred years ago and the attendant historical legacies of geocultural relations and their present-day modulated [re]articulations—e.g. in tourism and especially in sex tourism—Pratt's contact zone can be seen as a temporally flexible spatial category for the discussion of present-day relational dynamics.

tourism characterized by the "interactive, improvisational dimension of colonial encounters" (Pratt 7) in which local subjects often invent and adjust their behaviors on the fly to extract the greatest gain from their transient Other as they engage in a type of survivalist *bricolage*.

Within the space of the contact zone subjects interact with each other developing and relying on what Diana Taylor refers to as a "repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge" which enacts "embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement [...] in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge" (Archive and Repertoire 20). It is precisely through "embodied practice/knowledge" that local and foreign actors engage one another, seeking to fulfill their desire and negotiate the social arena of the contact zone. Just as wealthier travelers from abroad use their cultural capital of whiteness, socio-economic privilege, and greater mobility, local actors use the relational positioning and identification embedded in hegemonic racializing and exoticizing discourses and practices as well as their own territorial knowledges as their own cultural capital to fulfill desires and accomplish goals. As mentioned above, the dialectical interplay between them comes to be mutually constituting, for, within the contact zone, "subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other [which, in this case, are characterized by] copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt 7). Indeed, whereas the "contact zone" offers the conceptualized social space, the "scenarios" which produce them and in which they unfold "frame and activate social dramas" (Taylor 28). As they reenact the scenario of encounter, the local *cuero*, *jinetero/a* and the foreign male or female, straight or gay, activate the basic "set up and

action" of that moment of contact: "encounter, conflict, resolution, and denouement, for example. These elements, of course, are themselves the product of economic, political, and the social structures that they, in turn, tend to reproduce" (28). Thus, the embodied knowledges and practices—the repertoires—used to execute the performances of the scenarios of sexualized encounter, become a primary path or conduit for the transmission of those structures according to which they unfold.

In this way, the contact zone, as produced through contemporary sex tourism, provides the social stage for such transmissions of cultural knowledges, practices, memories and structural arrangements—serving as an arena for the convergence of the past and the present, for the current production and reiteration of discourses and subjectivities, of both structural and personalized forms of domination, resistance, negotiation, gain, loss, potential, and risk. In short, the contact zone forms a spatio-temporal continuum that provides an optic into the makeup of social experience and intersubjective relationships as constituted at the intersection of the local and the global. Conceptualized this way, the contact zone as a configuration of social space and experience resonates with the discursive space of literary narrative forms as theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin in The Dialogic Imagination.

According to Bakhtin, narrative forms of literary art are linguistic constructs which simultaneously incorporate and set into dialogue multiple discourses and temporalities. Referencing the novel in particular, Bakhtin considers it a "zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness" (Dialogic Imagination 11), an open-endedness that entails, like Pratt's contact zone, a

space of convergence of distinct temporalities as articulated , in this case, through multiple discursive forms.

As will be seen in the present study, this "zone of maximal contact" is present in the novel, testimony, and the shorter narrative works examined here, which exhibit the dialogic character to which Bakhtin refers. Moreover, in order to carry out their dialogue with their historical present, these works appropriate the social space of the contact zone so that it functions as a *chronotope*, a spatio-temporal construct that James Clifford defines as "a setting or scene organizing time and space in representable whole form" (25). Thus, the specific contact zones of commercialized sexual encounter where their narratives are situated become textual space—a readable and writable space—a site of and for textual production and meaning-making, and a lens through which to interpret social reality and space. In this way, as textual representations of *chronotopes*, the contact zones constructed in these works come to assume an additional function in the Bakhtinian sense of *chronotope*: "as an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring" (425-6). They thus serve simultaneously as the representational object and the means by which that object's social referent is observed. Therefore, one could argue that, inasmuch as these texts engage not only current manifestations of the encounter with the cultural Other, but also the historical discursive tradition and sociocultural logic which underpins and governs that encounter, the texts analyzed here offer a "contrapuntal reading" of Caribbean social reality. That is, a locally produced imaginary to counterbalance the weight of Western representations of the region produced over the last five centuries.[17]

[17] "Countrapuntal reading" is a term that comes from Edward Said, which he offers as a corrective analytical strategy to fill in the silences and gaps created in canonical texts of the "West" through their

It is, therefore, according to this broad theoretical framework that I approach the texts treated in this study, understanding them as discursive sites for the production of social meaning and as forming part of the material and social reality—the culture—that they represent. That is, I view these texts as artistic discursive mediations that engage the 'realities' from which they emerge and with which they are intimately intertwined, the former being shaped by and, in turn, giving shape and meaning to the latter to produce a way of representing contemporary socio-historical experience.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one, "Searching for *la vida verdadera* in the Dominican Republic: A Dialectical View," treats several short stories by Dominican author Aurora Arias that bring to the fore some of the predominant characteristics of foreign male-dominated, heterosexual sex tourism. Here Arias explores the sexualized/affective relationships into which some Dominican women enter with foreign males in order to make a living, highlighting the former's agency while at the same time examining the desires and motives of male travelers who are in search of "the real life" in the island. Urban streets, tropical beaches, hotels and the simulacrum of cyberspace become the stages for the negotiation of mutual desire between sex tourists longing for erotic encounters with the exotic Other and those local actors seeking to capitalize on their relationships with the transient outsiders who enter within their field of action.

Thus, this chapter analyzes the ways in which Arias represents the construction of social space within the crucible of commodified [hetero]sexual encounter. I argue that

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erasures of the colonial underpinnings upon which Western civilization rests. Whereas Said proposed such a method so as to ultimately understand Western culture and the historical foundation on which it has been built, I put forth the term here to point to the ways that these texts offer local perspectives on their interaction with Western others and the impact this has had on Caribbean experience. See Said *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 66-7.

the dynamics of sex tourism are presented as part of an unfolding relationship that traces its origin all the way back to early colonial encounters and, thus, are an extension of it. The texts studied here can be seen as attempts to textually apprehend the male tourist Other and the forces which his presence sets in motion—forces rooted in, indeed, reiterative of, colonial practice and discourse that continue to shape contemporary Dominican social experience and space. Ultimately, I argue that these texts set themselves over and against the discourse of hegemonic representations of the Caribbean and the praxis that accompanies and reinforces it, offering themselves as a counter narrative which explores and documents present day vital experience while anchoring such experience within an historical continuum of colonial relations, whose latest permutation is readily evidenced and apprehended in contemporary [sex] tourism.

In chapter two, "Cuba Part I: Performing Subjectivities of the Special Period," three works by Puerto Rican author Larry La Fountain-Stokes ("Del pájaro las dos alas," [2008]), and Cuban writers José Miguel Sánchez (akaYoss; "La causa que refresca" [1998]) and Angel Santiesteban ("Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" [2000]) portray some of the same and similar phenomena as Arias, showing how Cuban contact zones of the special period, like their correlates in the Dominican Republic, become individualistic predatory fields of action for the negotiation of the multiple desires embodied in local and foreign social actors. As I demonstrate through my analysis, it is not only geographical, physical space, but also the body—embodied experience—that becomes a site for the articulation and/or disarticulation of various competing discursive structures as social actors come to negotiate and occupy subject positions produced under the harsh "disciplining" conditions of the special period and articulated through a group of

repetitive actions, gestures, movements, and thought processes—i.e. a scripted or "naturalized" repertoire of social behavior. Central to my analysis is a Foucaultian approach to discourse, especially as developed by Judith Butler in her concept of "performativity." This approach, coupled with Diana Taylor's constructs of the "scenario" and the "repertoire," serve to demonstrate the way in which these texts, while concerned with the interplay of discursive structures, social processes and conditions and the way these shape local experience, place a greater emphasis on the constitution of subjects in the places where such forces converge. Specifically, I argue that these texts, responding to a fundamental tension increasingly felt at both the social and the discursive levels within Cuba, take as their central theme the constitution of particular types of Cuban subjectivities indicative of the special period, which, in turn, reflects the tension between competing socialist and capitalist social systems and their accompanying discourses.

Chapter three, "Cuba Part II: The Staging of an Abjection," analyzes Cuban author Amir Valle's mixed genre work Jineteras (2006) and novel Tatuajes (2007) that depict, like the works considered in the previous two chapters, the dynamics and realities of the touristic contact zone that result from the encounter of local and foreign subjects as they negotiate their desire. These texts show how local actors utilize that space as a predatory field both to meet basic material needs and to seek social and material advancement. Local subjects seize, from their comparative immobility, fleeting opportunities, employing tactics of seduction and manipulation to extract the most advantage from their encounters with their mobile foreign others.

However, whereas in the majority of the texts treated in chapters one and two a good deal of attention is given to the portrayal of the foreign tourist in dialectical contact with local social actors, the latter form an almost exclusive focus of narrative exploration within Valle's texts. While present, male sex tourists are granted minimal treatment and, then, never assume a role as individual protagonists, their part limited to indicate the basic dynamics which configure the contact zone and the social experiences that accompany sex tourism within Cuba. Indeed, the texts under consideration in chapter three are much more concerned with the immediacy of local actors' experiences of the national crisis of the special period. Employing Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, I argue that both *Jineteras* and its novelistic complement, *Tatuajes* are the textual manifestations—the material artifacts—of a process of abjection that constructs the *jinetera* so as to identify, discipline, and bring her under textual control, to thereby purge her from the narrative consciousness that calls her into being and, at the same time, purify the Cuban nation. Yet, in so doing, the male narrative voice that would seek to cleanse himself and the nation ultimately reifies and inscribes her within a patriarchal and misogynistic discourse as the dual embodiment of desire and repulsion.

To close this section, I turn to Néstor García Canclini who, as part of his interdisciplinary project to create a transnational sphere for cultural politics and engagement among artists and intellectuals, analyzes multiple discourses that describe globalization—from the "raw data" of the social sciences to various types of works produced by artists (*La globalización imaginada* 15-6, 36). Among the latter he places those narratives which, from distinct viewpoints, "expresan el modo en que sujetos individuales y colectivos se representan su lugar y sus posibilidades de acción en [los

procesos de la globalización]" ("express the way in which individual and collective subjects represent their place and their possibilities of action in [processes of globalization]; 36). In a similar fashion, the literary texts analyzed in the present study locate the dialectical position and possibilities of action of the individual social actors they portray at the sites of one of the most visible and prominent processes by which globalization is articulated within the Hispanophone Caribbean —[sex] tourism. However, as seen already in the chapter summaries provided above, instead of imagining globalization in any holistic sense, these works, through their focus on the contact zone of sexualized encounter produced by transnational flows and mobilities, are concerned first and foremost with the impact of such encounter on the [re]configurations of local social experience and space. These are shown to be constituted by multiple and competing discourses, personal desires, as well as national and transnational interests and global processes all of which converge, intermingle, clash and are negotiated on a daily basis. Through their richly nuanced portrayals of contemporary life on a micro-scale, these narratives, to use García Canclini's words, encompass "that which slips through the cracks and inadequacies of theories and policies" 'lo que queda suelto en las grietas e insuficiencias de las teorías y las políticas' (14) and produces a multifaceted depiction of the socio-historical dynamics that mark current experience in the Hispanophone Caribbean. In this way, these works contribute to the emerging cultural imaginary of the region as a whole.

Chapter 1. Searching for *la vida verdadera* in the Dominican Republic: A Dialectical View

This chapter analyzes six stories by Dominican author Aurora Arias ("Hotel Radiante" (*Fin de mundo* 2000), "Invi's Paradise" and "¡Oh, Bavaria!" (*Invi's Paradise y otros cuentos* 1998); "Bachata," "Novia del Atlántico," and "Emoticons" (*Emoticons* 2007) to examine the ways in which the author represents the construction of social space within the crucible of commodified [hetero]sexual encounter. It argues that Arias produces a discourse that enters into dialogue with and demystifies hegemonic representations of the Dominican Republic through its portrayals of the dynamics of sex tourism as an extension of an unfolding relationship that traces its origin to the moment of first encounter between indigenous populations and Europeans. This chapter will show that the texts herein studied can be seen as attempts to textually apprehend the outside Other and the forces which his presence sets in motion—dialectical forces rooted in, indeed, reiterative of, colonial practice and discourse that continue to shape contemporary Dominican social experience and space.

By way of setting up the chapter, I begin with a brief ethnographic narrative and textual analysis based on my first trip to the Dominican Republic. Here I recall a scene and sequence of events that would crystallize into some of the main themes which inform both this study and, in particular, this chapter. In reflecting back on that moment, I realize that as I sat in an open-air café reading a newly acquired collection of short stories, I did so from within the oldest seat of European power in the New World, Santo Domingo's *Zona Colonial*, and in the plaza named after Europe's first arrival, *Parque Colón*—a place where history, contemporary social processes, and national and artistic

discourses converged, the latter taking the form of a locally produced literary text that was in dialogue with its past and present, with the local and the foreign, with its society, indeed, with the very built environment in which I read it.

After spending the better part of the afternoon in the café, as evening approached, I began to read the opening narrative frame to Aurora Arias' story "¡Oh, Bavaria!" with which her collection Invi's Paradise closes:

> Imaginemos, Bavaria, que por una noche, quién sabe en busca de qué, tú también estuviste de paso por la Isla. Que te llevaron a la Zona a tomar unos traguitos. Calcula, entonces, que esto que te voy a contar sucedió. Que se trató de algo más que una simple historia de saltimbanqui ilustrados y piratas. Que algún día, en el fin del mundo, conociste a un tal Pepe" (Berlin 43).
>
> Let's imagine, Bavaria, that for a night, who knows in search of what, you also were passing through the island. That they took you to the *Zona* for a few drinks. Calculate, then, that what I'm about to tell you took place. That it had to do with more than just a simple story of enlightened gold diggers or pirates. That one day, at the end of the world, you met a certain Pepe.

While I read these words, I felt identified to an extent, interpolated, if you will, considering that I too was a visitor to the island and seated in the *Zona Colonial*, similar to the "Bavaria" to whom the narrative voice addresses itself throughout the story. The mention of pirates briefly brought to mind childhood memories and images from Treasure Island and Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* amusement park attraction.

As I continued to read, it became clear that "Bavaria," although associated specifically with a female visitor to the island, served as a metonym for the foreign traveler in general and, thus, a device for establishing a specific dialogical relationship between the local subject voiced in the text and his or her interlocutory Other. Thus, to the possibly incredulous visitor, it offers to reveal its own story in contradistinction to the discourse that has informed the Western imaginary concerning the Caribbean, populated as the latter is by images of romanticized pirates and whose early modern imperial expansion equated the region with the "end of the world" ("fin del mundo"), positioning it as a periphery. And yet, even as it seeks to clarify the island's reality in the face of touristic ignorance, the narrative voice reveals its own lack of knowledge of foreign motives—a consequence, perhaps, of the transitory nature of travelers who merely pass through the island "in search of who knows what" ("quién sabe en busca de qué")—and, thus, underscores the fundamental difference that separates the two actors in the dialogics it proposes.

Indeed, the text continues highlighting the role of the foreign presence in shaping local experience even as it partially constructs its own discourse by echoing and positioning itself within the discourse with which the Other has historically described it:

> (Yo no sé por qué, Bavaria, de un tiempo a esta parte, por los predios de Ciudad todo el mundo andaba un poco loco. Una lúdica suerte de motín, de carnaval, de desmesura, una eterna caravana, un diario safari por la oscuridad, nos apremiaba. Mucha gente llegaba a los puertos y los aeropuertos, a conocer a La Isla y a convivirla. Mucha yola alucinada

partía al amanecer. [...] La Ciudad. La Isla. El mar. [...] Más forasteros que de costumbre llegando a ver). (43)

(I don't know why, Bavaria, for some time, people were going around a little crazy all through the City. A type of ludic mutiny, of carnival, of excess, an eternal caravan, a daily safari in the dark, hounded us. A lot of people arriving to the ports and airports, to know The Island and cohabit it. A lot of deluded *yola* were departing in the morning [...] The City. The Island. The sea [...] more outsiders than usual arriving to see).

This passage points to the global processes which currently mark island space and social experience as it juxtaposes the simultaneous dual movement of arrival to and departure from the island, the ironic contrariwise motion of both Dominicans who seek to escape the harshness of local conditions in small makeshift boats ("*yolas*") and those wealthier outsiders who arrive to the island, having most likely left their homes as part of a temporary escape from daily life. Furthermore, through its "tropological" evocation of the safari into darkness, the caravan, carnival, excess, etc., the passage not only identifies the behavior that besets the island with the arrival of the outsider, but also continues its discursive self-exoticization from the point of view of its foreign interlocutor, playing on the imagery within the West that equates travel to the area with a voyage to exotic lands of indulgence.

Here was a text, then, that still bore the traces of that original *Colon*ial moment inaugurated by Cristóbal *Colón*—Christopher Columbus—upon his arrival to the islands. Indeed, as it seeks to dialogue with its foreign Other, inviting him or her to hear its tale, it immediately anchors its discussion in the weight of historical experience and the

discourse of encounter, triggered by the phenomenon of the tourist presence and industry—the contemporary consumerist permutation of the dynamics set in motion by Columbus and the conquistadores and colonizers who followed in his wake.

While I sat pondering these things, I looked up from the text to consider the reminder of that initial colonial encounter that stood just a few yards away from me in the center of the *parque* which bears the Admiral's name. This monument to Columbus and the nation's Spanish heritage depicts, frozen in metal and stone, the navigator looking toward the horizon, pointing confidently to a spot in the distance while beneath him a Taino woman, with pen in hand and arms stretched upwards in exaltation, has just inscribed his name and praises on the pedestal on which he stands: *Ilustre y esclarecido don Cristóval Colón* 'The Illustrious and Distingushed Sir Christopher Columbus'.

I then followed the trajectory indicated by the "Discoverer" as it cut through the growing dark, crossing the places where street vendors plied their wares, ambulant musicians performed, and beggars asked for money, to point a little to my right at the scene of another encounter between foreign male and local female. In this instance, the scenario was enacted by what appeared to be a pale, non-Spanish-speaking middle-aged tourist whose giddiness was betrayed by the grin that fluctuated between self-satisfaction and timidity with each bob of his head as he sought to avert eye contact with the Dominican woman who accompanied him, frustrated in her futile attempts to communicate with him.

It was time for me to go and, to get to my hotel, I had to travel further down the path pointed out by Columbus. Ironically, when I arrived, the armed night watchman pulled me aside to discretely inform me that, should I be interested in any female

companionship, he could procure "young and clean girls" ("muchachas jóvenes y limpiecitas") for me without a problem because he had a "small business" ("un pequeño negocio") he ran on the side.

Such was my introduction to the existence of sex tourism in the Dominican Republic—a permutation of the original colonial encounter that I saw evidenced twice in one day, demonstrating another way in which social space is produced through the contact between Self/Other. As I would soon learn, the theme of local and foreign contact that Arias first treats in Invi's Paradise assumes a prominent place within her literary trajectory, also present in her two subsequent collections of short stories Fin de mundo (2000) and Emoticons (2007). The latter two works include stories that take the dynamics of heterosexual sex tourism as experienced in the Dominican Republic as their central theme, first finding their setting in the *Zona Colonial* itself, and then in other spaces throughout the island.

I begin the remainder of the chapter by analyzing an early story that constitutes a first attempt at describing the phenomenon. Here the narrative voice, telling the tale from the perspective of a local female, seeks to decipher the mystery represented by male travelers even as it registers the effects of their ephemeral presence on the construction of Dominican social space. I then consider an even earlier text that takes up the theme of travel to the island and anchors it within a historical continuum of invasion, thus serving as a contextualizing device to understand current local experience. Next I turn to a selection of Arias' most recent publications in which she explores the actions, motivations, and inner life-world of a white, male traveler of uncertain origin who moves about the island in search of "real life," configuring island space as a stage for his

personal *re*creation and protagonism even as he enters into contact with local actors who also seek to [re]fashion their own lives. To conclude, I return to a brief analysis of "¡Oh, Bavaria!" to consider Arias' textual work as constituting a local discourse which inserts itself in a contestatory fashion within the broader tradition of hegemonic discourse and practice relating to the Caribbean.

One of the earliest stories to directly treat sex tourism on the island is "Hotel Radiante," from Arias' 2000 collection Fin de mundo. The narrative establishes in a preliminary fashion some of the basic themes that will be more fully developed in later stories as they locate the Dominican Republic at the nexus of global flows of desire, focusing on specific places within the country where the particular desires both of local subjects and the foreign tourists whom they encounter are played out. Set in Santo Domingo's historic district, the *Zona Colonial*, "Hotel Radiante" centers on the experience of a young woman—referred to only with the third person singular pronoun (*ella*)—who teaches kindergarten during the day to children of the wealthy while spending her evenings on the main commercial pedestrian thoroughfare of *El Conde* in the company of well-heeled foreigners looking to have a good time. The narrative addresses itself directly to one of these men, Lucas, a now absent Italian sex tourist, and recounts the trajectory of their relationship from the perspective of one who knows both of them. Privileging this local perspective, the text explores the impact of sex tourism within such a contact zone, especially in its portrayal of it as a space where desires and relationships are initiated, made, and undone primarily according to the dynamics of social and physical mobility understood as both means and end.

At the core of the text there is a sense of the unknowability of the absent, foreign Other, because of which the narrative voice struggles to piece together the true identity and motivations behind this mysterious European who appears and disappears without notice or explanation and whose only account of himself is in doubt: "Nunca te creímos demasiado, aquello de que trabajabas de obrero en la telefónica de Milán...¿montando cables? Oh, sí. ¿Y por qué ibas y venías continuamente a Santo Domingo? ¡A ningún obrero de ningún país le dan tantas vacaciones!" ("We never really believed you much, the whole thing about your job as a telephone worker in Milan...installing cables? Oh, sure. And why were you continuously coming and going back and forth to Santo Domingo? They don't give that much vacation time to any worker from any country!"; 48). This same uncertainty extends itself to Lucas's Canadian friend the "viejo Iván," in whose company the protagonist has spent much of her time: "Y por fin, Lucas, nos quedamos sin saber cómo fue que tú y ese señor se conocieron (¿Fue en Roma, Milán, Montreal, o Santo Domingo?), ni qué era lo que verdaderamente hacían aquí, ni por qué los dos desaparecieron de repente sin dejar rastros, ni por qué ese viejo canadiense tenía tantos dólares para repartir. ¿De dónde los sacaba?" ("Finally, Lucas, we never did find out how it was and that man met each other (Was it in Rome, Montreal, or Santo Domingo?), nor what it was you were really doing here, nor why the two of you disappeared suddenly without a trace, nor why that old Canadian had so many dollars to spread around. Where did he get them?"; 48). Apart from what limited, direct contact with these travelers affords and their self-professed taste for the beaches and women as explanation for their presence on the island, no more is known of the men with any certainty (48). From the position of the relatively static and immobile local, the constant

movement of these international travelers and the consequent volatility of their presence/absence has a destabilizing effect, producing a lacuna of relational knowledge which is consequently filled with suspicion as evidenced in the accusatory and skeptical language that marks such passages as the above while the narrative seeks to unveil and apprehend its ungraspable, interlocutory Other—as it interrogates that Other's true identity, motives, and sources of wealth. Indeed, the text's structure suggests a type of investigative enquiry and takes on the characteristics of juridical discourse, divided into lettered segments—a), b), c), etc—as if providing exhibitory evidence. Each brief section of the plot thus provides the only sketchy clues by which to reconstruct such visitors to the island and convey what they represent to the Dominicans who have had contact with them. As seen from the perspective of the local, knowledge of the Other is thus partial, identity and truth veiled—a consequence of the relational asymmetry between those whose wealth affords them a greater freedom of movement and those local subjects whose economic circumstance impedes the same.

Highlighting this asymmetry stands the female protagonist of the story, her social position and limited choices for advancement evidenced in the text through reference to her educational level, which fails to encompass the completion of secondary school. In the following passage the text ironically valorizes her education, simultaneously suggesting the deficiencies of the country's educational system. At the same time, it antagonistically counterpoises these against the absent Lucas, placing his own educational level in question: "Mas, para tu sorpresa, Lucas, esa muchacha es, lo que tal vez tú no eres, 'casi bachiller', y del colegio donde trabaja, la enviaron a hacer un cursillo de capacitación pedagógica que duró un fin de semana, nada más y nada menos que en la

Secretaría de Educación" ("But, for your surprise, Lucas, that girl is, perhaps what you're not, "almost graduated" from high school, and the elementary school where she works, they sent her to take a brief pedagogical training course that lasted a weekend, at the Secretary of Education no less"; 48). As the text describes elsewhere, her social and physical mobility—beyond teaching kindergarten--extends to enrolling in language classes primarily as a means of leaving home at night without arousing the suspicions of the aunt with whom she lives and so spend time on *El Conde* in search of relationships with men from abroad (47).

This once again underscores the central importance of mobility within the story, being the main motivation behind the protagonist's dalliances with the foreign men whom she seeks. This is once again highlighted in the following passage in which she sits at a local restaurant in the company of *el viejo Iván* on the night she first meets Lucas, observing her classmates as they leave the nearby language school:

> "Sus compañeras de clase armaron una bulla paradas en el balcón de la Escuela de Idiomas; [...] Luego bajaron de prisa las escaleras, con sus blusitas cortas y sus jeans apretados. Ella sabía, que en el fondo, aunque le acusen de «avión», ellas también se mueren porque un extranjero de los que deambulan por la calle El Conde, las enamore, y se las lleve bien lejos. (47-8)
>
> Her classmates made a racket as they stood on the balcony of the Language School; [...] They then hurried down the stairs, with their short little blouses and their tight jeans. She knew that, deep down, even though they accuse her of being an *avión*, they too were dying for one of the

> foreigners that roamed about *El Conde* street to court them and carry them far away.

In its use of the term "avión," the text employs a term utilized in common parlance to refer to a female who flies from one sexual partner to another and furthermore suggests the underlying desire for flight which drives some members of Dominican society to seek advancement and social mobility elsewhere through connecting with foreign travelers.

As Kamala Kempadoo points out with specific reference to Dominican sex workers from the poorest classes, such relational positioning *vis a vis* the foreign tourist can be seen as:

> a strategy that allows [them] a form of freedom from oppressive and exploitative national and global economic relations that keep them in poorly paid work or poverty and positions them to gain access to a life that takes them out of miserable social conditions and to obtain the power and freedom symbolized by the 'developed' world. In practice, the struggle can rest on sex workers seeking to find caring partners with enough financial security to assist them to overcome economic hardship, unemployment, and a bleak future for themselves and their families; of obtaining "La Gloria" in Dominican women's words. For many, this includes leaving their home countries and migrating to live with a lover. (27)

Although not belonging to the poorest of social classes that Kempadoo studies, nor a sex worker *per se* in that she doesn't receive money in exchange for sex, the protagonist still engages in her relationships with men primarily as a means of leaving the island. This

dynamic is further elucidated in the following conversation she has with Chiquita, an employee at the Hotel Radiante, a lower class hotel that was the last place she and Lucas were together:

> El tiempo ha pasado, y ella se acostumbró a mentir [...] Chiquita, la empleada del Radiante [...] le preguntó: —¿Y tu marido, el italiano?— dijo—. Ya ustedes no van por allá.
>
> Sin perder tiempo, ella le respondió que todo iba bien, que ustedes seguían juntos. Pero Chiquita, insistente, la volvió a interrogar.
>
> --¿Y tú no le has dicho que te lleve para Italia? Yo supe que Carmen, tu amiga, ya se fue con el suizo para Suiza, el mes pasado. Y a una prima mía que vivía en el campo, un holandés se la llevó pa' Holanda, como a los dos meses de tratarse. ¡Ese italiano te 'ta cogiendo de pendeja, muchacha, no seas tan boba!
>
> ¡Eso sí le dolió! (49)
>
> Time has gone by, and she's gotten used to lying [...] Chiquita, the employee at the Radiante [...] asked her, "And your old man, the Italian?" she said. "You guys don't go there anymore."
>
> Without missing a beat, she responded that everything was going well, that you were still together. But Chiquita, insistent, started interrogating her again.
>
> "Haven't you told him to bring you to Italy? I found out that Carmen, your friend, already left with the Swiss guy for Switzerland, last month. And a cousin of mine that lived in the countryside, a Dutchman took her to

Holland, after something like two months of knowing each other. That Italian is taking you for an idiot, girl, don't be such a fool!"

That really hurt her!

In as much as the *Zona Colonial* serves as an international convergence point for foreign travel and sex tourism, it becomes a space of risk and opportunity for those who place themselves within its flows. The pain provoked in the protagonist by Chiquita's words is that of one who is reminded of her failed position within a social hierarchy produced in places where achievement is measured by one's ability to successfully negotiate what is perceived as the primary path to social mobility on hand—the path off the island.

Yet the text also portrays the ambiguity which attaches itself to relationships forged within such contexts in which socio-economic self-interest and romantic attraction mingle, suggesting that the protagonist may actually be in love with Lucas even as she seeks to take advantage of her connection to him. This ambiguity is made manifest from the opening of the story which describes her first impression of him as he approaches the table where she is seated with his friend—and her companion for the evening—Iván. Here the text posits both his physical attributes and his foreign origin as sources of her interest in him: "Llevabas tus gafas de vidrios claros y montura gruesa, y enseguida, ella te miró, alzando las antenas: ni muy joven, ni muy viejo, alto, pelo bueno, medio rubio, e italiano. ¡Justo como el médico se lo recomendó!" ("You were wearing your glasses with the clear lenses and the thick frames, and suddenly, she looked at you, raising her antennae: neither very young nor very old, tall, straight hair, somewhat blond, and Italian. Just what the doctor ordered!"; 47). Although it is not clear in this passage what primarily attracts her to him, as the story progresses, it seems to indicate that her interest is more

than merely socio-economic. For example, although she has spent time with other foreigners prior and subsequent to Lucas's departure, it is to him her thoughts return even after he is gone. From time to time she passes the Hotel at a distance and reminisces on the moments they spent together there. Toward the end of the story, she remembers angrily leaving the room on their last night together because of his alcohol-induced rage, violence, and refusal to take her out to celebrate New Year's Eve. Going to the same restaurant where she first met him, she encounters Tom, a *gringo* merchant marine, and takes him to a bar known to be a meeting ground for Dominican women and foreign men. As she and her new partner dance and fondle each other, she can only recall the attraction she feels toward Lucas and, in spite of her anger, returns to the hotel to make love to him (50). Thus, her actions and attitudes seem to reflect what is also true of some Dominican sex workers who distinguish their relationships with foreign men as either *por amor* 'for love' or *por residencia* 'for residency', the latter underscoring socio-economic motives but which may very well mix with the former (Brennan, What's Love, 3).

The text thus offers in broad strokes a portrait of the ambiguities, frustrations and transitory nature of relationships forged within international contact zones of desire. While men from the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Holland and Italy arrive at the island desirous of "playas y mujeres" 'beaches and women', they come and go with the impunity that their privileged freedom of movement brings, remaining beyond reach and leaving only a trace of their presence in the memory and unfulfilled desire of the women they leave behind. As the text articulates this, it also delineates contemporary social uses of the oldest district of the Dominican Republic, the *Zona Colonial*—the site for the preservation of the Dominican Republic's Hispanic cultural patrimony and the first seat

of European power in the "New World"—an unstable contact zone that continues to preserve, amidst the flow and circulation of desiring bodies, the legacy of asymmetrical relational positioning between the inside of island space and its outside. Here mobility is both an end and a means within this place where stasis and fluidity meet and overlap even as outside indulgence and local escape are negotiated between foreign and local social actors.

The *Zona Colonial* can thus arguably be posited as a not so felicitous version of a space that conforms to what Glissant envisions as a "zone of relational community" that might evolve within *Relation*, a term he uses in part to distinguish the interconnectedness currently at work in the present phase of globalization between "geocultural entities" (142) such that "each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (Relation 11). Although through his poetics of relation Glissant ultimately seeks to propose a way of overcoming the weight of historical oppression, violence, and inequity that has determined the current articulation of the relationship between the Caribbean region and the traditional centers of hegemonic power, he acknowledges the lingering presence of the legacies of encounter as he describes in some detail the trajectory and impact of that relationship, which is the outcome not only of such institutions as the Plantation system--a "universe of domination and oppression [where] the tendencies of our modernity begin to be detectable" (65)--but also the result of imperial expansion first manifested in the travel associated with the original moments of "Discovery and Conquest" (16). These travels were intimately related to power such that Glissant categorizes the Conquistadors, as the Huns, "whose goal was to conquer lands by exterminating their occupants before them", as travelers who practiced "invading

nomadism" [which] spares no effect [and] is an absolute forward projection: an arrowlike nomadism [that] is a devastating desire for settlement" (12). The conquering impulse fueling the desire for "Voyage" and its execution also bears directly on the identities of both the traveler and the resident of the place travelled to. This expresses itself particularly in the conception of Self and Other on both sides of the relationship. As Glissant explains as part of his theoretical integration of Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between root and rhyzomatic identity[1]:

> In the course of this journey identity, at least as far as the Western peoples who made up the great majority of voyagers, discoverers, and conquerors were concerned, consolidates itself implicitly at first ("my root is the strongest") and then is explicitly exported as a value ("a person's worth is determined by his root"). The conquered or visited peoples are thus forced into a long and painful quest after an identity whose first task will be opposition to the denaturing process introduced by the conqueror. A tragic variation of a search for identity. For more than two centuries whole populations have had to assert their identity in opposition to the processes of identification or annihilation triggered by these invaders [...] for colonized peoples identity will be primarily "opposed to"[...] (16-7)

Thus, Glissant identifies two particular past articulations of the contact between local residents and foreign outsiders: the smothering, totalizing weight of the plantation system and travel, a prefatory invasion that made both settlement and the plantation possible. Combined, these two factors establish a process that would strip away conceptions of self on the part of subjected peoples (part of the "denaturalization

[1] see A Thousand Plateaus.

process" referred to above), seeking to impose through violence a new conception based on Western perspectives of an essentialist "rooted" identity. These two factors, then, turn encounter into a dialectic of domination/resistance.

Indeed, the assertion of local identity in the face of invasion is a theme taken up in the title story of Arias' first collection Invi's Paradise, which recounts the events surrounding a group of young bohemians who, as part of their countercultural escape, seek refuge from the oppressive gaze of local power through going to a cave along the ocean's edge to party.[2] After having imbibed a hallucinatory brew, the members of the group see a ship approaching the cave that one of the members identifies thus: "es una de las naves vikingas de cuando los taínos, men, que los vikingos nos descubrieron primero que Colón, ¿no se acuerdan? ("it's one of the Viking ships from when the Taínos lived here, men, the Vikings discovered us first before Columbus, don't you remember?"; 30-1). Upon hearing these words of self-identification with the island's earliest known inhabitants, members immediately assume various postures with which to encounter these new arrivals to the island. Ranging from playful confrontation to fear and defiance, the group collectively appeals to different elements that make up their cultural identity which they then marshal as a basis for solidarity and strength. The first character to respond is Behique, whose name comes from the Taino and used to refer to a type of *curandero* or priest and healer (Ferly 74). He invokes famous figures of resistance from Dominican history and spirituality while also pointing to the island's African and Taino heritage as he seeks to assuage the fear that this vision has triggered. He calls upon others of the group to join him to greet the newcomers:

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[2] Néstor E. Rodríguez makes this point in Escrituras de desencuentro en la República Dominicana 104. See pages 93-109 for a more thorough treatment of the story in its entirety.

--¡Qué cool, men! No se asusten, esto es parte de las profecías, men [...] No se preocupen, los espíritus de la gente de nosotros nos protegen, Mamá Tingó, men, Santa Marta la Dominadora, tranquilos, men, tranquilidad. Somos los elegidos [...] No es casual que todos estemos viendo lo mismo. [...] Que nadie se paniquee, somos fuertes, taínos, men. Mándela, Africa, Yemallá, men. López, *Terror*, vengan, vamos a recibirlos bien cool, men...(29)

How cool, man! Don't be scared, this is part of the prophecies, man [...] Don't worry, the spirits of our people protect us, *Mamá Tingó*, man, *Santa Marta la Dominadora*, chill, man, chill. We're the chosen ones [...] It's no accident that we're all seeing the same thing. [...] Nobody panic, we're strong, Tainos, man. Mandela, Africa, Yemaya, man. López, Terror, come on, let's give them a real cool welcome, man...

At the core of this evocation of the island's cultural heritage lies the appeal to strength through resistance.[3] For example, *Mamá Tingó* is the popular name of Florinda Soriano Muñoz, a female farmer who was killed in 1974 for her nonviolent struggles against the appropriation and redistribution of land and around whose name groups have successfully continued her fight (Rocheleau 93: Ferly 72, 75). Behique appeals in like manner to the island's African heritage, linking the Dominican collectivity

[3] Odile Ferly, in "La historici(u)dad en 'Invi's Paradise' de Aurora Arias," sees this appeal to resistance through identification with different historical and religious personages and cultural elements that make up the island's past as a way in which Arias rewrites history, reinscribing indigenous, Afrodominican and female subjectivities into Dominican cultural discourse : "En 'Invi's Paradise' se opera una reescritura del pasado, tanto lejano como reciente, que al reinsertar la presencia taína y africana y al reafirmar el papel de la mujer en la construcción de la nación, cuestiona la historiografía oficial" 'In 'Invi's Paradise' a rewriting of both the remote and recent past is operative, which, by reinserting the Taino and African presence and reaffirming the role of the woman in the construction of the nation, questions official historiography.' (67-8).

to the figure of Mandela while also signaling *Santa Marta la Dominadora*, a female deity of Afrodominican religion called upon at times, as her name implies, to dominate adversaries. Taken together, these form the basis with which to face this new, if anachronistic and hallucinatory, invasion witnessed by the whole group.

For her part, Sara, the first to have identified the Viking ship, assumes a posture of mocking flirtation : "Mírales los cachos en la cabeza, qué bonitos [...] vengan, vamos a levantarnos a esos hombres, o sea, mira qué bonitos son, ji ji ji, con esa barba roja, men" ("Look at the horns on their heads, how cute [...] come on, let's pick up those men, you know, look at how cute they are, hee, hee, hee, with that red beard, man"; 31) But even as she feigns seduction as a goal and desire, she immediately turns to another of the group who is from the United States, goading her into communicating with the members of the ship: "Erica, vocéales en inglés: ¡ellos ser los taínos!, o sea, nosotros...¡diles que Anacaona soy yo!" ("Erica, yell at them in English: they're the Tainos!, I mean, we...tell them that I'm Anacaona!"; 31). Thus, she too invokes resistance through self-identification with the Taino people—specifically, the female *cacica* 'chietain' , who was hung for her part in fomenting rebellion and putting up a successful front and, as Odile Ferly states, "oponiendo resistencia de más de diez años a los invasores" 'resisting the invader for more than ten years' (71).

After this, a musician of the group, *Terror*, is convinced to heed Behique's call to greet those aboard the ship: "--Vamos a componerles una canción a los vikingos. Yo. Ellos tienen que saber que van a desembarcar en Santo Domingo, Quisqueya, Primada de América, je, la tierra del *Terror*; que yo mismo, *Terror*, les voy a tocar una [...] Ok. ¿No trajeron cámara? ¡Qué fuerte! Pero okey. (A Behique): Una bachata, men" ("'We're

going to compose a song to the Vikings. I. They have to know that they're going to disembark at Santo Domingo, *Quisqueya*, *Primada de América*, heh, the land of *Terror*; that I myself, *Terror*, am going to sing them a song [...] Ok. They didn't bring a camera? That's too bad! But okay. (To Behique): A *bachata*, man"; 32). Even as he appeals to the island's cultural identity in preparation to greet the newcomers, a special link is made in his choice of identifying the island and the capital city by the names bestowed upon them by historically dominant groups. This is seen principally in his use of the Taíno name for the island, *Quisqueya*, followed by the title *Primada de América* to refer to the capital city, pointing to its being considered and touted by official discourse as the first city established by the Spanish after 'discovery' and conquest. In all of the appeals to cultural identity made by members of the group, his is the only mention of the Spanish component of the island's identity and it is immediately followed by the statement that the Vikings will soon land at "la tierra del *Terror*," perhaps a deliberate counter-discursive play on words linking the Spanish heritage with terror. That his is a counter-cultural posture is reinforced in his choice of native Dominican music forms, for the *bachata* during the time frame in which the story is set—the 1980s—was considered a marginalized music form associated with the marginalized sectors where it originated and enjoyed its greatest popularity.[4] In his brief comments, he thus offers a less romanticized assessment of the island's history than his companions, but equally valorizes autochthonous culture to form a position of more deeply entrenched resistance. Finally, even as he engages in the unfolding of the unlikely encounter which is about to take place, he inquires as to whether or not the new arrivals possess a camera, thus

[4] See Pacini Hernandez, Deborah. Bachata: A Social History of a Dominican Popular Music. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995.

pointing to the typical apparatus with which modern invaders—tourists—are equipped. Before Terror and Behique can play, however, all are silenced in the face of what they now witness as the ship draws closer:

> Desde lo más oscuro del horizonte, la nave se acercaba movida por enormes remos de madera; cada vez más, moviendo a su antojo la entera furia del mar, venida desde no se sabe cuál rincón del pasado, cargada de hombres rojos y sangrientos [...] que al rato, cuando los divisaron bien, comenzaron a gritar algo desde la proa en un idioma de piratas, con sus escudos, sus sombreros de metal, y esas lanzas, como dispuestos a iniciar una guerra que los tomaba desprevenidos y no les convenía. (33)
>
> From the darkest part of the horizon, the ship drew nearer, propelled by enormous wooden oars; progressively moving at its whim the entire fury of the sea, come from who knows what corner of the past, laden with red and bloody men [...] that soon, when they saw them well, began to shout something from the prow in a language of pirates, with their shields, their metal helmets, and those spears, like they were ready to initiate a war that took them by surprise and wasn't in their best interest.

Thus the past comes to haunt the present. Emerging from the darkness of the horizon, disparate historical periods spanning centuries are condensed into the bloody logic of invasion which has bridled and crossed the ocean's fury to arrive at the island. Before such a threatening vision stands the "fragile and ephimeral" (33) figure of another member of the group, Josh Tibi, whose reaction prophetically deciphers for all the core logic of what they witness: "sólo tenía ojos para mirar hacia allá, saber lo que está

sucediendo no es nada del otro mundo, que esa nave vikinga siempre estuvo ahí [...] y siempre lo estará. Ahí eternamente. Porque todo lo que fue sigue siendo. Todo [...] Aunque como ahora, todo se esté derritiendo y sólo me queda el mar para hundirme en él" ("he only had eyes to look there, to know what's happening isn't anything out of this world, that that Viking ship was always there [...] and always will be. There eternally. Because all that has been continues to be. Everything [...] although like now, everything's melting away and only the sea remains for me to sink myself into"; 33). After the collective call to resistance based in a common cultural heritage is muted, the story closes by pointing to the only alternative seen by one of the group's members in the face of invasion—self-annihilation.

The above passage also suggests the cyclical repetition of invasion which penetrates even local spaces of escape and play,[5] triggering among the majority of those present an affirmation of cultural identity, solidarity, strength and resistance *vis a vis* the invading Other while at the same time inducing some to rehearse a self-destruction born of despair—an echo of the choice made centuries before by some members of the Taino population, who committed mass suicide in the face of the harshness of conquest and colonization (Moya Pons 33-4). Thus, Josh Tibi, rehearses an almost conditioned response when faced with the island's experience of invasion. As Néstor E. Rodríguez points out: "[Josh Tibí] es el único de los contertulios que parece captar la imposibilidad de superar el lastre de una memoria histórica que se prolonga hasta el hastío " '[Josh Tibí] is the only one of those present that seems to capture the impossibility of overcoming the rubble of an historical memory that is prolonged *ad nauseum* ' (104).

[5] See Rodriguez, who argues that the cave is a type of counter-cultural heterotopia (102-4).

In this way, travel to the island is associated with power and struggle, pitting local resident against outside invader, ultimately provoking a particular type of relational conceptualization regarding Self and Other rooted in historical legacy—a dual consciousness that lingers to this day and which Glissant describes thus, "one is visitor or visited; one goes or stays; one conquers or is conquered" (17). In this way the episode surrounding the Viking ship is demonstrative of what Silvio Torres-Saillant terms "the hypermnesic element within Caribbean poetics," a thematic phenomenon characterized by "the uncommon compulsion to remember, to look for meaning in the exploration of past experience" (288). Furthermore, inasmuch as the episode is an evocation of a collective past experience of initial colonial encounter and its subsequent repercussions on local life and consciousness, it exemplifies Simone Gikandi's contention regarding Caribbean cultural producers' reaction before the memory of Columbus:

> Caribbean literature and culture are haunted by the presence of the "discoverer" and the historical moment he inaugurates. For if Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas and his initial encounter with the peoples of the New World have paradigmatic value in the European episteme because they usher in a brave new world, a world of modernity [...] these events also trigger a contrary effect on the people who are "discovered" and conquered [...] Caribbean writers and scholars exhibit extreme anxiety and ambivalence toward the beginnings of modernity. (Writing in Limbo 1)

Thus, the eternal presence of the invading ship as portrayed above anchors current social life in a type of phantasmagoric "deep past" from which to understand current

experience. In Arias' works, therefore, the anxiety and ambivalence to which Gikandi refers are produced within a continuum of local historical experience centered on travel, forming a common ground for autochthonous self-identification and a prism through which to contextualize the exploration of modern encounters between local Selves and invading Others within contemporary tourism and sex tourism.

If, within Arias' narrative trajectory, "Hotel Radiante" represents a first attempt to directly confront contemporary local experience of sex tourism, several stories from her latest collection Emoticons continue discursive forays into the theme. Here the narrative exploration of both local residents and tourists is much more fully developed, providing an in-depth consideration of each of their perspectives and the dialectical interplay in which they engage as they configure the social space of encounter. Here, Arias will explore the motivations and the inner life-world of the male traveler, revealing the operation of colonial patterns of perception and use of Caribbean space as well as the tactics deployed by local subjects as they seek to take advantage of their contact with him.

The stories "Novia del Atlántico," and "Bachata" center on the travels and actions of protagonist James Gatto within the Dominican Republic. He forms one of the main vehicles used by Arias to represent the wealthier traveler from abroad and it is he who will receive the greatest development as a character, standing in metonymically for what I term the *Euromale* due to characteristics which link him not to any one country in particular, but rather to the many countries of the so-called developed world whose majority or dominant population is white and where the predominance of European presence and/or legacy is still operative. A restless, white male of uncertain origin who

speaks Spanish, French, English, and Italian (Arias, "Novia" 112), Gatto wanders the world and the Dominican Republic in search of "la vida verdadera" ("the real life"; 121) and embodies practices which have marked metropolitan interaction with the Caribbean from the outset of modernity. Arias introduces him in the following passage taken from the beginning of the story "Bachata":

> Miraba todo desde afuera, como un gato que se detiene a auscultar encima de un tejado un escenario. [...] ¿Otro escenario más de los tantos que había conocido a lo largo de su vida de giramundo? No, de ningún modo. Un escenario muy singular, donde nacen hermosas flores entre los basureros. Donde ocurre una belleza nunca vista por sus ojos, como la de Yajaira, la muchacha que vivía junto al mar. Alta, prieta, encendida. Trabajaba de mesera en un disco-terraza. Una tarde cualquiera, James Gatto, sin proponérselo, cayó por ahí. (93)
>
> He was looking at everything from outside, the way a cat pauses on a rooftop to survey the scene [...] One more scene of the many he had known in the course of a lifetime of globetrotting? No, by no means. A very singular scene, where beautiful flowers spring up among the garbage heaps. Where there was to be found a beauty never before seen by his eyes, like that of Yajaira, the girl who lived next to the sea. Tall, dark-skinned, glowing. She worked as a waitress in a disco-restaurant. One afternoon like any other, James Gatto, without intending to, found himself there. (Trans. MaGuire)[6]

[6] Unless otherwise noted all translations of the story "Bachata" will be taken from the non-published translation of Emily Maguire.

In effect, this scene restages what Diana Taylor describes as the typical "Western" scenario of colonial encounter that "stars the same white male protagonist-subject and the same brown, found 'object'" (13). Indeed, from the very outset, the narration places Gatto on the outside looking in, that is, the detached observer who gazes upon the local scenery, delimiting that space and, as will be seen, converting the scene before him into a stage for his own protagonism. In this he exemplifies the practice of what John Urry has termed "the tourist gaze," which involves a dynamic of distancing and totalizing vision. This becomes a practice of mastery for affirming one's place in the world and, as Ellen Strain contends, building on Urry's concept, grew out of "Western" imperial expansion (24-5). This "touristic vision" is constructed by way of a series of objectifying strategies which reduce that which is seen to a surface spectacle that can become mystified through the projection of the will, imagination and desire of the observer. But, as Strain points out, the reality thus reduced and subsequently re-produced in the eye of the tourist becomes a mystery which demands an unveiling (18). Thus, in addition to the distancing inherent in the practice of the gaze, there is at the core of tourism the competing impulse for movement toward the observed, a desire for immersion in that Other reality (Strain 24-5) and perhaps an impulse for possession similar to that which characterized the figure identified by Mary Louise Pratt as the imperial "seeing man" of European colonial expansion whom she describes thus: "the European male subject of European landscape discourse—he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess" (7). Indeed, as Gatto surveys his environs his eyes recognize the trash heaps which surround him but fix on the "beautiful flower" Yajaira, the dark, exotic "girl who lived by the sea." As we will see

later, her very beauty and allure will convert her into "one more mystery to be deciphered" ("un misterio más por descifrar"; 94) and an object of pursuit.

However, another story, "Novia del Atlántico," reveals a search for more than mere libidinal gratification and offers a glimpse into other elements that constitute "real life" for Gatto. The story begins with a passage similar to the one with which "Bachata" opens, this time as he views the northern coastal city of Puerto Plata. Like "Bachata," it portrays him in the moment of delimiting and mystifying the space before him: "Parado en el malecón, James Gatto pensó que toda aquella luz que lo circundaba podría iluminarlo a él también. Animado, se dispuso a recorrer el lugar al que recién había llegado" ("Standing on the walkway that ran along the city's sea wall, James Gatto thought that all that light that surrounded him would be able to illuminate him too. Enthused, he decided to look over the place to which he had recently arrived";111). Thus, spurred on, Gatto continues to delimit space even as he penetrates it further, passing bars, hotels, and the beach where "la gente se bañaba feliz, sin prisas, sin problemas" ("people swam happily, without hurry, without problems"; 111). Arriving at the end of his brief survey of the local terrain he comes across two structures associated with the vigilance of institutionalized power that juxtapose different historical moments in the present: on the eastern border, the modern "Policía Turística" 'Tourist Police', designed to defend the rights of tourists, and on the West, the Fort of San Felipe, described by the text as "witness of the city of Puerto Plata since the sixteenth century ("testigo de la ciudad de Puerto Plata desde el siglo XVI") and whose current function is to form part of the picturesque and "authentic" touristic scenery, a piece of commodified history (111).

Aside from this passing mention of the reconfiguration of space and its social function according to the logic of tourism and pointing out the process of delimitation according to the tourist gaze, the passage cited above also signals, through its ascription of illumination as prominent in Gatto's self-conscious desire, more deeply existential motives behind his presence on the island. As the text continues, the reader is offered a more complete portrait of Gatto's first arrival to the city and its place within his life-trajectory:

> Al término de su caminata, Gatto entró a un bar. Escogió una mesa cerca de la playa. Se sentía encantado. La arena, el mar. Todo le parecía tan simple y primitivo, una ancha frontera abierta donde cabía, incluso, la felicidad. [...] La brisa marina y las sombras de las palmeras le inspiraron lo suficiente para saber que aquello era exactamente lo que buscaba. Quiero vivir aquí, quiero explorar, crecer, amar. Esta es la vida, y es cierta, pensaba complacido.[...] Le sobraba tiempo y energías, y esa tarde se sentía especialmente heroico, lleno de una euforia inusual. Tan distinto a un tiempo atrás, cuando aún habitaba en el anodino infierno que alguna vez fue su vida [...] El Océano Atlántico batiéndose frente a él funcionaba, sin dudas, como un elixir. El sentimiento de renovada ilusión, ese mar, esa luz, esa ciudad costera románticamente bautizada como "Novia del Atlántico," le parecían tan maravillosos que enterrarían por siempre todo lo que dejó atrás. (112-113).
>
> At the end of his walk, Gatto entered a bar. He chose a table near the beach. He felt enchanted. The sand, the sea. Everything seemed so

> simple and primitive, a wide-open frontier where even happiness had a place [...] The ocean breeze and the shadows of the palm trees inspired him enough to know that that was exactly what he was looking for. I want to live here, I want to explore, grow, love. This is the life, and it's certain, he thought, content [...] He had more than enough time and energy, and that afternoon he felt especially heroic, filled with a euphoria to which he was unaccustomed. So different than a little while back, when he still inhabited the anodyne hell that once was his life [...] The Atlantic Ocean beating in front of him functioned, no doubt, as an elixir. The feeling of renewed dreams, that sea, that light, that coastal city romantically baptized *Novia del Atlántico*[7], seemed to him so marvelous, that they would bury all he left behind.

This paradisiacal tropical space, invested with his own sense of euphoria, assumes a vital importance for this traveler who sees it as a "wide-open frontier" for his heroic protagonism as he "lives," "explores", "grows," and "loves." It holds the possibility of personal illumination and the life he seeks, a place to find "renewed hopes and happiness"—an environment in which to lose himself and "bury" his past life. His travels to the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic suggest a personal quest for self-fulfillment, entailing a break with the past, a passage to another, more "certain," life, another way of being. In short, Gatto's desire takes on an almost religious dimension and exhibits some of the ritualistic qualities that have been ascribed to tourism in general by several theorists.

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[7] "Novia del Atlántico" can be translated either as "*Bride*" or "*Girlfriend* of the Atlantic." The author, as will be seen, plays with the latter two of the meanings. I leave it untranslated in the text as it is a title by which the city is commonly known.

Those models of tourism that focus on its ritual aspect derive in large part from anthropologist Victor Turner's work on the nature and function of ritual, which, in turn, builds on French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold Van Gennep's analysis of rites of passage whose characteristics Turner summarizes as follows: "Rites of passage are the transitional rituals accompanying changes of place, state, social position, and age in a culture. They have basically a tripartite processual structure, consisting of three phases: separation, margin or limen, and reaggregation" (Turner and Turner, 249). Participants in rites of passage thus move from social normativity into a socially sanctioned "margin" or liminal state in which norms are suspended and characterized by what Turner describes as an "anti-structure" that entails "the dissolution of normative social structures, with its role-sets, statuses, jural duties, etc" (Turner From Ritual to Theatre 28). This model is flexible and is used to describe ritual spatial movement, as Turner explains, pointing to the physical movement frequently associated with transitional rites and in particular with pilgrimages: "the passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another [...] the spatial passage may involve a long, exacting pilgrimage in the crossing of many national frontiers before the subject reaches his goal, the sacred shrine [...]" (25). Having passed through that experience, the pilgrim can then come back to re-enter society, changed from her or his experience of liminality.

In a parallel fashion, the "transitional rite" of international tourism often demonstrates a similar progression: separation from home, crossing of borders and entrance into the tourist destination, and eventual return. On the experiential level, this movement through space and time entails a temporary departure from the accustomed

experience of home and everyday life and the particular time constraints and social norms associated with these, and the entrance into a place, a culture, and a normativity at least perceived as qualitatively different than that of home (Graburn "Sacred Journey," "Secular Ritual"; Selanniemi, "On Vacation"; Ryan and Hall, *Sex Tourism*). Thus, as seen from the perspective of the tourist and the society from which s/he originates, the tourist destination constitutes a margin or an anti-structure—a liminal space which is a type of "no-place and no-time" (Turner and Turner 250), suspended "betwixt and between" (249)[8] what is the normal, routine life of the tourist and a place where "the magic of tourism" may occur (Graburn "Secular Ritual" 45).

In describing the existential "magic" of occupying the anti-structural liminal of tourism, Tom Selanniemi, in what he describes as the tourist "south"—i.e. the geographically varied "places" associated with sun, sand, and sea and the typical activities in which the tourist engages—affirms: "The spatio-temporal transition/transgression from home and everyday life to the "south" changes our psychological state, the social order and our bodily state or the way we perceive and experience our surroundings" (27). The tourist experience thus sets up the conditions of possibility for the traveler to temporarily be other than he or she normally is before eventually returning home to resume life as before. As Selanniemi argues, "tourists travel more to a different state of being than to a different place" (25). In this way, the tourist experiences existential transitions on multiple levels: the spatial, the temporal, the mental, and the "sensory/sensual" (26-7). Thus, the sensual experience of the beach environment and the elixir-like effect of the pounding of the Atlantic surf all lead Gatto

[8] Also qtd. in Graburn, "Secular Ritual" 47; Ryan and Hall, Sex Tourism: Marginal People and Liminalities 3, 101.

to a state of "euphoria" and "enchantment," that is, to undergo a mental transition which is made possible by the voyage or travel. Selanniemi considers touristic practice "a transgression of our boundaries at home and work, the place and time of everyday life, into the placeless and timeless liminoid 'South'" (27). Indeed, it is precisely the escape from the normativity of home that ultimately leads Gatto to transgress it through his travel to the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic seeking a definitive break with that "insipid hell" with which the text describes his daily existence before his arrival in search of "real life."

In this, Gatto seems to exhibit what Dean MacCannell has described as a central part of tourists' motives and the experience they seek, both noting the religious/sacred qualities that characterize tourism and correlating them as the compensatory product of a disenchantment provoked within modernity and consequently sublimated into what he asserts as a longing for authenticity:

> 'The concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their [everyday] experiences parallels concern for the sacred in primitive society' (MacCannell, 1973: 589-90). [...] 'The more the individual sinks into everyday life, the more he is reminded of reality and authenticity elsewhere' (MacCannell, 1976: 160) [...] Therefore 'Authentic experiences are believed to be available only to those moderns who try to break the bonds of their everyday existence and begin to "live"' (MacCannell, 1976:159)'" (qtd. in E. Cohen 187).

As Gatto observes Puerto Plata, having broken the bonds of his everyday existence, he begins to feel the certainty of the life he witnesses in the liminal space of the Caribbean.

The reader will recall once again how his ecstatic state is heightened by his perception of the "primitive" and "simple" nature of the tropical island scenery, underscoring that this "here" and now constitutes "the life" that he has sorely been missing. That he should search among primitiveness and simplicity for the real and certain, is a further indicator that he seeks authenticity. As MacCannell affirms, "For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles" (3).[9] Thus, Gatto travels to the Caribbean to more than merely bask in the sun, sand and surf, he also seeks to immerse himself in a place "Other" than his home culture where he can transition away from his old way of living and experience an authentic life anew. That is, Gatto's travels have to do not only with sensuous pleasure and recreational indulgence, but also with personal *re*creation.

This is indeed highlighted throughout the story "Novia del Atlántico" as in the following passage when he chats with the personnel manager of a hotel in which he seeks employment:

> Gatto, tratando de hacerse el divertido, le dice [su nombre] en tres idiomas distintos y le pide que elija el que más le guste. *Ya alguna vez, en su gira existencial por otros lugares del Caribe, probó a ocultar su verdadera identidad cambiándose de nombre.* Así, de Marco Ferreti durante su breve estadía en Cuba, había pasado a ser Fidel Mulheiro en su paso por las islas Caimán y Puerto Rico, y Joseph Ross cuando estuvo en Haití. *Ahora, sin saber por qué, desea ser quien es* [...]" (116 emphasis added)

[9] See also the introduction of Regina Bendix's, The Search for Authenticity. Along similar lines Bendix argues that because of the spiritual and epistemological loss that accompanied the secularizing impact of the modern period in Europe, authenticity became "the origin and essence of being human" (6), and the search for it, a quest undertaken to satisfy "a longing for an escape from modernity" (7).

> Gatto, trying to come off as witty, tells her [his name] in three different languages and asks her to pick the one she likes the most. *He had already, at some point in his existential tour through other places of the Caribbean, tried to hide his true identity by changing his name.* Thus, from Marco Ferreti during his brief stay in Cuba, he become Fidel Mulheiro in his passage through the Grand Caymans and Puerto Rico, and Joseph Ross when he was in Haiti. *Now, without knowing why, he wants to be who he is* [...].

Here we see how Gatto, having spent some time on his "existential tour" of the Caribbean, has grown tired of trying on different identities and seeks to exist as himself. This ought not to be understood, however, as his wanting to recuperate or revert to some sort of essential Self rooted in the home or country he has left behind, for he has come to Puerto Plata to bury his past. Indeed, his "root" identity, to use Glissant's term, becomes so remote to him later in his trajectory upon the island, he has difficulty, as told in the story "Bachata," of giving an answer to the question of where he is from, having to take a drink first to buy some time, "para acordarse por fin de dónde es. Ha dado tantas vueltas por tan diferentes lugares, que ya no sabe a cuál de ellos pertenece. Seguro que a todos y a ninguno. De tanto ir a todas partes, simplemente, se quedó sin patria, y cuando le hacían esa pregunta, no sabía qué responder" ("to remember, finally, where he's from. He has roamed about so many different places, that he no longer knows to which he belongs. From so much going to such different places, he simply wound up with no country, and when they asked him that question, he didn't know how to respond"; 100). No, this unanchored traveler who is constantly in motion is not seeking to recapture an original

essence or core but is instead continually on the move, demonstrating the type of wandering impulse that characterizes what Erik Cohen has denominated the "drifter tourist," which he claims is a type of "disoriented post-modern traveler" (189). Drifter tourists, while sharing in the general trend of mass tourism to move "away from the spiritual, cultural or even religious centre of one's 'world', into its periphery, toward the centres of other cultures and societies" (182-3), can take such movement to an extreme, becoming people who, "lacking clearly defined priorities and ultimate commitments [...] get accustomed to move steadily between different peoples and cultures, who through constant wandering completely lose the faculty of making choices, and are unable to commit themselves permanently to anything" (189). Thus, Gatto is a type of ex-patriot and nomad whose story is the tale of one who moves perpetually within the periphery and the liminal, seeking new experiences and ways to recreate himself, yet never landing long enough to claim any one place as a center nor allowing any to claim him. That is, these stories tell the tale of the gradual re-centering of the *Euromale* whose ultimate center is himself and his immediate experience in the here and the now.

Yet, whether Gatto's search for authenticity and a new way of being in a marginal space is born of a particularly modern condition, such as MacCannell's theory would suggest, or is an example of Cohen's post-modern drifter tourist, his desire and actions rehearse an old pattern, dating back to the foundations of modernity and the globalization set in motion by Columbus and the conquistadores and colonizers who arrived to remake themselves in the "New World."[10] As Fernando Ortiz reminds us,

[10] I don't seek here to enter into the debate over the modern/postmodern. Suffice it to say that when MacCannell published his text in 1976, he was actually interested in turning the focus of ethnographic studies from "primitive and peasant societies" towards modern society (xv). In any case, "postmodern" did not yet enjoy the currency in the theoretical nomenclature that it would in the 1980s and 1990s. As Strain

these early arrivals to the Caribbean also undertook the voyage there in an attempt to recreate themselves and did, indeed, undergo change, spurred on particularly by the desire for financial gain:

> The mere fact of having crossed the sea had changed their outlook; they left their native lands ragged and penniless and arrived as lords and masters; from the lowly in their own country they became converted into the mighty in that of others. And all of them, warriors, friars, merchants, peasants, came in search of adventure, cutting their links with an old society to graft themselves on another new in climate, in people, in food, in customs and hazards (100-1).[11]

Indeed, in the midst of his self-refashioning, Gatto utilizes to his advantage an identitarian repertoire based in the historical colonial relationship of encounter between those privileged travelers who come from the outside of island space and those who dwell within it. For example, when in "Novia del Atlántico" a sex worker thrusts herself upon him, he, thinking that no good would come from a dalliance with a mere "cuero" 'whore,' puts on "su mejor estampa, la de *gentleman llegado de lejanas tierras*, adorable y *aventurero que intenta parecer, la imagen con la que pretende reinventarse* [...]" ("his best face, that of the *gentleman from distant lands*, the adorable *adventurer that he tries to appear, the image with which he tries to reinvent himself*"; 124 emphasis added). In his personal reinvention, he draws on the history of travel to the Caribbean to assume a

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points out (8-9), MacCannell later would come to equate his "tourist" with the figure of a postmodern person, describing him in a strikingly similar way to Cohen above: "Perhaps 'the tourist' was really an early postmodern figure, alienated but seeking fulfillment in his own alienation—nomadic, placeless, a kind of subjectivity without spirit, a 'dead subject' (MacCannell xvi).

[11] In this, they were following Columbus's example and the discursive prescription for the imperial use of the islands as set forth in the "Carta a Luis Sántangel" quoted in the epigraph at the introduction to this dissertation—i.e. the *ganancias* to be had in the Caribbean for all European nations and individuals.

posture and a role in order to cast an exotic image that will establish his superiority and distance relative to the local.

In another passage, as he contemplates soliciting a job as night manager of a hotel, he ponders the relational position he can establish between the local employees and himself in light of the attributes which he possesses: "a todos se les metería en su bolsillo gracias a su carisma, a su caballerosidad y encanto, a su pinta de hombre educado, blanco, a su buen español, francés, ingles, e italiano" ("he would put everybody in his pocket thanks to his charisma, his gentile manners and his charm, his look of an educated man, white, his good Spanish, French, English, and Italian"; "Novia" 112). Beyond his enchanting personality and gentlemanliness, and the desire and confidence to put everybody in his pocket, we see traces of colonial relation even as Gatto seeks to capitalize on his fluency in four of the languages of Empire that have served as tools for domination in the region. Nor can one overlook his racialized otherness—his whiteness—which confers upon him a special status. Although only briefly mentioned in this passage, this factor is emphasized more pointedly in the title story "Emoticons" in which Gatto makes an appearance as a secondary character who comes to the aid of a local Dominican, Pepe, who has fallen victim to a pickpocket while out on a date with the Spanish "fiancée" whom he met in a chat room on-line and who has recently arrived to the island. The text summarizes the effect Gatto's arrival and offer of help have on Pepe: "Pepe entonces se relajó un poco. La oportuna llegada de aquel tipo alto, blanco, ojos claros, con cara de buen bandido, le hizo sentir una inesperada calma. En cualquier lugar [...] resulta oportuno hacerse acompañar de alguien así. Al fin y al cabo, *ser blanco es una profesión en este país*, tal como suele decir el común de la gente" ("Then Pepe

relaxed a Little. The opportune arrival of that tall, white guy with the light-colored eyes and the face of a kind outlaw, made him feel an unexpected calm. Wherever you went [...] it was fortunate to be accompanied by someone like that. In the end, *being white is a profession in this country*, as the common folk tend to say"; 68). Thus, some members of Dominican society such as Pepe also pull on the repertoire of colonial encounter, assuming the lower position in a hierarchical relationship, conferring superiority on whiteness, which can be traded, as Gatto in effect does at times, for personal gain.

In this way, even as these passages demonstrate his attempts at self-refashioning, they simultaneously reveal the colonial dynamics which obtain in the Self/Other equation that has historically shaped the region and the lives of those who pass through and/or occupy island space. These passages also demonstrate that these same phenomena form part of the relational repertoire upon which Gatto draws in the execution of his personal makeover. Thus, just as early travel to the periphery of empire established the Caribbean as a site for personal transformation, its original violence establishing greater power and privilege upon the traveler from abroad, that same space still functions as a transformative peripheral space for the outside visitor to the islands. In this way, tourism is but another manifestation of global processes closely linked to the travel and identitarian impulses that have marked "Western" modernity from the outset, locating the Caribbean within its flows and webs of power. Furthermore, as Mimi Sheller affirms: "[These processes have] powerfully shaped transatlantic cultures over the past five hundred years, and [have] shaped the Caribbean [through] the making and remaking of places, cultures, bodies and natures" (6).

An important part of that reshaping of the region, of course, has come about through the discourse concerning it as produced within the European imaginary. Thus, as Gatto occupies the liminal zones of the Dominican Republic, drawing on a relational repertoire consisting of colonial discourse and practices to [re]fashion himself, he sees, as did the earlier travelers to the Caribbean, a "wide-open frontier," for the personal protagonism and adventure he desires. The enchantment provoked by the primitiveness he perceives there also is ultimately a continuation of the legacy of the objectification strategies deployed by the Western traveler to the islands. As Anne McClintock observes:"For centuries, the uncertain continents—Africa, the Americas, Asia—were figured in European lore as libidinously eroticized [...] Africa and the Americas had become what can be called the porno-tropics for the European imagination--a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears" (22)[12]. Thus, Gatto observes, delimits and circumscribes space to invest the objects and bodies found there with a desire born of the exoticizing discourses inscribed in his cultural "Other." Once having entered that transgressive margin where, in Selanniemi's words, his own "latent 'Other' may come forth and reveal characteristics that self-control and social control keep hidden in everyday life"(27), he pursues exoticized, primitivized and racialized women like the "tall, dark-skinned" Yajaira in the story "Bachata." As the story later reveals, he perceives her as the key to the authenticity that he seeks when he observes her dancing a *bachata* at the bar where she works, the movement of her hips showing such "soltura, gracia y libertad" 'ease, grace, and freedom' (97) that they reveal her as the embodiment and gateway to "la verdadera vida,"

[12] In addition to Said's classic Orientalism, see also Ryan and Hall 12-3, for a discussion of how the Far East and the South Pacific were exoticized and eroticized within the European imagination and practice.

consisting for him, in part, of a natural sensuality "stripped [...] of any kind of restriction on the laws of instinct" (despojada [...] de toda restricción a las leyes del instinto" 97).

Therefore, it is precisely the "remaking of places and bodies" within globalized economic flows of desire and consumption that mark such places as Manresa—outside the capital city of Santo Domingo and the setting for "Bachata"—and Puerto Plata through the sex tourism which exists there. This is one of the main themes explored in "Novia del Atlántico" in which Arias portrays the current realities of this industry as manifested in *Barbanegra*—"*an erotic, exotic resort for single men and adventurous couples*" (126)—which, in a similar fashion to the *Zona Colonial* in "Hotel Radiante," but more intentionally so, has become a global convergence point for men from abroad to repeat colonial sexual fantasies commodified through tourism. Within the story, Arias explores the types of negotiations which occur between Dominican sex workers allowed to work there by foreigner John Finch—the owner of the hotel—and the wealthier outsiders who come in search of the objects of their fantasies.

These are fueled to a great extent by the internet, through which flow the erotic images for the male "tourist gaze" to behold, linking Puerto Plata to the current global sex trade. The narrative offers the following depiction of the role of the net, underscoring the desire which motivates some of the men and the power of foreign wealth and travel to shape local conditions:

> para [algunos] la cosa está bien clara, un cuero siempre será un cuero, un pedazo de carne caliente que hay que tratar de conseguir al menor precio posible. 'Mejor si la engaño y no le pago nada, y luego, en el *message board* del *World Sex Archives* doy testimonio sobre mi estupenda estadía

en aquel paraíso de carne que es ese paisito, coloco las fotos que tomé, trofeos de cacería desde Puerto Plata, paraíso de cueros baratos, de mujeres y niñas que se ofrecen a Mr. Finch para que las deje buscárselas en su hotel.' (120)

for [some] it's crystal clear, a whore will always be a whore, a piece of hot meat that one has to try and get at the best possible price. 'Even better if I trick her and don't pay her anything, and then, on the *message board* of the *World Sex Archives* I can give a testimony about my stupendous stay in that fleshly paradise that that little country is, I put up my photos that I took, hunting trophies from Puerto Plata, paradise of cheap whores, of women and girls that offer themselves to Mr. Finch so he'll let them *buscárselas*[13] in his hotel.

It is just such web sites as *World Sex Archives* which fall within the eroticized gaze of tourists from all points of the globe: "gringos en su mayoría [...] viejos, menos viejos, blancos de Ohio, negros de New York, un noruego pálido todavía [...], el alemán de 85 años de edad" ("mostly *gringos* [...] old men, some less old, whites from Ohio, blacks from New York, a still-pale Norwegian [...], the 85 year old German"; 117).[14] Here the author once again highlights the place of the Dominican Republic within globalized flows of desire while underscoring the motivational function of the internet on these men and the consequent configuration of the island within exterior discourse as a *porno-tropics*. Interpreting what he observed in his research within Boca Chica,

[13] In the Dominican Republic, "buscárselas" is roughly the equivalent of "to hustle." Like the English word with which I associate it, it is used in a variety of circumstances and generally connotes a combination of ambition, drive, and astuteness to achieve one's goals.

[14] World Sex Archives is an actually existing internet sex tourism forum, located at *www.worldsexarchives.com*.

Dominican Republic, Stephen Gregory describes the impact of sex tourism and the instrumentality of the internet, highlighting the positioning and shaping of local women within global economic processes and a male imaginary: " Male sex tourism positioned women as subjects of gender-based labor exploitation; it also figured them within an electronically mediated masculine imaginary as eroticized subjects of sexual control and consumption" (141). Within these contexts, Gregory sees the internet as a "scopic" instrument for what he terms the practice of "imperial masculinity" in which "men collectively constructed and naturalized ideologies of racial, class, ethnic, and sex/gender hierarchies of the global division of labor" (133).

As Arias' text indicates, some of the men go there merely in search of the cheapest "piece of hot meat" possible. However, others' motives range from the wish to be treated well, if only fleetingly, to "falling in love" and perhaps taking a few of these "infelices" 'wretches' home with them to their countries, or, at least send them monetary remittances (117). As we saw earlier in "Hotel Radiante," mobility and escape from the island also constitute the desire of many of the sex workers from the Dominican Republic. But whereas in "Hotel Radiante" the female protagonist is cast into the role of the unfulfilled, possibly in-love "victim" of shadowy and highly mobile men whose motives are concealed, in "Novia del Atlántico," the men are reduced by these professional sex workers to mere means toward material benefit. Indeed, as Brennan points out in her article on the sex trade in Sosúa, just as male sex tourists may "view [Dominican sex workers] as commodities for pleasure and control," so too the women see them as "readily exploitable [and] potential dupes" and vehicles for their own material gain. These women use sex, romance and possibly marriage toward that end and also as

a "stepping stone" off of the island ("Selling Sex" 168), thus seeking escape and, as did the protagonist of "Hotel Radiante," participation in the mobilities that local conditions prohibit. In other words, Dominican sex workers also seek to *re*create them*selves* through their participation in the recreational sex of others. They are, as Brennan states, "marginalized women in a marginalized economy [who] can and do fashion creative strategies to control their economic lives" (168), thus making the contact zone a space of potential mutual transformation.[15]

The socio-economic disparity that exists between sex tourists and sex workers puts into question, of course, the extent to which the latter can refashion themselves and their circumstances. "Novia del Atlántico" explores this point as it offers a portrait of the marginal conditions referred to by Brennan as well as the strategies and tactics deployed by the "*Barbanegra girls*" as they seek to "buscárselas"[16] at Finch's establishment. The narrative describes how these women arrive to work from the town outside the tourist zone, "where they have left their children with the old man," ("Novia" 118) thus, hinting at the importance their work plays in maintaining the family. Some of the women, if they are successful in getting a client, know that they "will have the means to eat" while others "will lose everything in the casino and wake up drinking, snorting coke, and crying alone" (118).

Within this context, the following passage encapsulates the aspirations the workers hold for the evening as well as the means of encouragement they employ to carry them through the task that lies ahead as they make their theatrical entrance into the space of colonial encounter:

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[15] Also see Brennan, *What's Love Got to Do with It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic.*

[16] See note 13 above.

> Las *Barbanegra girls* hacen su entrada [...] por la puerta principal, caminando como por una pasarela, hasta llegar al centro del bar, tratando de demostrarles a las demás que '*yo tengo mejor pinta que tú, mi amor, yo toi ma buena, yo voy a conseguir mucho cualto eta noche, un par de short terms de RD$1,500 o un overnight de RD$3,000, ¡a mamar güevos fue que vinimos!, así que ánimo, y si el ánimo no basta, unos buenos tragos y una fundita de perico ayudan.*' (118)
>
> The Barbanegra girls make their entrance [...] through the main door, walking as if down a runway, until arriving at the center of the bar, trying to show the other women 'I look better than you, my love, I'm so much finer, I'm going to earn a lot of coin tonight, a pair of short terms for $1500 Dominican or an overnight for $3000 Dominican. It's cocks we've come to suck! So, courage, and if courage isn't enough, a few drinks and a baggie of coke help.'[17]

This passage demonstrates the nature and the material motives of the local performance of desire within sexualized contact zones, underscoring its competitive nature, its object, and the personal meddle needed to carry it out, often bolstered by drugs and alcohol.

Thus, these women initiate the embodied performance of *el agarre* [...] "the great circus of seduction" (119) as they take the dance floor:: "caras de orgasmo, caderas, senos, caderas, cuerpos no tan perfectos porque saben lo que es mal pasar; dinero, decadencia, frustración sexual e impunidad de un lado; juventud, miseria, hambre del otro" ("orgasmic faces, hips, breasts, hips, not-so-perfect bodies because they know what

[17] As of this writing, the exchange rate for the Dominican peso against the US dollar is roughly 36 pesos to the dollar. Thus, a short term service would be worth roughly $40.00 US and an overnight, approximately $80.00 US.

it is to live through hard times; money, decadence, sexual frustration and impunity on one side; youth, misery, hunger on the other"; 121). In this way, this space becomes the performative interstice between local poverty and outside wealth, both of which exact their toll.

The text then further underscores the consumerist nature of the interaction between the girls and their clients, juxtaposing their respective attitudes and activities the following day as each group segregates from the other. While the men sit by one side of the pool, "otorgando votos y advirtiendo cualidades y defectos de este negocio de vacas" ("casting votes and noting the virtues and defects of this meat market"; 119), the women sit on the other, "a jugar barajas y a chismear entre sí, riendo de lo que quitaron a tal o cual gringo pendejo. Los "mi amor", parte del circo de la seducción, han sido falsos, 'te lo hago bien para que no te olvides de mí después de que te vayas, para que me mandes dinero', ya tengo cuatro viejos que me envían cuartos y me lloran por teléfono" ("playing cards and gossiping amongst themselves. The 'mi amor,' part of the circus of seduction, have been false, 'I do you right so you won't forget me after you leave, so that you'll send me money', I already have four old men that send me money and cry for me on the phone"; 119). In this way, the narrative encapsulates the main pecuniary interest involved in these relationships, highlighting what some women gain for their night's work, showing the falsity of professed love, and revealing how the women take advantage of the men, further exemplifying the two-way commodification that occurs within such places as *Barbanegra*.

Such are the relational dynamics which govern this space when James Gatto arrives to apply for the job of night manager, unaware at first, of the "adult" nature of the

establishment. As he awaits an appointment with the owner Finch, he notices some of the girls who, once they spot him, "don't take their eyes off him even for a second." Thus, Gatto, the white foreigner, falls under the local gaze, there to be quickly reduced to a surface spectacle, an object invested with the economic desires and fantasies of the sex workers, one of whom, Jennifer, calls out to him as indicated in the epigraph with which I opened this dissertation—«¡Diablo, papi, tú sí 'tá bueno, buen perro!», etc. She is eighteen years old and already a veteran of her trade, who, "when it comes to men, knows all the tricks" (124)—a young woman confident in the power that resides in her sexualized body. Gatto, who arrives thinking he can put everyone in his pocket, is represented as an "unweaned child" compared to her (124), even though he's twice her age. Later that night, she will seduce Gatto who is caught "betwixt and between" being led by the unrestrained "laws of instinct," on the one hand, and those 'civilized' codes which place him above a vulgar "cuero", on the other (124).

Prior to that, however, Gatto is forced to wait all day for an interview which never materializes due to the fact that the owner, Finch, is in a drunken stupor and can't see him. Thus, Mercedes, the personnel manager whose "black eyes" and "black African mouth" had so interested him when he first met her earlier in the day, informs him that he'll have to spend the night at the hotel (117). In the mean time, the great "circus of seduction" described earlier begins as the girls take the dance floor. Mercedes then grabs Gatto and brings him out onto the floor and begins to dance. Gatto, standing immobile for a moment within that liminal interstice, at last, "sin saber lo que hace, se tira a la pista y baila" ("without knowing what he's doing, throws himself onto the floor and dances"; 121), entering a performative contact zone of racialized desire. Mercedes then reiterates

that the interview won't happen that day, encouraging him to "[...] olvídate, Jaimito, disfruta" ("[...] forget it, *Jaimito*, enjoy" ; 121), upon which Gatto, "baila con ella, se ríe, le gusta que esa morena de boca africana le llame Jaimito, no piensa en dónde ni en cómo va a amanecer, ésta es por fin la vida verdadera" ("dances with her, and laughs, he likes it that that dark woman with the African mouth calls him *Jaimito*, he isn't thinking about where nor in what condition the morning will find him, this, at last, is the real life"; 121). Thus, Gatto moves into a state of anti-structural liminality within the space of the dance floor where norms and structure melt away, a state of unknowing, of non-planning, of slackened control as he surrenders himself to the flow of circumstance within the bar and the hotel, stimulated by the "primitive," seductive features of his Other. Once again, he is transported to "the real life."

Yet, not all is completely settled within Gatto's conscience regarding his choice to occupy the anti-structure of liminal space, for later that night, after he has gone to bed, he dreams the following:

> Ve entre sueños a un hombre flaco y más viejo que él, sin camisa, completamente tostado por el sol, parecido a uno de esos gringos que acaban con su vida en playas extranjeras, luego que todas las demás opciones se han evaporado. Triste, solitario, sin familia, objeto de burla de los que le arrancaron todo y ahora no encuentran qué hacer con él [...] James descubre que ese hombre es él mismo en unos cuantos años." (122)
>
> He sees in dreams a skinny man who is older than he, without a shirt, completely toasted by the sun, similar to one of those gringos that end their lives on foreign beaches, after all their other options have evaporated.

> Sad, solitary, without family, an object of mockery by those who ripped everything away from him and now can't find what to do with him [...] James discovers that that man is himself in a few years."

The imagery from this dream carries the weight of centuries of discourse surrounding the Caribbean, this time of the area as the other side of paradise, a hell in which a wandering and profligate *Euromale* may founder and be lost (Sheller 114). The passage thus plays on the second term of the binarism that operates within the metropolitan consciousness concerning the Caribbean as *porno-tropics*, the flipside of desire—fear—of the dissipation and decadence associated with the "Other" space. As Mimi Sheller explains:

> The 'imperialist self' in the West Indies was always at risk of getting lost, never finding a way back to Europe, both literally and metaphorically. The imperialist body is literally vulnerable to losing its bearings and being shipwrecked on a distant wild shore, starving, being eaten by cannibals, or succumbing to disease (111) [...] The detour into tropical luxuriance must remain only that, lest the European not return. (118)[18]

Part of what is at stake, of course, is that which will come to ruin if James himself does—the wife and children we discover that he has. As the older and dissipated version of his future self takes James' hand, he transports him back to his mother's house where Gatto

[18] As Médar Serrata points out, within Western discourse, from the Odyssey onward, one finds the recurring image of the traveling hero in danger of becoming incapacitated as a result of the encounter, in particular, with female/sexual temptation. This is a central motif within the 1942 epic poem Yelidá by Dominican author Tomás Hérnandez Franco in which a young, virgin Norwegian seaman travels across the Atlantic allured by the mythical tales surrounding the Caribbean to land in Haiti. There he dallies with and eventually marries a Haitian prostitute and eventually loses his life. As Serrata argues, his "purpose [in traveling to the Caribbean] was [...] to satisfy his sexual appetite" (217-8). Thus, in as much as the white protagonist of the poem is allegorical of the Western male (Serrata 217), he seems to be an early representation of what I call the *Euromale* sex tourist and a predecessor of Gatto within Dominican literary discourse.

sees his son in worn out, ill-fitting clothing who, looking at him sadly, tells him "'yo sabía que ibas a volver, papá, lo sabía, y si no volvías, yo sé lo que iba a hacer para encontrarte', me dice llorando y abrazándome," ("'I knew that you were going to come back, dad, I knew it, and if you didn't come back, I know what I was going to do to find you', he says, crying and hugging me"; 123) to which James responds, "'*¿Qué tú ibas a hacer, qué tú estás diciendo*?, le pregunto y lo abrazo más fuerte. Pobre hijo mío, me fui y te abandoné junto a tu hermanita, qué locura, qué locura, esto tiene que ser una pesadilla sin remedio, ya no podré hacer nada por ti, nada" ("*What were you going to do, what are you saying*?, I ask him and hug him more tightly. My poor son, I left and abandoned you together with your little sister, what madness, what madness, this has to be a nightmare with no solution, I won't be able to do anything for you any longer, nothing"; 123).

Thus, at this point, Gatto's past is still operative within his psyche, forming part of his dreams and referencing a deep-seated part of his identity and of the normative structure of home, pointing to the fact that at this stage of the process of his reinvention, he has not yet made a break, nor completely assumed a new identity. No, the normative structures of his home society still have purchase on him as evidenced in his self-condemnation within the dream and in the following excerpt when he is abruptly awakened by an insistent pounding at his door: "¿Quién me busca? ¿Dónde estoy?, ¿dónde está mi hijo? Ah, este hotel...Se tira de la cama, y abre la puerta. *Recupera su otro yo, el que vive en esta isla desde hace meses*" ("Who's looking for me? Where am I?, Where's my son? Ah, this hotel...He throws himself out of bed, and opens the door. *He recovers his other self, the one that's been living on this island for months*"; 123 emphases added).

As it turns out, this has been only a fleeting moment of memory and attachment connecting him with his past, for in conscious life, he quickly re-assumes a self that he has been cultivating within this island margin. Indeed it is Jennifer who pounds at the door, breaking his oneiric connection to his children and past, summoning him to join her in the Jacuzzi, which he had noticed earlier in the day, hidden within the grounds as he viewed them upon his arrival:

> Enfrente, una fuente de cemento y yeso con un par de flamencos a ambos lados, y al centro, una Venus Afrodita lanzando agua. A la izquierda, una pared parecida a un cerco, con muchos árboles puestos allí para ocultar el área, darle privacidad. Se trata del inmenso *jacuzzi* al aire libre, diseñado para meter a mucha gente, a cualquier hora, a hacer de todo. En el amplio balcón del primer edificio acostumbran a amontonarse los gringos, mirando hacia el *jacuzzi*, listos para no perderse los momentos de más interés. (112-3).
>
> In front, a cement and plaster fountain with a pair of flamingos on both sides, and in the center, a Venus Aphrodite spouting water. To the left, a wall similar to a fence, with many trees placed there to hide the area, give it privacy. It was an immense open-air *Jacuzzi*, designed to fit a lot of people, at any time, to do anything and everything. The *gringos* tended to pile up on the spacious balcony of the first building, sure to not miss the moments of greatest interest.

Indeed, the Jacuzzi is yet another liminal space, doubly constructed as a part of and apart from the hotel itself, partially hidden within the grounds yet accessible,

designed for both privacy and spectacle as it simultaneously shields occupants from the gaze of others and exposes them to it. This will also soon become a stage for Gatto's presumed heroic protagonism and take on the qualities of a sacred space of initiation.

As Jennifer awaits Gatto's reply to her invitation, she caresses the hair on his arm. Displaying the look of an innocent child, she holds his eyes with her gaze as she slowly introduces and removes a sucker several times from her mouth and then finally suffers a swoon which may merely be a ruse or the product of all the cocaine and alcohol she has ingested during the evening. At last she manages to overcome Gatto's initial resistance and stirs pity within him as he realizes "she is only a girl" (124). When he arrives at the Jacuzzi, he finds her lying apparently lifeless within it. As he attempts to revive her, she laughs and throws her arms around him and briefly kisses him before settling back down to rest her head on the edge of the tub.

At this point, Gatto seems to be moved by some feeling of heroic nobility—perhaps a chance at redemption after the reminder just a few moments earlier of his having abandoned his own children. Perhaps he senses what the text describes of the life of this eighteen-year-old:

> Jennifer, pestañas largas, que no sabe contar, que no sabe ver la hora en un reloj, que en vez de escribir, garabatea unas cuantas letras torcidas [...] Jennifer que nunca fue niña, encarcelada, acostándose con el abogado para salir de prisión [...] Jennifer, borracha y endrogada para engañar al dolor y sólo sentir placer [...] Jennifer enferma de los riñones, del alma, adicta, astuta, mentirosa, incumplidora, princesa de los bares de mala muerte de

Long Beach[19], en compañía de to' lo cuero malo de Puerto Plata [...] (125-6)

Jennifer, long eyelashes, who doesn't know how to count, who can't tell the time on a clock, who, instead of writing, scrawls a few twisted letters [...] Jennifer who never was a child, jailed, sleeping with the lawyer to get out of prison [...] Jennifer, drunk and stoned to cheat the pain and only feel pleasure [...] Jennifer sick with kidney problems, sick to her soul, addicted, astute, a liar, an oath breaker, princess of the seedy bars of *Long Beach*, in the company of all the bad-assed whores of Puerto Plata.

Whatever his full motives, with a mixture of heightened libido and aroused sense of chivalry Gatto declares, before touching her breasts, "Jennifer, novia del Atlántico, víctima del subdesarrollo, quiero ser tu héroe, yo, James Gatto, ciudadano del Primer Mundo, te salvaré" ("Jennifer, *novia del Atlántico*, victim of underdevelopment, I want to be your heroe, I, James Gatto, citizen of the First World, will save you"; 126). Aside from this parodical and somewhat humorous portrayal, Gatto's attitude is actually not uncommon among male sex tourists, who, upon witnessing the socio-economic disparity of their sex worker lovers are sometimes moved to exhibit this same type of concern—what Chris Ryan calls a "'white knight' syndrome,'" a product of "the self-delusion exhibited by some males that they, and they alone, are the answers to the predicament they imagine the [...] girls to be in" ("paradigms" 32).

After he makes his noble proclamation, Jennifer, smiling, grasps his sex as if a "remote control," maintaining her eyes fixed on his, holding him within her gaze as she

[19] An area within Puerto Plata where a good number of foreign ex-patriots, particularly North Americans, established bars and rent-by-the-hour bungalows commonly frequented by sex tourists.

immerses him in a hedonistic baptism with which to bury his former life and close "Novia del Atlántico."

From this point on Gatto, having symbolically taken another step of separation from his past, enters liminality more fully. However, as seen in his dealings with Jennifer, there is another factor beyond his own protagonism and desire that immediately comes to the fore as he enters into contact with local actors—the presence of their own desire and the power they wield within their domain—a power with which he must negotiate. This dynamic will continue and intensify in the story "Bachata," whose events occur at some future point relative to "Novia del Atlántico." In the end, these stories taken together show how Gatto's progressive surrender and move into liminality parallels his progressive vulnerability to those who seek to take advantage of the very wealth and mobility with which they identify him. At the same time, the texts portray the distinct perceptions and uses of local social space on the part of Gatto and local actors.

Thus, while "Novia" details Gatto's progression into what represents the opposite of his home culture, severing the ties that bind him to it, "Bachata" details what life is like after he has more fully entered a state of consciousness that has freed itself from those ties and norms. This is seen from the beginning of "Bachata," where the text recounts his arrival to Manresa, a small coastal slum of Santo Domingo which the text describes as "El típico suburbio de casa construidas a lo loco [...] sin acera, orden, ni planificación, por alguien que [...] es sólo un arquitecto al servicio del caos y la estrechez" ("The typical suburb of randomly built houses [...] without sidewalks, order, nor plan, by someone who [...] is only an architect at the service of chaos and poverty";

92-3). After Gatto passes through this "anti-structural" built environment, he suddenly discovers another liminal space:

> La arquitectura caótica dio paso a la anchura irresistible de las aguas y el cielo. Un cielo sin nubes que necesitaba un agrimensor para que lo deslindara del mar, pues ya no había frontera entre ellos, pensó James. El cielo era el mar y viceversa, y una vez más le causó sorpresa ese mar carente de agrimensores y tierra firme. Siempre la misma sensación pirata que tantas veces le había suscitado su andar por aquella isla mal descubierta y mal criada [...]. (92)
>
> The chaotic architecture gave way to the irresistible wideness of water and sky. A cloudless sky that would have needed a surveyor to distinguish it from the sea, James thought, since there was no border between them. The sky was the sea, and vice versa, and he was once again surprised by this sea, lacking in surveyors and firm land. Always the same pirate feeling that his travels through that poorly-discovered and poorly cared-for island had stirred in him so many times [...]

Before him is a space that contains no lines of separation, no borders. All things here become one in the indistinguishable, free flow of sea and sky, a naturally occurring perceptual space beyond the ordering logic of the gaze—that is, an anti-structural space *par excellence*. Beyond measure and containment, it awakens within Gatto a feeling of freedom beyond bounds—a libertine "pirate sensation." This site will function like a magnet, for moments later he will park his car, trembling with uncertainty before this space of unbounded possibility. He then comes to occupy yet another liminal space as he

stands on the shore to observe the horizon once again, overcome with a diffuse sense of nostalgia for "something," or "someone" before being awoken by the power of the sea that faces him and fills him with a desire to live: "Sí, lo importante es que todavía estaba vivo. Y aquel mar violento lo excitaba, devolviéndole aún más las ganas de vivir" ("Yes, the important thing was that he was still alive. And that violent sea aroused him, filling him once again with the desire to live."; 93)

Thus, while occupying an ultimate geographical interstice in the "betwixt and between" of the littoral zone which is neither mainland nor sea (Ryan and Hall 20), he observes the limitless horizon where sky and sea are one and enters into a fully liminal experience as described by Turner: "[In the margin or limen] the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance" (Turner "From Ritual"; 44). With his "alma en vilo" 'heart completely undecided/up in the air' (93) between nostalgia for an ambiguous past and the uncertainty of the liminal present, he affirms life in the here and the now, opting for the vitality of the moment of which the sea's violence reminds him as it fills him with the desire to live.[20]

This does not mean, however, that Gatto has now decided to take a new course of action and make plans for his life whether long term or short, for he presently takes off his sandals and wanders along the shore, "sin mayor pretensión que la de fumarse un

[20] A part of Gatto's search can also be described as illustrative of some of the key elements that Zygmunt Bauman identifies with touristic behavior: "the tourist is a systematic seeker of experience, of a new and different experience [...] The tourists want to immerse themselves in the strange and bizarre element (a pleasant feeling, a tickling and rejuvenating feeling, one that blends vague danger with a sense of salvation—like letting oneself be buffeted by sea waves)..." (*Fragments* 96). Furthermore, as Bauman points out, the more "life itself turns into an extended tourist escapade," the more any tangible sense of "home" disappears, the latter being "increasingly stripped of all material features" (97). As we have seen, this is precisely Gatto's goal and, as he moves ever farther into liminality, the concrete elements of his past recede accordingly, leaving him with an increasingly vague sense of nostalgia with no definitively ascertainable referent. See Bauman *Fragments* 95-8 for his complete discussion of the tourist.

cigarillo y ver lo que le deparaba la existencia" ("with no greater intention than to smoke a cigarette and see what existence would provide him with"; 93; MaGuire). Indeed, it is in "Bachata" that we see Gatto's fuller conversion into Cohen's "drifter tourist":

> In the broadest sense, drifting is a striking manifestation of what Kavolis has termed the mentality of 'post-modern man,' for whom '... the self is experienced in the expanding peripheries, or at the vanishing horizons...' and who is characterized by a 'decentralized personality' for whom '... all elements of behavior have the same rights...' so that '... personality must become ... disorganized and assystemic.' This decentralization is well expressed in the aimlessness of the typical drifter's traveling and his indifference as to the next stop of his trip [...] (93).

As we see in the quotes above, as Gatto looks out onto the horizon, he is faced with a place beyond the ability of his gaze to delimit, a space beyond grasping but which holds him fascinated and resonates with his desire to be whatever he wishes. Caught in the simultaneous balance between unrestricted promise and possible oblivion, Gatto draws impetus to continue his existence from the violent energy of the sea. He is thus driven on, though with no firm footing or course of action, for the gaze that cannot delimit the vanishing horizon to which it aspires is unable to map a plan for its own existence beyond the here and now. Indeed, though simultaneously lured by both the existential spectacle of the sky/sea with its immeasurable horizon and local existence on firm land which he can delimit as a field of action, Gatto soon hears the sound of a *bachata*—a song form often associated with revelry and eroticism—wafting through the air from the land side. Curious about the "beautiful flower" he had come across just

moments before, his appetite for the primitive and instinctual opens up and, "de inmediato, le apeteció una cerveza" 'suddenly, he craved a beer' (94). He then tracks down the music to the nearby *disco-terraza*, a type of open-air bar that adjoins the beach where he discovers that Yajaira works.

The bar will form the setting for Arias to introduce the reader to a more in-depth representation of the local mixture of the formal and informal economies as constituted within places such as Manresa, which do not form part of the tourist circuits. Indeed, the bar and the beach which it borders are both spaces of marginal legality, populated by delinquents and police officers who arrive to receive bribes. This is the context within which Yajaira moves. Just as Jennifer at *Barbanegra*, she is positioned according to both local and international hegemonic masculinist systems which ultimately are shown to be dependent on her multi-tasking labor, which, in turn, grants her both agency and authority. For example, since his arrival to the bar, Gatto tries to woo Yajaira, eventually succeeding to convince her to dance with him. As the two of them dance, they fall under the local gaze of some of the men at the bar who immediately position Yajaira within the local economy and masculine hierarchy according to her function:

> Antes, Yajaira miró por el rabillo del ojo al grupo de hombres que continuaban bebiendo y tarareando canciones sin por ello dejar de prestar atención a la pareja hombre desconocido (a lo mejor un gringo) y la hija de la gran puta de Yajaira, tan buena que tá tan depravada sabichosa,

mundana, buscavida, dueña de la finquita[21], gallinita de los huevos de oro [...] (98)

Before, Yajaira glanced out of the corner of her eye at the group of men who were still drinking and humming songs without failing to pay attention to the couple: the unknown man (probably a *gringo*) and that bitch Yajaira who's so hot, so depraved, know-it-all, worldly, such a go-getter, queen of the hill, hen-who-layed-the-golden-egg [...]

In this way, the above passage articulates the ambivalent male construction of a female who plays a central role in their social and economic lives. While seeking to maintain male hegemony, they recognize the power that resides in her eroticized body even as they frame her in derogatory terms ("la hija de la gran puta," "depravada,") a product, perhaps, of their resentment at the economic power she wields and upon which they depend ("dueña de la finquita," "la gallinita de los huevos de oro"). This latter point is further developed in the list of different roles she has had to play. As the passage continues, the narrative voice shifts to a more sympathetic description of the load that she has born within the micro-economy of the extended family:

[...] masajista, bailarina, mesera, chica de compañía. Pobre Yajaira, muchacha que ha mal pasado esa, explotada desde jovencita por su pseudo-familia chupa-sangre, mamá, papá, hermanas, sobrinos, y esos tres hermanos dedicados tempranamente a la delincuencia, uno de ellos deportado desde los países, que a cada rato caen presos, y ella los tiene que ayudar. (98)

[21] "Dueña de la finquita'" literally, "owner of the little farm." "La finquita" is an expression used among the popular classes to refer to the vagina, emphasizing the income generating capacity of a woman's sexual labor.

> [...] masseuse, dancer, waitress, escort girl. Poor Yajaira, what a bad time she's had of it, exploited since she was a kid by her blood-sucking pseudo-family, mom, dad, sisters, nephews, and those three brothers fallen early into a life of crime, one of them deported back, arrested again and again, and she has to help them.

Participating in both the formal and informal economy of Manresa while working at her father's *disco-terraza*, and in her contact with both local men for whom she serves as a sex worker and those from abroad like James Gatto, who effectively add an exotic element in their erotic objectification of her, the "tall, dark-skinned" Yajaira exemplifies the economic bricolage to which some women resort due to the demands of economic hardship. Kamala Kempadoo has affirmed regarding black women in the Caribbean: "Caribbean history indicates that sex work, particularly prostitution, has been profoundly shaped by both racialized and gendered processes within the context of the wider global economy, with the black woman at the nexus. The subordination of women is crucial in the process, with prostitution often an extension of domestic and household work [...]" (23). Even as Yajaira works for the family business as a waitress, she engages in multiple roles dealing with sexualized labor, such as masseuse, dancer, and escort, thus demonstrating, as did Jennifer from "Novia," her own repertoire for survival. Yet, she is not without agency, for throughout the story, she exercises power and authority over men even as she finds herself placed within local and global masculine hierarchical systems.

This is shown in her dealings with James Gatto whom she effectively seduces and who finds himself at her mercy at the end of the story. The text describes both her confidence in the power that resides in her sexualized body and the underlying economic

interest that motivates her interest in Gatto. As she sits with him, she astutely reads his behavior, noticing that, "ella le gusta muchísimo a él también. Está como nervioso. A Yajaira le encanta poner a los hombres así. Y más a un extranjero, porque con los tígueres de por ahí, no hay vida" ("he really likes her too. He's nervous. Yajaira loves to make men feel that way. And even more so a foreigner, because with the toughs around here, there's no getting ahead"; 100, translation mine). Indeed, she had already taken an interest in Gatto from the first moment she saw him when they crossed paths along the beach earlier. Just as she was detected within Gatto's field of vision and immediately inscribed with his exoticizing desire, she immediately invests him with the desires that spring from the economic conditions in which she lives. As the narration describes it: "La muchacha se quedó parada observándolo mientras se alejaba. Ese hombre viene de algún país lejano, probablemente desde donde ella se muere por ir" ("The girl stood there, watching him as he moved away. That man came from some far away country, probably from where she was dying to go"; 96 MaGuire). Once enacted, the power of the local gaze is described thus: "[Ella] lo dejó irse, sabiendo que no llegaría más allá del último basurero" ("She let him go, knowing that he wouldn't get any farther than the farthest trash pile"; 96 MaGuire). Of particular significance is the manner in which the text underscores her decision to "let him go," another indicator of her knowledge of men and the local terrain as well as her confidence in the exercise of her personal power.

In contrast to the strident cat calls that Jennifer employs when first spotting Gatto in "Novia," Yajaira's seduction of Gatto is much more subtle, beginning with the smile with which she greets him on the beach when they first cross paths. In addition, when he asks her to join him at his table after having danced with him, she gently protests, calling

him "my love" 'mi amor' (99), maintaining she has to work, but as the text points out: "casi diciendo con los ojos que sí" ("almost saying yes with her eyes"; 99). Again, when he eventually asks her to leave with him after suddenly kissing her "a la vista de todos" 'in the sight of everyone' (101), she accedes "con una docilidad cómplice, como si se conocieran de siempre" ("with a docile complicity, as if they had known each other forever"; 101) and then directs him to meet her by a small house on the beach near a stream of dirty water where he is eventually mugged. In this way, she performs masculinist fantasies of female docility, affecting these postures to gain the advantage and thus effectively reduces Gatto to an object of material interest, a product of a consumer exchange.

This point is further reinforced by the behavior of the men in the bar who call Yajaira over to them to inquire about the white, "gringo" foreigner who, they note, probably uses dollars—a preferred currency—and who looks like "gente" 'somebody' (99). They then wish a blessing upon Yajaira, "A Yajaira que se la busque bien con él" ("may Yajaira get something good out of him"; 99). Once again, Gatto falls under the local gaze, reduced to a surface spectacle and invested with the economic desires of the local people.

Once again, as occurred in "Novia", there is a mutual objectification and commodification between the characters, for after Yajaira agrees to meet him, Gatto leaves a "good tip" (" buena propina") for her, perhaps in repayment for the pleasure of the afternoon and her company, perhaps in token of future rewards for her dalliance with him. Furthermore, the place she instructs him to meet with her is a house that has a "for sale" sign outside—marking it as a territory for the marketing and selling of property,

associating their meeting and her assent as part of an economic transaction. In this way, the text connects sexuality, labor, and desire—the commodification of relationships within the contact zone.

Indeed, the reduction of the foreigner to his cash value has also been on the minds of the local men, as was pointed out earlier. While Gatto waits with anticipation in the dark of the moonless night, he suddenly feels the edge of a knife blade against his throat, and discovers he is being mugged by the same men who moments earlier had said goodbye to him "como si se tratara de un viejo amigo" ("as if to an old friend"; 101), which he had taken as another instance of the Dominican "sociability" he had come to love in his experience on the island (101). However, Gatto had fallen within their gaze as they had immediately equated his "gringo" otherness with the money they crave and so now he finds himself hanging by his collar while three men drag him toward the back of the house at knife point.

Immediately prior to this, however, the text portrays Gatto's last entrance into the liminality of the beach, a quality now increased because of the engulfing darkness: "Parecía bien entrada la noche. Una noche oscura. Pocas estrellas y nada de luna" ("The night seemed well advanced. A dark night. Few stars and absolutely no moon"; 101). In this dark space, Gatto notices the movement of the fishermen: "Los Pescadores llegaban y se iban. James pensó que le gustaría llegar con los que llegaban e irse con los que se iban" ("The fishermen came and went. James thought that he would like to arrive with those who were arriving and leave with those who were leaving"; 101). Just as earlier he was drawn to the immeasurable expanse of sea and sky, held mesmerized by the vanishing horizon which resonated with his desire for limitless possibility, so now he is

simultaneously attracted to both types of contrary movement, seeking both arrival and departure—a reflection of the restlessness of the drifter and an indication of his growing inability to choose or commit to a single course of action.

However, even while being mugged, Gatto still explores the potentiality of the liminal for his personal reinvention, casting himself within a story and as a character of his own liking. Indeed, the initial feel of the knife blade against his throat within that setting triggers a search for models of heroism that might serve him in just such a predicament, the first being the discourse of comic books. But his memory soon reverts back to the tale of his experience as night manager, trying to save the sinking ship of *Barbanegra* that founders amidst sex tourists, prostitutes, thieves, corrupt police and its owner/captain, a "pirata sin ley" 'lawless pirate' (102), even as he tries to forget his past (102). But he is soon confronted with the memory that he is not the hero who sacrificed himself for something that wasn't even his, but rather an anti-hero who left that place without saying goodbye thanks to the mobility he enjoys (102). Thus, amidst these musings, even as he stands with knives to his throat, Gatto still manages to convert the liminal space before him into a stage for his final moment of protagonism:

> su vida de aventurero en una pintoresca isla del Caribe iba a terminar. Y, pensándolo bien, ya había vivido tanto, había sido protagonista de tanta momentánea felicidad, que bien se merecía un descanso. ¡Qué bueno que por lo menos sucedería allí, frente a ese mar! Tal vez se tomarían la molestia de tirarlo al agua para que se lo traguen rápidamente las furiosas olas y lo devoren los tiburones. Qué final tan interesante, pensó [...]. (103)

> his life as an adventurer on a picturesque Caribbean island was going to come to an end. And thinking hard about it, he had lived so much, had been the protagonist of so much momentary happiness, that he well deserved a rest. How nice that at least it was going to happen here, facing that sea! Maybe afterwards they would go to the trouble of throwing him into the water so the furious waves could suck him down and the sharks could eat him. What an interesting end, he thought [...].

In this way, Gatto experiences yet another ritualistic characteristic of liminality, for, according to Turner and Turner: "The liminal state has frequently been likened to death; to being in the womb; to invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, and the wilderness [There is a] resurgence of nature when structural power is removed [...] Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated " (249-50). Thus, the sea, which had earlier provided him with the revivifying energy to continue living in accord with whatever "existence would provide him with," comes to the fore once again, cast as a romanticized setting for the end of his existence while he stands in the dark between death and life on the beach.

In the end, however, Yahaira comes to the rescue of this would be "First World" savior, asserting her command and dominion over men. After authoritatively calling off the attackers, who turn out to be her brothers and obey her without question, Yahaira then confronts Gatto, addressing him formally, thus imposing a distance between them which had been breached in their earlier interaction: "—Y usted, mejor váyase y déjeme trabajar tranquila—dijo ella, como enojada, dejando de tutearlo" ("'And you, sir, had better go and leave me to my work in peace,' she said, as if angry, no longer addressing him

informally"; 103). But even as she drives him away she entices him by "coquettishly walking into the semi-darkeness with a sensual "meneo de nalgas" 'sway of her buttocks,' further exhibiting her command over men (103). As the narrative gaze lingers on this scene, it incorporates a song lyric as its intertext, reinforcing the link between her eroticized body and her personal power. The song, a *bachata* that has been interwoven throughout the text, offers its audience the option to either "forget me, or come back if you wish, I will wait until you understand that without my love, you're nothing" ("*Y si tú quieres me olvidas, si quieres volver también, yo esperaré hasta que entiendas, que sin mi amor tú no eres nada...*"; 106). Through this textual juxtaposition, the narrative highlights the role of Yajaira's sexual labor in securing her own agency and authority within both local and global systems of hierarchical power, effectively contesting and upsetting, in a manner similar to what Stephen Gregory has observed, the "heteronormative structures of power and meaning" upon which these systems are predicated (157).

Thus, Arias offers no simple binary depiction of exploiter and exploited but rather the dynamics involved as local and foreign subjects engage each other, negotiating their desire, endowing spaces with meaning as they use them. Indeed, even as Gatto reduces Caribbean places to a personal setting for the rehearsal of Western scenarios of heterosexual male protagonism within the periphery, the local subjects he encounters use those same places for personal material benefit and gain, configuring his "wide-open frontier" as a predatory field of action.

To further analyze the type of negotiations that factor into the configuration of the contact zones, I adapt Michel de Certeau's conceptualization of "strategies and tactics" as

articulated in The Practice of Everyday Life. According to Certeau, at the heart of the power differentials operative within a social field is the ability of a subject to both delimit and control an autonomous place of their own. Thus, he defines a strategy as a calculation made by a "subject with will and power" who occupies a "*place* which can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats [...] can be managed" (36). A tactic, on the other hand, is "a calculated action" on the part of a subject who is not able to delimit an autonomous place of their own. Because of this, "[t]he space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it by the law of a foreign power" (Certeau 36-7). Although applying his theory to the possibility for action on the part of individuals (who are limited to tactics) within a social field constructed and controlled by institutional power (the "subject of will and power," able to deploy strategies), what one finds at play within the contact zones as portrayed by Arias, are shifting positionalities and levels of power possessed by individual actors at any given moment in the course of encounter, even while overarching levels of inequality and power are in force.[22] Let us then briefly consider this contestatory model of the contact zone as applied to the encounters portrayed within the texts.

Perhaps this is most easily illustrated by considering first the position of Jennifer and the other sex workers from "Novia del Atlántico," who, in the end, exemplify the use of tactics due not only to their economic but also their literal geographical positioning.

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[22] My adaptation here of Certeau's theoretical construct is in keeping, at least in part, with his own reconfiguration of it both later in The Practice of Everyday Life (131-53) and in "Montaigne's," where his "subject of will and power" is no longer identified with institutions, but rather with the individual. To be sure, even though in these latter two cases the individuals in question are Western subjects and thus equated with the possession of a privileged level of power within the fields in which they move, as my argument shows, no matter how "overdetermined" their socio-economic positionality, the local actors represented in the stories still possess a sufficient level of power to exercise agency and not only contest hierarchical systems but, indeed, to actually enjoy "victory"—however ephemeral—over their foreign Others.

Indeed, their economic condition and early formation have steered them toward prostitution, and in as much as they, as the text puts it, are "allowed," to work at foreigner John Finch's hotel, they, in fact, work within a terrain configured and ruled "by the law of a foreign power" and must utilize the bar, the lobby, the dance floor and the Jacuzzi as places to "maneuver 'within the enemy's field of vision' [...] and within enemy territory" (Certeau 37). Here they perform male desire, employing tactics of seduction and manipulation to their own advantage. This is a direct result of their relative immobility compared with their foreign Other. Indeed, the mobility they do possess is one "that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment" (Certeau 37).[23] However, although these women move in the space of their Other, at the same time they possess an autonomous space from which to "delimit an exteriority"—i.e. their own bodies, from which they exercise the power of their own gaze, and the knowledge they possess cultivated within local territories. And so, it is through her astuteness, skill and, importantly, the strategic power of her gaze that Jennifer exercises mastery over James's will, gradually seducing him. At least for a brief time and sufficient for her immediate desires, Jennifer, who "conoce al dedillo todas las mañas y peligros aprendidas durante su temprano aprendizaje callejero" (knows by heart all the craftiness and dangers learned during her early apprenticeship in the streets"; Arias "Novia"125), ends up controlling the would-be controller.

This illustrates what Certeau identifies as a crucial "effect" of possessing a place of one's own—the "mastery of places through sight [...] proceeding from a place whence

[23] This, it will be remembered, was also seen in "Hotel Radiante" in which the female protagonist's failure was portrayed as her failure to effectively seize the opportunity for flight from the island that the Italian Lucas represented to her. See above, p. 12.

the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and "include" them in its scope of vision" (36). As has been seen throughout these texts, central to the exercise of power is the possession of precisely this type of sight through which both Gatto and the local actors with whom he comes into contact execute a series of operations as they, upon detecting each other, reduce one another to a surface spectacle, invest one another with their desire, and thus effectively objectify each other. Thus, just as Gatto dissects space, delimiting the field of action for his heroic protagonism to then mystify it with his desire, so too do the women with whom he comes into contact.

All of the above elements come into play in Yajaira as well, the "dueña de la finquita," whose laboring body serves an exploitative family while simultaneously granting her agency and a degree of authority within patriarchal systems. She, of all the women with whom Gatto interacts, possesses the greatest level of agency, being free to move within her own territory, which serves as a "base" from which she can manage relationships with Others. Like Jennifer and the other women, Yajaira must seize quickly on opportunities as they present themselves and, while also relatively immobile, she exhibits the ability to exercise a bit more of strategy within her territory. Thus, when she first sees Gatto on the beach, she calculates his movements based on her knowledge of the local terrain, "letting him go," knowing that he has only one way to come back—by the *disco-terraza* where she works. It is unclear if she is complicit with her brothers in setting Gatto up for a mugging, or if they, also residents of the architecture of "poverty and chaos," seize on the opportunity with which they have been presented.

In the stories under consideration, Gatto, of course, would be most readily identified as the "subject with will and power" owing to his origin, his privileged racial and cultural capital and his greater wealth and mobility. However, even though he delimits, dissects and mystifies Caribbean space as if it were his possession and the colonial "playground" that historic practice and the *Euromale* imaginary have construed it to be, he does not, in fact, own it and actually ends up misreading it to be outmaneuvered and manipulated by local actors. Thus, his gradual progression into liminality during his "existential tour" through the island entails a corresponding decentering such that he misreads local design and desire, and is thus trumped by local knowledges, tactics, and strategies.

Such is the experience of the privileged traveler James Gatto as he confronts local power. The narration describes him as a "giramundo" (91)—a word commonly translated as "globetrotter." However, interpreted within the context of the global flows of money and bodies which trace their origin to the colonial relations established at the outset of modernity and whose logic they continue to perpetuate, the term "giramundo" could very well be taken in a more literal fashion as "one who spins the world" or "causes the world to spin." Indeed, it is precisely out of the socio-economic and relational dynamics set in motion by travelers like Gatto in their encounters with the local, that Arias weaves her portraits of present day sex tourism in the Dominican Republic, showing how that 'tropical paradise' is a site of negotiation and struggle where bodies are shaped and reshaped as they spin in a dialectic of mutual desire, power and agency.

This chapter began by referencing Arias' story "¡Oh, Bavaria!" drawing attention to the fact that, even as it identifies its place of enunciation as a periphery of the West ("the end of the world"), it enters into a dialogic relationship with the metonymic representative of the Western traveler to the island, *Bavaria*, who serves as the text's interlocutor before whom and to whom the narrative voice seeks to tell its tale. These same devices have been employed in the works studied in this chapter as Arias continues to construct a dialogical discourse generated by the contact and relationships between foreign males and local females within the context of commodified [hetero]sexual encounter. In "Hotel Radiante" the narrative voice addresses itself directly to the mobile and ephemeral Lucas and his friends as it seeks to come to terms with their volatile presence and its impact on the lives of the women whom they encounter. In the case of "Novia del Atlántico" and "Bachata," the emphasis is on a deeper, more thorough exploration of the individual *Euromale* as represented by the metonymic James Gatto. Taken together, these stories discursively portray the impact sex tourism has on the production of social experience and space within the Dominican Republic as both foreign and local subjects negotiate their desires.

I also pointed to the fact that Arias correlates travel to the island to the logic of invasion, suggesting that the trope of the phantasmagoric Viking ship serves as a contextualizing device to interpret current experience, placing travel to the island and its local impact within an historical continuum, correlating it to dynamics set in motion some 500 years ago by Columbus and those that came after him. Indeed, the effect of early travelers to the region are further described by Fernando Ortiz, whose depiction, even

though specifically pertaining to Cuba, could easily apply to the present day male travelers described in these stories:

> There was no more important human factor in the evolution of Cuba than these continuous, radical, contrasting geographic transmigrations, economic and social, of the first settlers, this perennial transitory nature of their objectives, and their unstable life in the land in which they were living, in perpetual disharmony with the society from which they drew their living. Men, economies, cultures, ambitions were all foreigners here, provisional, changing, "birds of passage" over the country, at its cost, against its wishes, and without its approval. (101)

In a similar fashion, the men depicted in these texts engage their periphery according to the residue of colonial practice inscribed within *Euromale* consciousness, treating island space as possession and a "wide-open frontier" for their own indulgence and recreation, utilizing it either as a paradise of "cueros baratos" and "carne caliente" or an existential theater for personal reinvention. Yet, in the face of those who mystify island space with exoticizing discourses, finding in it a quintessential anti-structural location for the projection of the conquering *Euromale* ego unleashed—an almost-perfect liminality to correlate with the vanishing horizons that draw them onward as they drift from island to island in search of "la vida verdadera"—these narratives read as a dialogic continuation of the contestatory discourse begun in "¡Oh, Bavaria!", whose narrative voice affirms its own truth, pointing to the contrasting difference between two cultures in contact: "Te juro, Bavaria, que es cierto todo cuanto acontece, que ésta es la verdadera verdad, y la verdad menos verdadera, aunque sí menos real, está en cualquier otra parte"

("I swear to you, Bavaria, that everything that is happening is true, that this is the true truth, and the less true truth, although, indeed, less real, is anywhere else"; Puerto Rico 132). Thus, the text argues not only its veracity, but also that the spaces it describes and what transpires there constitute "true truth" in contradistinction to the lesser truth which lies elsewhere—including the very lands from which the Other originates. Furthermore, as it raises itself one last time to address those that have made of the island a stage for their transient protagonism, the narrative voice signals to its Other the true nature of "real life" within island space: "Y, una vez hayas pisado los escenarios de esta isla, de estos huesos blandiendo como bandera un corazón marino abierto de par en par, la lógica será un animal dañino e inatrapable, y no te quedará más remedio que borrar todo lo hecho y dicho más allá de tu ayer" ("And, once you have trod the stages of this island, of these bones which brandish, like a flag, a marine heart that has been split wide open, the logic will be a harmful animal that can't be trapped, and you'll have no choice but to erase all that has been said and done beyond your yesterday"; 132).

The logic or "true truth," of course, are the phenomena portrayed in Arias' texts—that is, the mixture of current global processes and the legacies of colonial practices that set the dialectical groundwork for present-day relationships and negotiations that occur between local and outside actors, configuring Dominican space simultaneously into a mystified paradise and a predatory field of survival. It is a logic and a practice that would maintain local women locked into subjugation at the leisure, service, and pleasure of the "uncatchable" foreign male—much like the Taino woman whose body and joyful submission are fixed in space as the necessary counterpart to the glory of the conqueror in the statue at *Parque Colón*. Indeed, given this, if you will, "harmful animal" logic at

the core of their relationship, the interlocutory Other is called on to consider not only the "yesterday" constituted by that original moment of colonial encounter he or she shares with local actors, but the empty space, the oblivion which lies "beyond" it in the irretrievable local past[24] that was erased at the point where the Taino woman was given the instruments with which to inscribe the [hi]story of the forward-pointing Western imperial project embodied in the "heroic" conquering male.

For her part, Arias, from within the crucible of contact that configures current Dominican social space and experience, also takes up the pen to inscribe the name of the Other as part of her own discursive project. Demonstrating a deep awareness of the trajectory of relations marked by coloniality operative within current processes of globalization, Arias raises a local voice to confront the interlocutory outsider. Thus, just as the local subjects depicted in her stories seize the opportunities that appear in fleeting moments of encounter, so too these narratives form part of a discursive body that captures and apprehends these travelers in the midst of their passage through the island, fixing them within the space of the page, there to interrogate and demystify them and the practices they embody.

[24] This observation is based on Peter Hulme's position that the moment of encounter between Columbus and indigenous peoples is the insuperable epistemological barrier to the indigenous past (56-7; 66-7). Also, see Certeau's discussion of the "Scriptural Economy," (Practice 131-54) in which he argues that writing in the West, at least since the 15th (133) or 16th (135) centuries, has "gradually reorganiz[ed] all the domains into which the Occidental ambition to compose its history, and thus to compose history itself, has been extended" (133). It is also both "capitalist and conquering" because of its dedication to "accumulating the past and [...] making the alterity of the universe conform to its models" (135).

Chapter 2. Cuba Part I: Performing Subjectivities of the Special Period.

In chapter one, the texts of Aurora Arias offered us a panoramic view of contemporary Dominican social experience within the global convergence point of the tourist contact zone—a dialectical space of commodified sexual encounter and negotiation which foreign and local social actors configure according to their own desires as a potential-filled liminal zone for personal [re]creation, either for recreational consumption and inner refashioning, or for the extraction of material gain and advancement. In addition, we also saw how much of the phenomena portrayed within the stories is an articulation of globalized social processes and forces reiterative of colonial practices and discourses from which Arias weaves her own dialogic contestatory discourse.

In this chapter, we consider some of the same and similar phenomena as articulated in Cuba during one of its moments of greatest crisis—the special period—through the analysis of three texts: "De un pájaro las dos alas" (2009)—a literary autoethnography by Puerto Rican writer Larry La Fountain-Stokes; "La causa que refresca," (1998) by Cuban author José Miguel Sánchez (Yoss)—a short story that takes the form of a dialogic monologue; and lastly, the short story "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" (2000) by Cuban author Angel Santiesteban. These texts, like those of Arias, are concerned with the interplay of discursive structures, social processes and conditions and the way these shape local experience, yet placing a greater emphasis on the constitution of subjects in the places where such forces converge. Specifically, I argue that these texts, responding to a fundamental tension increasingly felt at both the social and the discursive levels within Cuba, take as their central concern, each in their own way, the

constitution of particular types of Cuban subjectivities indicative of the special period. These, in turn, reflect the tension between competing socialist and capitalist social systems and their accompanying discourses—a tension that can be detected first of all at the level of official discourse.

To illustrate in a preliminary fashion the central questions this chapter seeks to answer, I briefly analyze a speech made by Fidel Castro on July 26, 1991, roughly a year and a half after declaring the "special period in times of peace." The occasion was the anniversary commemoration of the inaugural moment of the Cuban Revolution—the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953 which gave name to the revolutionary 26 of July Movement. Speaking from that very site and with Nelson Mandela (released from prison the previous year at roughly the same time as the special period was declared) in attendance, the Cuban leader announces the nation's partnership with a Spanish firm as the country opens up to and seeks to develop a tourism industry in the face of the economic crisis that beset it: "Curiously, as evidence that we are not dogmatic, today an unusual event has occurred. We have given one certificate, of the 15 we gave out, to a work center, the Sol Palmeras Hotel, [...] which we own in partnership with a Spanish company. Well, we do not have enough capital to develop tourism at the pace we want to".[1] The disclaimer with which this quote opens is a transitional rhetorical device that occurs toward the end of a speech that has firmly condemned capitalism and its contemporary neoliberal incarnation on more than one occasion, as in the following example in which it criticizes the application of free market policies to address the problems of poverty, underdevelopment, and inequality. Castro says:

[1]Castro "Castro opens."<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1991/19910726-2.html>. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes excerpted from this speech come from the source indicated here.

> Trying to solve those problems through capitalism in a world divided between immensely rich capitalist countries and a great majority of immensely poor countries—precisely as a result of capitalism, colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism—believing that neo-liberal formulas will promote a miracle for our countries' development, is an incredible illusion. It is like trying to put out a fire with gasoline.

Throughout, the text attacks capitalism in a similar fashion, creating the image of a beleaguered and valiant Cuba, alone in a drastically reconfigured geopolitical landscape, last bastion and defender of "the most just ideas in the history of mankind, the ideas of socialism, and the ideas of Marxism-Leninism." As it sets itself up in a contestatory dialogic position, it references a rather vaguely-defined antagonist associated with triumphalist capitalism: "About what are they going to speak to us? About the past? About capitalism? [...] About private property, large land holdings, corporations, imperialism, neocolonialism? [...] about the days of beggars, of prostitution, of the systematic looting of the national treasury, of cheap politicking, or of the merciless exploitation of workers and landless peasants [...]?" In this way, the speech points back to the social ills which beset the country prior to the Revolution of 26 July as a consequence of the capitalist system, a point reinforced in the following quote: "Let them not tell us stories about capitalism, the market economy, and such crazy things, which we are already familiar with and can remember."[2] Indeed, the speech pitches its rhetorical

[2] Indeed, the speech further condemns capitalism as the ultimate core of social suffering: "I asked myself: Where did injustice come from? Where did inequality, poverty, underdevelopment, and all the different calamities come from, if not from capitalism? Where did colonialism come from, if not from capitalism, neocolonialism, and imperialism?"

battle precisely in terms of the historical dialectic of the different stages of capitalism and their contestation as experienced on the island. Thus, as it points to the conditions of inequality dominant prior to the Revolution, it highlights the types of subjectivities produced under capitalism—beggars, landless peasants, maids, prostitutes, etc—and ultimately cites one of the oldest subjects and, perhaps, the one that symbolically subsumes all the others: the slave.[3]

Early in the speech Castro, having acknowledged the presence of Nelson Mandela, links both apartheid and slavery as expressions of "the essence of capitalism [and] of colonialism," and then further links the Cuban people and slavery, asserting that at one point in the nineteenth century over 300,000 were enslaved on the island. This connection is one that the text then exploits throughout the speech, adducing not only the current, collective performance by all members of revolutionary society of work once done by slaves, but also the multiple achievements of the Revolution—e.g. the manufacture of productive machinery, the great success of the Cuban educational system, the increase of women's participation in the formal economy—after each of which it adamantly affirms such things as "How far we slaves have gone!", "See how high we slaves have climbed!", We slaves have climbed high!" The speech thus employs this defiant equivalency of the nation's citizens and the slave to underscore how the

[3] However, one year later, Castro acknowledged the rise of prostitution that accompanied the growth of the tourism industry, although he attempts to assert its coincidental nature by pointing to its illegality and it's "voluntary" nature: "We had to accept tourism as an economic need, but we said that it will be tourism free of drugs, free of brothels, free of prostitution, free of gambling. There is no cleaner, purer tourism than Cuba's tourism, because there is really no drug trafficking, no gambling houses. There are hookers, but prostitution is not allowed in our country. There are no women forced to sell themselves to a man, to a foreigner, to a tourist. Those who do so do it on their own, voluntarily, and without any need for it. We can say that they are highly educated hookers and quite healthy, because we are the country with the lowest number of AIDS cases. There are nearby countries which have tens of thousands of AIDS cases. Therefore, there is truly no tourism healthier than Cuba's." Castro "Castro Speaks." <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1992/19920712.html>

revolutionary Cuban subject, formerly "enslaved" under capitalism, has overcome the former limitations imposed on him/her.

Yet, even in its repeated and insistent invocation of this modernized, transformed Cuban "slave," one senses that this ostensibly overcome subjectivity may once again constitute a threatening possibility. Witness the following quote: "Who wants to return to the time of the slaves' barracks? With what will they force us to return? Perhaps with a threat to starve us, an increased blockade, the imperialist arrogance [...] after the disasters in Eastern Europe?" Thus, even as Castro signals the collapse of some of Cuba's primary trading partners, he also points to the very real threat and pressure exerted on Cuba by some capitalist nations, primarily the U.S.[4] He then continues his defiant and determined rhetoric: "We will manage. Somehow, we will manage [...] But we will not return to the slaves' barracks."

Is slavery perceived as a real threat? Or, is its utterance a hyperbolic rhetorical gesture designed to underscore how far the people have come in their historical experience and, thus, garner support for the regime and its ideological and political commitments? What exactly are those commitments? Is it coincidental that the slave is invoked so frequently at the precise moment the nation is opening itself up to capitalism, and, that, through the development of tourism—with the very nations which occupy that geopolitical and economic grouping that the speech itself has gone to great pains to identify as the source of colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism and historical and

[4] The traditional hostility of the U.S. government toward Cuba, as evidenced by the trade embargo, took an even harsher turn in the fall of 1992 with the passage of the Torricelli Act and in 1996 with the Helms-Burton Act, both of which imposed severe sanctions and restrictions designed to isolate Cuba and "visit upon the Cuban population unrelieved punishment, to make daily life in Cuba as difficult and grim as possible, to increase human suffering in measured but sustained increments, at every turn, at every opportunity, at a time when Cubans were already reeling from scarcities in goods and the disruptions of services in the wake of the Soviet collapse" (Pérez, 314). For more detailed information on the contents and impact of each of these acts, see Pérez, 299-301 and Gott 301-06.

potentially current enslavement? Is the fact that the text pitches its relational positioning in terms of the slave—in solidarity with the world's "oppressed and exploited"—over and against "the exploiters, conquerors, colonizers, and looters" identified with the capitalist "West," a case of duplicitous and obfuscatory political speech or an admission and indication of an underlying anxiety about a vital slippage: not only of revolutionary discourse's binding address, but also of the revolutionary subjectivity that that discourse has sought to produce? What exactly does making accommodations to allow for free market-like reforms, however "cautiously," imply for the island's subjects? Amalia L. Cabezas points out the nature of the reforms that the Cuban government made:

> the state-party apparatus implemented wide-reaching reform measures such as decentralization, the opening of all sectors of the economy (except education and health) to external influences through foreign investments and joint ventures, and other market-oriented policies, which contradicted or reversed some of the government's most egalitarian socialist-based principles. The Cuban reforms appeared to be based on principles very close to those of neoliberal economic strategies and had all the features of structural adjustment programs, except that they were internally generated and not prescribed by the IMF. (60-1)

Is Cuban society of the special period thus faced, unlike its post-Soviet European counterparts, not with the "spectres of Marx," but rather the *revenant* of capitalism—in particular, the resurgence of a type of colonial discourse, power differential, and attendant relational positioning between the island and the wealthier capitalist nations of

the world which may be reduced to the Master/Slave dialectic retooled for the late twentieth-century tourism industry?

The texts analyzed in this chapter grapple with precisely these questions as they deal with the issues and processes attendant upon the constitution of subjects within the particular social spaces that I have designated, borrowing from Pratt, as tourist contact zones—spaces marked by their own specific local, material, and social contingencies as well as serving as loci for temporally bound dialogic social practices which respond to and articulate multiple discourses and processes that converge there both from within and without national boundaries. That is, this chapter sets out to answer in a particularized and specifically contextualized way, the following set of questions asked by Michel Foucault regarding the social constitution of subjects through discourse in his essay "What is an author?": "[U]nder what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse?" (1635-6). This chapter is concerned precisely with the conditions and forms by which subjects appear, disappear, and transmute in an order of particular competing discourses as these converge in specific, materially embedded social spaces. Moreover, it argues that part of the discursive work being carried out in the texts herein studied consists of registering the [dis]articulation of subjectivities as it takes place within the specific socio-temporal order of the Cuban special period.

As will be seen in what follows, these texts have a certain theatrical quality about them, which will be underscored by bringing to the fore Diana Taylor's terms related to the performance of contemporary social dramas enacted within the contact zone—e.g.

"enactment," and "(re)staging" of various "scenarios of encounter" and the "repertoires" of repeated "embodied/bodily acts" by which social actors constitute themselves and activate the particular scenario variant in which they engage.

Complementing Taylor's theoretical apparatus, the analysis which follows will also employ Judith Butler's conceptions of "performativity" and the constitution of subjects through discourse and social performance. Similar to Taylor's description of the "scenario," Butler, speaking of the way in which gender as a subject category is constructed, points to the restaged quality of a social act that has already been scripted prior to the actor/subject assuming its role/subject position: "Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives" ("Performative Acts" 526). In a similar fashion, both local and foreign social actors, or subjects, enact the scenario of sexualized encounter within the Cuban contact zone according to a seemingly pre-existing set of possibilities. Indeed, I take Butler's "stylized repetition of acts," by which subjects are constituted in discourse and which serve as the occasion for "meaning" and, therefore, agency (Butler "Performative Acts" 519-21), as the functional equivalent of Taylor's repertoire of embodied acts—those performative acts of bodily memory and knowledge learned through repetition, specific to the scenario at hand, and called upon for its successful execution (Taylor Archive and Repertoire 19-20). These texts chronicle, through their textual representations, the experience of Cubans and visitors to the island as they interact according to various subject positions available to them as embedded in

competing discursive structures.[5] Indeed, each text seems to point to a script—a set of normative roles—of "stylized bodily acts," if you will—that have been produced within the contact zone based on the relation and contact between particular stylized bodies. In other words, within the Cuban contact zone of the special period, discourses, practices, and processes converge; within this context certain "stylized bodily acts" are performed repeatedly such that they form a repertoire with which to enact the general script of the scenario of sexualized encounter.

The texts by La Fountain-Stokes, Sánchez, and Santiesteban further suggest that these bodies in encounter can be understood, according to Butler's summary of the phenomenological perspective on the topic of Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities" (521). That is, as the bodies that encounter one another in the contact zone come to take their places as subjects, they do so "by taking up and rendering specific [...] a set of historical possibilities" (521)—possibilities which will become apparent in the analysis which follows.

In 1998 Larry La Fountain-Stokes participated in a Latin American theater conference hosted by La Casa de las Américas. Arriving with an open mind and a desire to experience directly a country whose ideals he had admired, the disappointing

[5] One crucial difference between Butler's theorization and my adaptation of it is that whereas she is very much concerned with destabilizing the apparently "abiding" essentialist identitarian category of gender by showing how it is a temporally bound enactment of pre-existing discursive norms, I am dealing with a relationship and the assumption of relational positions generated through a mutually recognized temporary encounter inherent in tourism's mobility. Therefore, although there seem to be a type of pre-existing norms for sexualized encounter, I am not arguing that these authors propose the *jinetero/a* as a fixed, essentialist category such as the "gender" which Butler seeks to decenter. Indeed, part of special period subjectivity, and of *jineterismo* itself, is that it is more of a bricolage-type fashioning with sexual commodification being only one avenue among many others through which one looks to hustle and "make a buck". Amalia L. Cabezas maintains that one of the difficulties she faced from a theoretical standpoint was the fact that, based on what she observed in her field work, the role of the *jinetero/a* did not seem to coalesce into a stable subject category—sex work was rather just one option among the many tasks undertaken by women as they sought to earn money (Economies of Desire 8-9).

experience he had while there would trigger the writing of the piece "De un pájaro las dos alas," which evokes the nineteenth-century poem "A Cuba" by Dolores (Lola) Rodríguez de Tió, the poet who also penned the Puerto Rican national anthem, "La Borinqueña." The text is a generically indeterminate work that La Fountain-Stokes's classifies as "a fictionalized, experimental narrative or autoethnography based on my travel experiences as a gay Puerto Rican theater critic and former graduate student" (La Fountain-Stokes, "De un pájaro las dos alas," 2008 [2002] 211).[6] Indeed, the element of self-construction denoted in the term "*auto*ethnography" becomes a major discursive component as the author produces a piece of writing that simultaneously constructs a personal vision of the contemporary state of the Cuban nation at the same time that it represents his negotiation of the multiple subject positions he both assumes and into which he is cast by the local population—e.g. "as a white, foreign, well-off, gay tourist" ("Postdata" 228, n 19).

While restaging, in its most rudimentary sense, the scenario of encounter between the outside traveler and the local population, the roles played by the narrator/protagonist represented within the text are more complex than those performed by, for example, a "straightforward" *Euromale* character such as James Gatto. Here, what is foregrounded is the protagonist's multivalent subjectivity as an economic, ideological, and desiring subject who is also gendered, sexualized, and racialized and who must navigate the waters of a population in the throes of material desperation, the latter condition ultimately

[6] Throughout this chapter, I draw on two versions of this text. From the first, published in Glave, Thomas, ed. *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles*, I limit myself to citing selections from the appropriately entitled last section "Posdata: Metatextual Wings of a Dove," which continues the author's reflections on his experience in Cuba in 1998 and offers an explanation of the genesis and content of "de un pájaro" and his aims in writing it. From this point on, I will refer to any material cited from this text simply as "Postdata." The second version of the text, published in the author's bilingual collection *Uñas pintadas de azul/Blue Fingernails* (Tempe: Bilingual P/Editorial Bilingüe, 2009 150-175) will serve as the main source text for my analysis. All citations in English and Spanish will come from these texts, unless otherwise noted.

reducing human relationships to the laws of economic exchange—the ideals and goals of the Revolution left behind in the search for daily survival. What is produced, then, is an ambivalent text that reflects a subject who is simultaneously pulled by a liberatory historical discourse of pan-Caribbean solidarity and the experience of becoming reduced to a victim in a field of economic predation.

Thus, while offering itself up to a multiplicity of meanings, "De un pájaro las dos alas" serves extremely well , on the one hand, to show the reader the conditions of the Cuban "special period" from the perspective of a restless multiply-identified subject. Thus, the first half of my analysis will focus on the way in which the text reconstructs, from a bird's eye view, if you will, the social space of Havana and the local circumstances and experiences of subjects there, while highlighting the narrator's own experience that brought him to question both his preconceived ideas and idealism regarding the Cuban revolution.

On the other hand, La Fountain-Stokes's "nightmare" experience in the Cuban contact zone, which he is glad to leave behind, produces a discursive crisis involving the articulation, or, as Judith Butler would term it, the "resignification" of subjectivity. Indeed, inscribed by a multiplicity of discourses, the text, like the subject(s) that write(s) it, illustrates the difficult attempt to perform or "bring into being that which it names,"—in this case, a fully constituted pan-Caribbean identity, understood as attached to united, yet free and independent, geographically situated entities. In the second part of my analysis, therefore, I focus on the discursive work being carried out by La Fountain-Stokes's text, arguing that it can be read as a palimpsest of the poem from which it derives its name, rewriting the latter's representation of the ideals inscribed in the Cuban

nation as well as its liberatory dream and aspiration for solidarity between Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Narrated in the second person singular, early on the text sets the tone for its representation of the decaying Havana of the special period, foreshadowing both the quality of the physical and social space through which the narrator will move as well as his ambivalent experiences there. Describing the oldest part of the city, he states: "Old Havana, of walls consumed by termites that no poison will kill" (151). Placed in the opening paragraph, this multifaceted metaphor sets up the narrative, pointing forward to multiple manifestations of physical and social corruption even as it chronicles their processual causes. At the most direct level, the passage refers to the decaying state of the urban built environment such as noted in a street "pockmarked with holes that looks [...] like Beirut," and the "filthy bay contaminated by the petroleum waste and debris from a thousand ships" that the narrator encounters in a municipality of Havana (163). The material decline he witnesses also extends to the dwellings of the families with whom he treats as is portrayed in the description of the living space and conditions of one of his contacts during his stay there: "Abraham shows you the way, and when you arrive you have to go up hundreds of steps without light, wander through the darkness of a wolf's mouth to reach the small apartment where the black-and-white television proclaims the wonders of the revolution [...] You greet his family and burst into sweat while they bring you a glass of water that might not have been boiled" (153). As it ironically juxtaposes the state's triumphal official discourse with metaphors of a threatening darkness and labyrinthine space—while hinting at possible contamination from unclean water—the narrative sets the stage for his movements and his experiences within Havana, pointing to

the heightened level of risk with which not only he, but also the Cuban citizenry of the special period have to contend daily.

Indeed, the personal risk he feels is heightened by several other factors that contribute to his feeling of insecurity, which, in turn, correlates to his sense of fear and limitation before phenomena beyond his control. Indeed, this is reinforced by another multivalent metaphor—the central one of the text—which is also introduced early on and which signals the inception of the narrative's autoethnographic function. Here, the narrator begins to construct himself as the protagonist referred to in the title: "You are the two wings of a dove—de un pájaro las dos alas—but you cannot fly; the celestial clockwork does not allow it" ("De un pájaro"153).

Coming immediately before the aforementioned limiting factors attached to the decayed state of Havana, this metaphor announces his impeded ability for liberty and freedom of movement. Instead, he is besieged from the outset by a series of limitations which contribute to his "ordeal" (153): The travail of travel—the risk of illegal movement which he has undertaken to avoid the US-imposed embargo (151); the surveillance of the airports and the technological fruit of "la modernidad"—X-rays and dogs—deployed by state apparatuses, "lest you were bringing along a mortal plague" (151); the harassment upon leaving the airport by two youthful-looking officers carrying "state-issued guns" (153); and finally the warning of one of his acquaintances of the possibility of crime (153). Indeed, these factors, together with those already enumerated above, are but the first in a series of events and experiences which will leave him extremely ambivalent about his stay there and will produce a growing state of malaise in which, from his earliest moments in Havana he comments, "fear and paranoia assail you"

(153). At this point the narrator also indicates the early onset of his doubts and disillusionment before the incongruence between experienced reality and the ideals he has invested in the Cuban nation. Indeed, to him, this reality does not conform to "*Nuestra América*; my America of José Martí's dreams slides down a path you didn't realize existed in these tropics" (153), once again, referring to what he has just described as well as pointing ahead to the rest of the experiences that await him on this voyage.

Most of these are mediated through his interaction with two homosexual men—Josué and Abraham[7] — each of which comes from a different social class and to whom he refers respectively as the "horizontal" and "vertical" "wings" of his "flight" through Havana. Both of these men and their local families serve as vehicles for the illustration and exploration of the social inequities that deeply marked special period Cuba as a result of the dual economy that became ever more entrenched once the US dollar was allowed into circulation and adopted as the primary currency for commercial exchange. As Esther Whitfield explains:

> [T]he dollar's superiority over the Cuban peso set a pattern for social inequalities that the revolutionary project had sought to eliminate. Salaries continued to be paid in pesos while material goods were sold in dollars, so that labor hierarchies were distorted and service work that could earn dollars (waiting tables, guiding tours, driving taxis, prostitution) was valued over specialist professions. Society's deeply ingrained work ethic became increasingly obsolete as the depenalization of the dollar propelled Cuba's primarily agricultural-industrial economy,

[7] In the "Postdata" of the 2009 editon, the author also relates these nicknames to the vertical and horizontal wings of the bird referred to in the title, itself taken from the poem "A Cuba" and which stand as metaphors for Cuba and Puerto Rico (211). We will pick up this metaphor at more length below.

once artificially sustained by the Eastern bloc, to a more service-oriented economy geared toward non-Cuban consumers" (Cuban Currency 5).

Illustrative of these dynamics, Josué and Abraham and their families allow the narrative to focus on the ironic inequities of a social system that has broken down and the effect of the dual economy. Thus, a family like Abraham's, whose parents are chemistry and biology professors, barely earn enough to maintain a family of four adults who live in a one-bedroom apartment, with Abraham's grandmother forced to sleep in the kitchen. (157-9). As the father states, "'No one can take it anymore, but if you say anything you lose your job, and at our ages, where are we going to go?'" (157). After speaking of the possibilities to escape by rafts or *balsas*, the narrative continues to contrast the dollar economy with what a citizen can obtain on the government allotted rations: "a two-liter bottle of Najita orange soda to quench your thirst costs a dollar seventy; mayonnaise -- forget about it" (159). With the *libreta*, the government-issued rationing book, they receive "seven eggs, powdered milk only up to six years of age, 5 pounds of rice and beans a month, no meat, and the toothbrush and toothpaste of a foreign friend who came for a visit were stolen by a neighborhood boy who crawled in through the window" (159)[8]. Thus, Abraham earns roughly 300 pesos a month as a professor of electronics—roughly worth fifteen dollars, as calculated by the text—an amount, as Louis Pérez has noted, that was "the black market price of four bars of soap, or a two-pound chicken, or four liters of milk" (310).

[8]As Louis Pérez Jr. observes: "The pursuit of dollars led to a rise of petty theft and pilferage, both for personal use and for use as a medium of exchange for dollars, which in turn served to exacerbate scarcities of state supplies [...] Gasoline reserves, foodstuff, and consumer goods were only some of the many items that found their way into the underground market" (311).

Juxtaposed with Abraham and his family of well-educated and highly trained professionals, one finds Josué/lateral's family whom the author identifies as belonging to a less educated working-class, yet who enjoy a better standard of living, owing to their being plugged into the dollar economy. Through their contact with foreigners "in countless businesses," they are able to enjoy "a color television and eat congrí (rice and beans) with picadillo (seasoned shredded meat) and spaghetti with hot dogs from the government dollar store." Indeed, as Richard Gott affirms, "Those with dollars—obtained chiefly through the tourist trade, the black market, and remittances from Miami—became significantly wealthier than those who had none" (292).

Even though Abraham and his family members chose to remain in their professions in spite of suffering economic hardship,[9] many did not, and Cuban society suffered from a flight from the professions to service-sector jobs, as noted in the above quote by Esther Whitfield. Giving an even more detailed depiction of exactly what labor conditions were like, Pérez affirms:

> The dollarization of the economy had other anomalous consequences. The demand for dollars resulted in something of an internal "brain drain," where professionals employed in various state enterprises and paid in *pesos* "migrated" to dollar zones, most typically to those sectors connected to tourism. It was not uncommon for a hotel bellhop to earn 10 times more than a brain surgeon, or a taxi driver to earn 20 times the salary of a

[9] As the La Fountain-Stokes notes, he assigned Abraham and his family the nick name of "vertical" to connote his and his family's more "straight-laced" approach of following the system's rules by not participating in the black market, in contrast to the "horizontal" Josué and his family who "were more openly defiant of the regime and participated fully in the informal sectors of the economy" ("Postdata 217)

> state engineer, or for a hotel waiter to earn more in two weeks then a physician earned in one year (310).

Even as the text documents the disparity between income levels and the consequent level of access to consumer goods and necessities, so, too, the flight of professionals to the informal and service economy is treated in several places. This is seen in the former chemical engineer-turned-taxi-driver mentioned at the beginning of the narrative "who had abandoned his profession, who told stories about the virtue of American dollars to anyone who had the patience to listen" (151); and, again, in Abraham's now pregnant "old schoolmate who abandoned their profession and now works as a tour guide. Engineering is worthless when the only dollar around stays in a hotel, she who doesn't hustle with her body, if she wishes to survive, she hustles with her soul" (163).[10]

It is in this context of frantic economic struggle and survival that the narrator comes to learn the dynamics of a society and economy marked by the *jineteo*—where he will come to know firsthand the meanings of the words *vividor* and *joseador*, to both of whose connotations he reduces some of his primary experiences and his interactions with local social actors.[11] Indeed, it will be they who implacably convert this special period setting into a predatory field of action, driving the exasperated narrator to exclaim at the end: "you couldn't stand the thievery any longer, the constant grubbing for money" (169).

Indeed, just as we saw in chapter one of the present study in the interactions of James Gatto and the local subjects with whom he comes into contact, the narrator in "De un pájaro las dos alas" is quickly reduced, through an inversion of the "tourist gaze" to a

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[10] The word here translated into English as "hustles" is the Spanish "jinetea," thus, underscoring the dual sense in which the word can be used, leaving the sexual exchange aspect up to the reader.

[11] *Vividor* denotes one who parasitically lives off another—i.e. "moocher" would be a close translation in English. *Joseador*(also *joceador*), would be roughly the equivalent, of the Dominican word *buscavidas* that we saw in chapter one of the present study (see chapter 1 note 13).

surface spectacle, and invested with local economic desires as Cubans associate him as an opportunity upon which they wish to seize, thus interpellating him, as the author himself points out, as "a white, foreign, well-off, gay tourist" (228 n. 19)[12]. This is clearly seen in his description of the persistent experience of beggars who assail him in different locations throughout the capital. For example, when considering the efficacy of his prayer offering to the Virgen of Regla after having visited the cathedral there, the narrator questions[13]:

> Was it she who protected you when the swarms of children grabbed you on the Malecón, or later in Old Havana? Wherever you go, you attract multitudes as if you were the Pied Piper of Hamelin, but you don't let go of a penny. You send them off, leaving nothing in their wake but the memory of a brief scare [...] Blessed be he who wanders aimlessly through Central Havana possessing the face of a gringo like yours, even if you are from the oh-so-esteemed other wing (161).

Bearing the racialized marker of whiteness, he is identified as a source of desperately needed cash. Indeed, this is seen once again, as he relates what he has heard regarding public transport and wonders if he dare risk it: "transportation around here is so bad because of the 'Special Period,' you know, that if you don't live near your job you never get there. The motorized camellos or buses the people travel in seem more like trains for

[12] As the author explains in his "Postdata": "In this type of environment [i.e. the particular sector of the gay community that he personally witnessed], all tourists are seen as potential customers, and interpersonal relationships that are not based on economic exchange are rare" (222).

[13] Regla is a municipality of Havana and a potent space of symbolic capital, from the tradition of early colonial indigenous resistance, to the anti-colonial/pro-independence speeches of Jose Martí in the 19th century, to the current Santería festivals surrounding the figure of the Virgin located there.

livestock, and you don't dare ride for fear of having your pockets emptied, looking like the foreigner you are—or at least that's what everyone says" (165).

The narrator is subject to the basic dynamic of "grubbing for money" that drives *jineterismo* not only through his contact with the general population of Havana, but also through his more personal relationships with those with whom he associates during his stay. This is especially evident in his relationship with Josué, the working class "lateral" wing who attempts several methods of extracting as much benefit as possible from their time together. For example, at several points throughout the narrative, he will attempt to seduce the narrator, serving as a go-between to procure the latter as a client for one of his neighbors, at first merely informing the narrator of "a stud near his house with a prick a foot long" (155). Later, Josué's intentions become more overt as he "tries to get you to pay his neighbor, the one with the ungodly dick, but you resist" (163). Finally, after having been asked point blank "Did you come to fuck?"(163), the narrator states in exasperation, "You explain to lateral a thousand times that you don't want to bed anyone, that that is not why you came, and finally the concept bores a hole in his Celestina-like head, although he will never cease to repeat '¡Qué buena es la carne cubana!'" (165), a further attempt to close the sale on such fine human merchandise. Thus, the author, the white traveler, is once again interpellated as a sex tourist, but as he states "[W]hen they told you about sexual tourism, you felt sick, not because of the jineteros but because of the power of dollars, and perhaps because you envy them and it bothers you that you are too shy or scared to try it" (163).

Indeed, the reduction of relationships to economic exchanges converts the capital of the nation into a predatory field ruled by a survivalist logic which pervades decisions,

physical movement, and social interaction and which the narrator underscores as he comments on his lack of desire to engage in sexual liaisons, which, upon reflection, may merely be caused by "inconveniences, like the fact that vigilante hotel doormen keep all Cubans strictly out of guest's rooms. Like a penniless child in an ice cream shop, and the treats are sharks on the prowl" (167). Even as he points out the exclusionary inequities brought about by the dual economy and the strict separation enforced between tourists and Cubans who weren't directly employed in tourist-oriented establishments, the narrator quite clearly demonstrates the predatory nature of the place within which he travels and moves, marking this space as one of thwarted desire.

Indeed the *jineteo*—"grubbing for money"—seems to be an inescapable logic that will also pervade the male homosexual circles to which the narrator is introduced through his acquaintance with Josué, who, even as he continues to seek to extract benefits from the narrator throughout the latter's stay in Havana, describes the very same special period praxis in which he himself engages: "Josué starts to tell you of the guys who have made him a woman and complains in a sad tone how expensive they've become. 'I met him when he was nobody; he didn't have those clothes or gold chains, and he slept with me for ten dollars that I had gotten from a Spaniard. Now they all ask you for something: a shirt, a pair of trousers'" (167). The reader will note that Josué's complaint is not so much about the fact that relationships and intimacy are based on some sort of material exchange, but that the cost has increased from the time when he was able to exchange the dollar value of his own sexual labor in an even trade. Moreover, the very practice of which he complains is part of his own survivalist repertoire as we see when, in light of the narrator's rapidly approaching departure, he asks him for the shirt that he had seen

him wear the previous day, having the added cheek to actually ask him if it was a designer brand. On the night in question, he also had sought to convince the narrator to try to pass as a Cuban, and thus, save money—a calculation at whose motive the narrator guesses: "he well knows that the more you save, the more you can spend on him; or perhaps it is yet another ruse. You even start to suspect that there is a certain tenderness, even while everything is so marked by the commercial exchange" (170-1). After having thus identified the ruling logic of his social interactions, the narrator offers one further example:

> You meet another friend, Chino, who asks you to buy him a drink, and you offer him a beer, but he wants a bottle of rum—it'll last longer and it's only two dollars more—but you say no out of principle, although you actually don't have that much money left anyway. 'Why did you go out with so little money?' Chino asks, and you tell him your trip's over and you'll be leaving tomorrow, and you have to give twenty to Fidel if you want to get out. So he halfheartedly dances with you in a sexy but distant way. It's pretty late, and the chances of netting bigger fish are slim. (171)

And so it is that the narrator finds himself, through his relationship with Josué, in close contact with the world of homosexual sex tourism, where: "affective and sexual relationships with other men were predominantly based on economic exchange" ("Postdata" 218)—an extension of the general hustling through contact with their foreign others in which his family members engaged much to their material benefit, as discussed above ("Postdata" 218). Indeed, the general mooching which characterizes their relationship will continue beyond the time the narrator spent there, for a few weeks later,

Josué will write him and the narrator will end up sending him "vitamins and film magazines and new socks and T-shirts with a traveling acquaintance" (171)—similar to the types of remittances about which the *Barba Negra* girls boasted as we see in Arias' short stories.

And so it is within this predatory context in which he felt taken advantage of that the narrator feels "profoundly ambivalent" about his experience ("Postdata" 223). Compounding his personal discomfort is the fact that, he, as an ideological "leftist," had held such high hopes and expectations, but found instead, through his experiences, evidence of the failure of the Cuban revolution. As he explains: "'De un pájaro las dos alas' reflects my disillusionment with a revolution that I had held up as a model of social development, in spite of its notorious persecution of homosexuals" ("Postdata" 214-5). And so the author chronicles his experience of a world upside down, ravaged by a base material desperation in which inequities proliferate as the ideals and goals of the revolution are gutted and hollowed out in daily practice.

It is in response to the reality of the special period that the Cuban-born writer and intellectual to whom "De un pájaro las dos alas" is dedicated, José Quioroga, also composes his book-length essay Cuban Palimpsests. He too notes a type of "money grubbing" that characterized the Cuba of the special period in which identifiably Cuban items were sold off by those in need. Some of these objects came to his attention as he saw them collected in a Cuban restaurant in Madrid, where they were regathered to promote the establishment's "authenticity." Thus, he describes his fascination with the disassembling and reconstruction of Cuba as a consequence of the needs that beset Cuban society across the board in the 1990s in the midst of the national crisis:

> The yin-yang quality of these parallel dynamics fascinated me. There was the reproduction of Cuba and at the same time its ongoing dismantling. The two situations are complementary. The restaurant in Madrid was living off furniture and objects taken out of Cuba during the 1990s by Cubans who needed to get access to hard currency. But, at the same time, the revolution was heavily investing in selling itself as a franchise. There are many places in the world called La Bodeguita del Medio, for example, using a trademark adopted by a semigovernmental agency that exports ambience, recipes, and rum, but also cooks, bartenders, managers, and sometimes waiters. It is sort of a Hard Rock Café, though here the symbolic capital treads a fine line between revolutionary panache and the merchandising of fun and sun. For every restaurant that reproduced Cuba from Havana there was someplace else where pieces of Cuba were being sold off by anybody who needed to make some hard currency—which was everybody in Cuba during the 1990s.[14] (Cuban Palimpsests x)

Thus across all sectors of the society, a strict socialist ethic slowly gave way to increasingly liberalized practices, where the law of capitalist consumerism became a major driving force in shaping society and human experience.

In a similar fashion, the discursive work in which La Fountain-Stokes engages in "De un pájaro las dos alas" chronicles the utopian dreams of the revolution in the process

[14] This "selling off" of Cuba was also a phenomenon that happened internally as reflected in the following observations of Louis Pérez Jr.: "A plumber, electrician, or carpenter, often with tools and materials pilfered from the workplace, was in a highly advantageous position to sell goods and services in a market where public demand was years in backlog of state service schedules. Sources at foreign companies engaged in hotel construction, for example, often reported the theft of building materials of all types, including toilets, tiles, cement, and electrical fixtures. Producers, distributors, and retailers routinely diverted goods for private profit" (311).

of being dismantled and reveals the type of society which takes its place as seen from the particular social spaces he traversed and experienced during his travel there. Indeed, it is my contention that "De un pájaro las dos alas" can be read itself as a palimpsest of the poem from which it draws its title, "A Cuba" by Rodriguez de Tió, exemplifying Quiroga's definition: "The palimpsest does not reproduce the original, but it dismantles it, writes on top of it, allows it to be seen. It is a queer form of reproduction, one where two texts, two sites, two lives, blend into one continuous present" (ix). In the course of its own palimpsest-like discursive work, "De un pájaro las dos alas" dismantles not only Rodriguez de Tió's poem's ideological content but also the idyllic version of the Cuban landscape contained therein, overwriting both of these elements with their current configuration some one hundred years later, highlighting the implications of such reconfigurations on the subjectivities of those who dwell in and pass through such spaces.

In his "Postdata," La Fountain-Stokes goes to some length to explain the significance of the poem for him, contextualizing its historical meaning, and pointing out the links of solidarity between the islands. As he affirms, the poem, originally written in the 1890s during Rodriguez de Tió's exile in Cuba from her native Puerto Rico, arises out of her aspirations toward pan-Caribbean unity against Spain. Even as it extols the beauty and attributes of Cuba, the poem underscores the poet's ideals for solidarity between the two islands, fomenting the dreams she held for the eventual liberation and independence from their colonial yoke ("Postdata," 216, 228-9, n 20). This is the entire poem:

¡Vuestros dioses tutelares
Han de ser también los míos!
Vuestras palmas, vuestros ríos
repetirán mis cantares...
Culto rindo a estos hogares
Donde ni estorba ni aterra

El duro brazo que cierra
Del hombre los horizontes...
¡Yo cantaré en estos montes
Como cantaba en mi tierra!
Cuba y Puerto Rico son
De un pájaro las dos alas,
Reciben flores y balas
Sobre el mismo corazón...
¡Qué mucho si en la ilusión
Que mil tintes arrebola,
Sueña la musa de Lola
Con ferviente fantasía,
De esta tierra y la mía:
Hacer una patria sola!
Le basta al ave una rama
Para formar blando lecho:
Bajo su rústico techo
¡Es dichosa porque ama!
Todo el que en amor se inflama
Calma en breve su hondo anhelo:
Y yo plegando mi vuelo,
Como el ave en la enramada,
Canto feliz, Cuba amada,
¡Tu mar, tu campo y tu cielo![15]

On the one hand, the central metaphor of the poem, "un pájaro" 'a bird,' represents the poet herself who has found in Cuba a refuge from persecution, while on the other, it represents the pan-Caribbean unity and liberty of which she sings. For his part, La Fountain-Stokes appropriates the metaphor of "de un pájaro las dos alas" and, in a similar fashion, links it both to his own identity and to the same ideals of solidarity between the two islands. And yet, there is a central difference, as stated early on in this "experimental

[15] Rodríguez, *patriagrande.net*. Line number indications added. "Your tutelar gods / shall also be mine! / Your palms / Your rivers / Will repeat my songs... / I render homage to these homes / Where the hard arm that closes off / Horizons from man / Neither hinders nor terrifies... / I shall sing in these mountains / like I sang in my land! / Cuba and Puerto Rico are / The two wings of a bird, / They receive flowers and bullets / Over the same heart... / What matter if in her hopes / Reddened by a thousand hues, / Lola's muse dreams / With fervent fantasy, / To make one fatherland / From this land and mine! / The bird needs only one branch / to form a tender bed: / Under its rustic roof / It is happy because it loves! / All that in love is set aflame / Quickly calms its deep yearning: / And I, staying my flight / Like the bird in the bower, / Sing happily, beloved Cuba, / Of your sea, your countryside, and your sky!"

autoethnography": "You are the two wings of a dove—de un pájaro las dos alas—but you cannot fly" (153), immediately pointing to the dissimilarities and dissonances between two realities situated one hundred years apart in which the triumphalist confidence articulated in the nineteenth century is overwritten by a new sense of anxiety in the late twentieth. Thus, he constructs his palimpsest, writing himself, his starkly contrasting experience, and the contemporary Cuban urban topography over that portrayed by Rodríguez de Tió. Instead of the majestic palms, rivers and hillsides, we have the filth-strewn bay of Regla and the pock-marked streets of Havana, riddled by an unstoppable decay (i.e. the "termites that no poison will kill" (151)). Instead of one who can find refuge in their flight of exile upon a soft branch from which to sing happily and brightly, we are confronted with the weary, frazzled, and frightened traveler who is harassed by those who, instead of receiving him as an ally, prey upon him for their own profit, thus configuring Cuba as an adversarial space to be negotiated rather than a welcoming refuge—a space from which he will gladly leave, likening his stay there to "torture" and after which he doesn't plan to return "for a good while" (175). Indeed, as the author states in his "Post-data": "I, too, live in a sort of exile, in the United States, far from Puerto Rico where I was born and raised; for me, Cuba was not a welcoming place—a *nido* or nest, as Rodríguez de Tió repeats in her poetry—but a site of grave anxiety" (223).

Thus, in answer to Rodríguez de Tió's elevated, lofty, and affirming song of hope, La Fountain-Stokes counters once again with another reconfiguration of the poem's central metaphor, offering a stark reassessment of the reality described by the poet a century earlier. As he ventures through the streets of Havana accompanied by his newly

acquired friends Josué and Abraham, he ponders the situation of the island, musing that "Cuba and Puerto Rico are the sad flip-flop sandals of a myth that rots between the fungus-infected toes of a sickly, tired foot" (159). Through this metaphor, he identifies the encapsulating logic of what he sees and according to it, overwrites the poem. Of course, to point to the mythic quality of the original metaphor is to invoke the political ideals that it contains. To speak of that myth as rotting, is to speak of its current failed state; and to locate the two islands as flip-flops is to associate them with the tourist feet which trod their soil, feet infected, perhaps, by the consumerist logic which has reduced so much of local experience to the "transaction between Cubans and damned Spanish and other European tourists who arrive with their tainted money" (155)—a phenomenon which has so deeply reconfigured life, contributing to the undermining of the Revolution of 26 July's goals, and, marking, in effect, a reversal of so many of the gains which it had achieved in such areas as education, medicine and the virtual elimination of what now had erupted precipitously within the island—prostitution. Indeed, the narrator reminds the reader of the impact of the dollar economy and the impoverishment it represented for the Cuban population immediately after employing this metaphor of the "sickly, tired foot." Should the foot belong to a local citizen without access to foreign currency, "Forget about medicine—nothing without dollars" (159).

And yet, as José Quiroga affirms, the palimpsest does not completely replace that which it seeks to overwrite. And so, even amidst his disillusionment, the author/narrator necessarily invokes that which had constituted his prior vision concerning Cuba and his corresponding idealism. Thus, he places the opening action of the piece "under the loving gaze of El Che," which he links to "an ivory tower as tall as the horizon," perhaps

pointing to the limitless extension of the liberatory dreams historically invested in the heroic martyr and the teleological millennialism of the revolution's discourse. In this, his opening passage can be seen to give specific content—from the perspective of the late twentieth century—to the opening lines of Rodríguez de Tió's poem: "¡Vuestros dioses tutelares / han de ser también los míos! 'Your tutelar gods shall also be mine!' Indeed, the Che is not the only 'god' invoked, but also Cuban patriot and nineteenth-century revolutionary José Martí—with whom Rodríguez de Tió collaborated while both of them were in exile in New York— and his own visionary project for a united Latin America against Spanish colonialism and North American aggression and imperialism outlined in *Nuestra América* 'Our America.' There is, therefore, solidarity articulated in this autoethnography even if the solidarity ultimately shown is one rooted in the shared experience of the failure of nineteenth and twentieth century liberatory ideals to fully come to fruition. These, perhaps, constitute for the narrator a central part of the "expectations [that] have never been so high" that he had entertained prior to arriving to Havana and, before the reality that he witnesses, triggered "the fall so precipitous" (161).[16]

And so we are brought once again to the metaphor of the late twentieth-century "bird" who cannot fly because of forces and power beyond its control—the "celestial clockwork" that "does not permit it," but works against it. In contrast to Rodríguez de Tió's affirmation of the utopian dynamics uniting Cuba and Puerto Rico—"Culto rindo a estos hogares / Donde ni estorba ni aterra / El duro brazo que cierra / Del hombre los horizontes..." 'I render homage to these homes / Where the hard arm that closes off /

[16] On the connection between Rodríguez de Tió and Martí, see Ortiz, Altagracia, "Historical Vignettes of Puerto Rican Women Working in New York City, 1895-1990." in Félix Padilla, ed. Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Sociology. Houston: Arte Público P 1994. 221.

Horizons from man / Neither hinders nor terrifies'—La Fountain-Stokes's work underscores precisely those forces that diminish future horizons and current hope: the decadent state of Cuban social space, the hegemony of the dollar and the consequent inequities of the dual economy, Puerto Rico's colonial status, North American neo-imperialism, Cuban dictatorship, and state-sponsored surveillance on both sides of these mutually antagonistic borders. Additionally, if, as the poem declares, 'the bird is happy because it loves (line 24),' then La Fountain-Stokes's misery is further born of a current context which reduces human affect and sexuality to consumerism.

And so, in the writing of his palimpsest, La Fountain-Stokes invokes and continues to construct a pan-Caribbean discourse, linking the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries and reclaiming the original discourse even as he shows how it has been greatly erased and obfuscated by current conditions. Like, Rodríguez de Tió, he places the narrative voice as the bridge between the two islands. Furthermore, in "De un pájaro las dos alas," that voice also serves as the filter, the individual subjectivity that functions as a convergence point for different discourses and the mechanism by which they are articulated. In this case his palimpsest reveals a multivalent subjectivity in the act of negotiating this pan-Caribbean landscape—i.e. a white, male, gay, intellectual, tourist, leftist, "well-off," Puerto Rican patriot, who considers himself an exile in the United States and feels solidarity with the Cuban people, even as he is repelled by his contact with them. In this way, a crisis is triggered, a "grave anxiety," as the subject's multivalence is brought to the fore. Indeed, the text can be argued to be a representation of the very process of subject formation brought about in and by the author/narrator's contact and relation to his Other, even though that otherness is not absolute in as much as

he and they share linguistic, historical, and cultural affinities. Thus, this text is both an *ethnography*—a representation of the Cuban people as experienced by an itinerant "outside" member of the intellectual elite of North America and Puerto Rico—and, even as the author labels it, an *auto*ethnography through which he constructs himself, a construction which, in his anti-imperial stand against the US as a Puerto Rican citizen and "exile", also includes the traces of colonial subjectivity.

The constitution of the subject in and through crisis perhaps can best be teased out by examining its occurrence at the most basic point—the subject position of the narrative voice itself. The text, as ethnography, seeks to answer the question, 'What happened?' But in an *auto*ethnography, the verb "to happen" becomes transitive, extending to include the direct object 'me'. In "De un pájaro las dos alas," however, the direct object is not articulated in the first person singular, but rather through the use of the informal form of the second person singular, "you"—e.g. "*you* are the two wings of a dove;" "Abraham shows *you* the way;" "*You* are a cultural journalist;" "*you* get a splitting headache;" "*you* felt sick" (153, 155, 161, 163 emphasis added). Therefore, the simple question of "What happened to me?" becomes "What happened, such that "I" am displaced in "my" construction through speaking only of "you"? Where am "I"? "I" am over there. Displaced. Found in "you." But, where are "you"? Who/What am "I"/are "you"/"we"? In this, the text seems to attempt to capture a decentered subject in the process of negotiating the multiple subject positions which constitute it. Are these just effects of the free play of differences; of the multiple subjectivities with which the enunciating voice self-identifies in tension with those into which he is cast in contact with the Cuban citizens whose paths he crossed in his travel through Havana? Is the text a record of the

fluid processes involved in various acts of signification, the effects of multiple converging discourses that constitute the subject? As Judith Butler explains: "As historically specific organizations of language, discourses present themselves in the plural, coexisting within temporal frames, and instituting unpredictable and inadvertent convergences from which specific modalities of discursive possibilities are engendered" (Gender Trouble 184). Indeed, "De un pájaro las dos alas" seems to articulate "specific modalities" of the "discursive possibilities" which converge in the contact zone, forming a performative text in which the subject in question is captured in the moment of negotiating different categorizations: "homosexual," "tourist," "white," "patriot," "pan-Caribbean," "leftist," "anticolonial." That is, as a gendered, sexualized, racialized, ideological and economic "being." Thus, there is no definitive fixity to the "you" through which the narrative self is constructed; it is a performative and "slippery" subject, perpetually deferred as a signifier, unwilling or unable to be at rest as it negotiates its broken flight through the Cuban contact zone.

In answer to this autoethnography of a weary and disillusioned cultural tourist and his experiences, comes another performative text written from and about the contact zone of Havana. It too deals with the constitution of subjectivities through their contact with one another in conditions of inequality, although, in this case, it highlights the continued operation of discourses and practices rooted in the original colonial scenario of encounter even as it accounts for the form that that encounter takes within contemporary material and social processes. "La causa que refresca" by Cuban author José Miguel Sánchez (Yoss) stages the moment of interpellation of an ostensibly ideologically committed female "cultural" tourist by a local *jinetero*. This narrator, a *vividor/joseador* type whose

behavior closely resembles that of Josué of "De un pájaro las dos alas," reveals that ideology plays only a part in his interlocutor's trip as she also is equally interested in satisfying her sexual desire. As Esther Whitfield points out, the text can be seen as constituting a type of strategic counter to the stereotypes of Cubans that the latter experienced in their contact with foreigners during the special period, in this case, employing the similarly stereotyped construction of the female tourist.[17] Written in the form of a monologue and also narrated in the second-person singular, this text is marked by an at times cynical undertone as the sarcastic *jinetero*—a character/narrator who has exclusive control over discourse—rehearses an inversion of hierarchies between the guilt-ridden, yet libidinous, privileged outsider and the local self. The narrative voice highlights its own agency and power, while seeking to demystify its interlocutor's desires and motives. It will be these that form the bases of the narrative's "stereotypology," which, in turn, reveals the discourses which these social actors' "stylized bodily acts," to use Butler's terminology, articulate as they come to be constituted as subjects in relation within the social temporality of the contact zone.

The text begins with the *jinetero* designating himself as the tour guide who will lead the object of his desire—the female tourist—into the world that she has travelled to find: "Bienvenida. Sí, yo siempre estoy aquí, en la entrada del aeropuerto o del hotel, esperando por ti. Veo en tu sonrisa que tú también me has reconocido a la primera ojeada" ("Welcome. Yes, I'm always here, at the entrance of the airport or the hotel, waiting for you. I see in your smile that you also have recognized me from the very first

[17] This is part of her framing of some Cuban special period stories as a nationalist literature which responds to international markets. "Their stories play to the homogenizing expectations of foreigners—that on the part of foreign editors and readers, Arturo Arango has outlined, are expectations of hypersexuality, political dissidence, and material need ("Escribir en Cuba hoy [1997], " 17)—and yet counter them with equally superficial stereotypes of tourists" (Cuban Currency, 93-4).

glance"; 91). Thus, he positions himself in a place from which to see and be seen, to be held within the tourist gaze even as he gazes back, from there to gauge his Other and work his seduction, proffering himself as her fulfillment: "Yo soy lo que soñaste todos estos años, justamente lo que buscas" 'I'm what you dreamt of all these years, exactly what you're looking for' (92). Portrayed as a permanent fixture, he is recognized by his Other; recognized according to the "authenticity" he embodies and upon which he capitalizes strategically. Thus, he begins by detailing what his body signifies according to the historical dual discourse of the Caribbean as simultaneous paradise and hell, the site of primitive pleasure and threat: "Tengo ojos mestizos y la piel mordida por el sol y el salitre, pelo indómito y músculos de trabajo [...] En mis facciones está el peligro, el delicado riesgo del robo o la enfermedad venérea, pero también la dulzura de la caña, la sincera amistad, el buen salvaje de Rousseau" (92).[18] This litany of stereotypes enumerates the primary subject positions he occupies—the roles he plays as her object of desire and upon which their relationship is predicated. Of course, these will extend to their sexual liaison in which they rehearse the racialized exoticism by which Caribbean and *Euro* subjectivities have historically been joined: "Disfruta [...] de mi cuero tostado sobre tu piel nívea [...] ¿Tú eras de las que creía que eso de la virilidad afrocaribeña era otro mito?" ("Enjoy [...] my toasted hide over your snowy skin [...] Were you one of those who thought that all of that about Afrocaribbean virility was another myth?"; 93). As he continues his description of their sexual liaison, he further portrays their experience as rooted in the consumption of the exoticized brown body. Having passed through the "escuela latina" 'Latin school' of lovemaking, her stereotypically refined and contained

[18] On this dualism within metropolitan discourses and practices, see Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean, p. 107-22.

sexuality comes to express itself in a more boisterous and "savage" manner, evidenced by her seeking to subjugate herself to him and the primitiveness that he embodies for her: "Y podrás nombrarme ipso facto dictador con plenos poderes [...] Y pedirme que contigo nunca tenga esa democracia, ni monarquía constitucional ni nada civilizado, sólo este puro salvajismo que tanto te complace. La bella y la bestia, la turista y el nativo. La primermundista y el subdesarrollado" (And you will be able to name me ipso facto a dictator with full powers [...] And ask me to never have all that democracy with you, nor constitutional monarchy, nor anything civilized, only this pure savagery that gratifies you so much. Beauty and the beast, the tourist and the native. The first world citizen and the underdeveloped one"; 93). Thus, while through their sexual liaison this string of binaries—which specify the relational positionalities of each actor—is both consummated and placed into suspension, in the end, it is her desire that dictates the terms of their temporary social pact, including the temporary inversion of hierarchical roles. Furthermore, through these binaries, the text represents the *jinetero* as the "authentically" Cuban, a category which comprehends the history of the island in relation with the "West" from the time of discovery, to the recent phenomenon of tourism, encompassing recent geopolitical categorizations into "First" and "Third" worlds.

Her desire—and his configuration—however, extend beyond the merely carnal, for her travels also have an ideological motivation demonstrated in her political practice and the revolutionary symbolic capital she has acquired: participating in student demonstrations in 1968, knowing intimately the songs of the Cuban *Nueva Trova* artists Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés, decorating her room with posters of Fidel and Rigoberta Menchú, participating in relief efforts for orphaned children of Guatemala, and

arguing back home over the true identity of Subcomandante Marcos (91-2). In other words, she has also come to the island to participate in "solidarity tourism" in which some travelers seek, as Florence E. Babb states, to "express solidarity with the revolution"—a phenomenon which arose during the 1960s and still continues today, although less frequently ("Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris," 12).[19] And thus, the narrator, perhaps predicting his interlocutor's wishes, enjoins her, "Ahora, por supuesto, Amistur" 'Now, of course, Amistur,' (91) referring to a state-run tourism office that "organizes international solidarity group travel to various sites of historical importance to the Cuban revolution" (Babb 13). In the end the author reassures her, after listing all of the pieces of revolutionary pop culture and participatory evidence of her revolutionary commitment, that, "No te preocupes, todos sabemos eso. Eres una de nosotros" ("Don't worry, we all know that. You are one of us"; 92), thus sarcastically affirming her self-identification with the revolutionary cause.

However, her solidarity arises from another source in addition to her ideological commitment, it also stems from her tourist desire for authenticity—in particular, to share in the "real" life as lived by Cubans in what Dean MacCannell terms "back regions" where there is a chance of penetrating beyond the areas designed and staged for tourist consumption. As MacCannell explains: "Being 'one of them,' or at one with 'them,' means, in part, being permitted to share back regions with 'them.' This is a sharing

[19] For example, as Babb elaborates: "Until the United States government cancelled people-to-people exchanges at the end of 2003, groups like Global Exchange based in San Francisco gave many who were sympathetic with the Cuban revolutionary project the opportunity to travel for educational and cultural tours [...] Still, many other international travelers are attracted to see one of the 'last bastions of Communism'—if only because its ideological stance has protected the island against over-development—even as they enjoy beaches, nightclubs, and the music scene" ("Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris," 10-11).

which allows one to see behind the others' mere performances, to perceive and accept the others for what they really are" (The Tourist 94). But the line dividing what is "staged" from what is "real" becomes obfuscated by the fact that this *jinetero* also is familiar with this desire and plays to it: "A ti, claro, no te interesa ver lo otro. Eso que ya conoces, que no encaja en este ambiente tan paradisíaco de palmeras y salitre. No te llaman la atención ni las tiendas de autoservicio ni las discotecas ni las imitaciones de McDonalds, todo en dólares, claro" (You, of course, aren't interested in seeing the other things. That which you already know, that doesn't fit in this paridsaical atmosphere of palms and salt. The self-service stores nor the discoteques nor the McDonalds imitations, all in dollars, of course"; 92). In this way the passage indicates the prevalence of the franchising that serves as the tourist "front" region—the area foregrounded for touristic consumption and the area beyond which she wants to arrive—as well as suggesting that even "back regions" may be converted into touristic space.

In stark contrast to her traveling counterpart from "De un pájaro las dos alas," she prefers to show her solidarity as "una de nosotros disfrutando de los colores y la inconstancia y el sabroso contacto latino del transporte público, en su variante hipersalvaje del metrobús, vulgo camello" ("one of us, enjoying the colors and the fickleness and the delicious latino contact of public transport, in its hypersavage variant of the city bus, vulgar *camello*"; 92). In addition, he tells her to set aside her dollars and surrender herself to the "juego de la cola y de ser usuaria y no cliente," ("game of the line and of being an everyday user and not a client"; 92) sharing in the trials of daily life of the common Cuban citizen without access to dollars, mimicking their life style so that, "en pocas semanas, nadie te reconocerá" 'in a few weeks no one will recognize you,'

which, he points out, is the 'rule of the game' "regla del juego" of the authentic experience she seeks. Indeed, the narrator, sensing this, declares "Tú nunca quisiste mirar los toros desde la barrera, la vida desde el ómnibus climatizado, la realidad desde la prensa. Ven, entonces. Vamos a los barrios marginales, marihuana, navaja y folklore, machismo y aguardiente, tan colorido, tan auténtico" ("You never wanted to watch the bulls from behind the fence, life from the climate controlled tour bus, reality from the press. Come, then. Let's go to the marginal neighborhoods, marihuana, knives, and folklore, *machismo* and liquor, so colorful, so authentic"; 92). In addition to these marginal spaces, he will guide her to other local events and places which may not typically be destination points on a tourist's agenda: *Nueva Trova* and alternative rock concerts, the artsy, countercultural world of the poets and thespians of the underground (92).[20] In his seeking to cater to her, he is a jack-of-all-trades, willing and able to connect her to many different facets of "authentic," behind-the-scenes-Cuban experience. As he points out, "Yo soy el poste indicador de los caminos, ven. Bienvenida a la otra Ciudad Esmeralda, pequeña Dorotea" ("I'm the guidepost, come. Welcome to the other Emerald City, little Dorothy"; 92), once again highlighting the woman's fantasy-like investment in Cuban cultural space. Therefore, while these may not be the "front regions" of designed touristic space, in the end, they are appropriated in the service of touristic desire by the local *jinetero* host as he seeks to please his female guest on her quest for refreshment, which, as the text signals, corresponds to the gradual commodification of ever larger aspects of Cuban society according to the logic of tourism. As Babb observes:

[20] Even though these events and places are presented within the text as less openly touristic, such activities and spaces, no doubt, may very well appear on "niche" tourist agendas. As Babb points out: "The economy's diversification is paralleled by tourism, which targets a number of specialized niches: eco-tourism, sun and sand tourism, academic and educational tourism, heritage tourism, architectural and cultural tourism, health tourism, and so on" ("Che, Chevys, and Hemingway's Daiquiris" 10).

> Turning to consider some ambivalent aspects of tourism in Cuba which mirror the nation's rather hybrid dependence on precapitalist, capitalist, and socialist economic forms, we may observe that tourism at once highlights the vibrant natural environment, recognizes colonial history and architecture, memorializes pre-revolutionary extravagance, and honors the revolution. Tourists may become aware of enduring cultural forms like Afro-Cuban Santería, as well as contemporary forms such as Cuban hip hop, film, and conceptual art [...] Often, these cultural forms and tourist attractions are closely intertwined, although they may appear to be in conflict with one another. (13-14)

What, then, could be considered "authentically" Cuban? Potentially any aspect of Cuban society as it is converted into cultural capital which can then be packaged and marketed for tourist consumption—even on a micro scale, as seen in the story. Thus, the woman's desire corresponds to the multi-tiered socio-historical cultural logics mentioned by Babb, from her seeking sun, sand, palms and salt, to her indulgence in colonial fantasies of the "primitive," hypersexualized other while at the same time motivated ideologically toward solidarity with the revolution and the Cuban people—from the enactment of the drama of "Beauty and the Beast" to rehearsing the paternalistic encounter between the "First" and "Third" Worlds. This latter desire is also allied, according to the text, to her sense of guilt over the material advantage she enjoys over the Cuban people, her primary culpability owing to the "pecado de ser del Primer Mundo" ("sin of being from the First World"; 94), an emotional state used by the *jinetero* throughout the narrative to extract material benefit.

Similar to the local characters' interaction with their foreign visitor in "De un pájaro las dos alas," this local *jinetero*'s entire relationship with the female tourist is one based on the acquisition of material gain and he will play whatever angle he is able. Incarnating the qualities of a *joseador* and *vividor*, as soon as he discovers her ideological proclivities, he automatically seeks to divert her away from the hotels so that she will rent a room from a friend of his, "[p]or solidaridad proletaria" 'in the name of proletarian solidarity' (91). When he tells her to set aside her "moneda fuerte" (literally, "strong coin"—i.e. her dollars) as part of her experience of authentic solidarity with the Cuban people, he later reveals his motive as they pass by the very McDonald-like establishments that she rejects: "Sí, me apetece un helado, y yo tampoco tengo ganas de hacer cola, ¿entramos? *Para esto te dije que guardaras tu moneda fuerte.* ¡Fantásticos estos BURGUIS, eh?" ("Yes, I feel like an ice cream, and I don't feel like standing in line either, should we go in? It was for this that I told you to save your hard cash"; 92 emphasis added). Also reminiscent of Josué's *vividor* machinations is the way the narrator entreats her to buy the food and drink for a party, while he will take charge of the invitations (92). In addition, he thankfully accepts her "First World" guilt offering—a pair of pants and tennis shoes; and, after asking if she will mail some letters for him, assures her that she can write to him, playing on her guilt once more as he unobtrusively reminds her that "conoces mi talla, no creo que vaya a engordar" ("you know my size, I don't think that I'm going to get fat"; 94). Indeed, even as he mockingly assumes the role of a priest, he sarcastically points out the benefits that accrue to Cuban citizens as a result of her penitent acts "de expiar tu culpa bendiciéndonos con moneda fuerte, con tus maletas que llegaron llenas y se van casi vacías, por tu caridad y tu satisfacción de estar

haciendo algo por la justicia social" ("of expiating your guilt blessing us with hard cash, with your luggage that comes here full and leaves almost empty, for your charity and your satisfaction of doing something for social justice; 94), thus, highlighting the role her guilt plays in her interactions with the local populace.

Whereas La Fountain-Stokes's text serves as both ethnography (the representation of the other) and an idiosyncratic autoethnography (representing both the self and that self in simultaneous tension and solidarity with the other) because of the dual positions of the privileged intellectual traveler and Puerto Rican colonial subject from which it is written, "La causa que refresca" more narrowly corresponds to the definition of autoethnography as described by Mary Louise Pratt, who, speaking of representational practices that developed within the colonial contact zone upon the encounter of indigenous and European social actors during the colonial period, maintains: "If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations" (Imperial Eyes 8). In the same way, Yoss's text wrests control of discourse to construct an utterance that contests/dialogues, from a local perspective, not only with stereotypical metropolitan representations of the "Cuban," but also their discursive trace as articulated through the behavior and practices of those such as this tourist whose interest is, on the one hand, ideological, and, on the other, deeply intertwined with the exoticizing discourses of desire. Indeed, this discourse, originating in the way colonial dynamics framed the relationship between local Caribbean peoples and metropolitan outsiders, is shown to exoticize all aspects of her trip, which, in the final analysis, is a sojourn at the end of the twentieth century in search

of "authentic" objects for consumption—from the hypersexual and racialized brown male body through which to refresh herself physically, to her ideological and moral refreshment through experiencing firsthand "authentic" life in the land of the mythologized Cuban revolution, a land of "un pueblo que, a pesar de todo, lucha y no se rinde" ("a people who, in spite of everything, fights and doesn't surrender"; 93)—even as the latter quickly take advantage of her participation in the specialness of the special period, aiding the "authentic" suffering Cuban subject.

Yet, while the text may be, as Whitfield contends, a contestatory counter-stereotyping of the tourist, it nevertheless demonstrates the role of exoticizing metropolitan discourses in constituting subjectivities within the contact zone. For the enunciating subject of that contestatory speech and his interlocutor are both brought into contact, bound, and constructed according to the operation of that discourse, which thus predicates the terms of their interaction and the positions they occupy relative to one another. This is well evidenced even in the closing passage in which the narrator pointedly describes the significance of the role he has played over the course of her visit: "renuevo en tu corazón la fe en la causa, una causa de seis semanas al año, de amor latino y sabor prohibido, de idealismo y sexo. Una causa hecha justo a tu medida de mujer atrapada en la vorágine de la vida moderna. Segura y cómoda, fácil de llevar. La causa que refresca" ("I renew in your heart your faith in the cause, a cause of six weeks of the year, of Latin love and forbidden taste, of idealism and sex. A cause tailor-made for a woman like you trapped in the vortex of modern life. Safe and well-off, easy to lead. The cause that refreshes"; 94). Thus, even as he links the title of the piece to her activity in Havana—sardonically defining her "cause" as a rehearsal of the tourist consumption of

commodified ideals and local bodies—he also converts her into a cause for the local *vividores* like himself who look to capitalize on the naivety, material comfort, and privilege she embodies. In this way, they make of her the "cause," in the sense of "causal agent" of their own material refreshment, a discursive move intended, perhaps, to turn the tables of power, as it were, and underscore local agency. However, if we consider the definition of "cause" as an "originary, generative force," we are directed back to the metaphor of *la vorágine de la vida moderna* 'the vortex of modern life,' itself interpretable in a double sense as referring to both the comfortable "First World" space from which she comes—replete with car, house, and yuppie boyfriend—or to the more impoverished special period Havana, arguably the product, in part, of the very geopolitical positionality into which the island has been placed historically through such metropolitan discourses and practices as that in which this female tourist participates.[21] In this way, she is portrayed both as a target for the local *jinetero*'s own consumption and an agent that perpetuates the vortex of modernity. Therefore, both of them are posited as formed through productive forces beyond them and which casts them as actors in a play, a point the text itself highlights, as the narrator, once again assuming the role of sardonic priestly predator, blesses her: "Yo te absuelvo y te dejo suficiente culpa para que regreses pronto, a esta Cuba de detrás de la postal, a este juego de máscaras que somos y eres, a esta identidad folklórica y postmoderna" ("I absolve you and leave you sufficiently guilty so that you'll return soon, to this Cuba that lies behind the postcard, to this game of masks that we are and you are, to this folkloric and postmodern identity"; 94). Thus, through its assertion of masks as constitutive of being, this passage summarizes the central dynamic in the construction of authentically "folkloric" and multiple

[21] See Fernández Retamar "Our America and the West."

"postmodern" identities, highlighting the performative nature of subjectivity within the contact zone.

The question of role playing within the contact zone and the formation of subjectivities is also foregrounded in the text "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" which revolves around a married middleclass college student cum *jinetera* named, significantly, Xinet, who participates in the sexual economy as a way to support herself and her family. Her story also exemplifies the dynamics of the special period as Amalia L. Cabezas identifies them, describing the explosion of the phenomenon and the rise of public awareness both locally and abroad:[22]

> Just as the international media buzzed with accounts of cheap, sexy, brown Cuban bodies for sale, rumors circulated throughout Cuba about young women—jineteras—leaving for stints in Havana and Varadero and returning home with dollars, perfume, designer clothes, domestic appliances, foreign boyfriends, and invitations to marry and travel abroad. (2)

Indeed, this paragraph summarizes succinctly the phenomena which will be portrayed in "Los aretes que la faltan a la luna" as the latter exemplifies the transitions through which the Cuban population passed and, in particular, the effect of such transitions on local women participating in the sexual economy, a point Cabezas makes as she continues her characterization of the special period as a "period of painful transitions for all Cubans, with women becoming the shock absorbers for the many changes that such cultural, social, and economic shifts entail" (2)

[22] She specifically correlates this seemingly sudden awareness to the article published by Jeff Cohen in *Playboy* magazine in March of 1991, which Cabezas also argues was a primary catalyst for the explosion of sex tourism on the island (2).

In comparison to "De un pájaro las dos alas" and "La causa que refresca," Santiesteban's story stages probably the most common of the sexualized scenarios of encounter within Cuba, in this case, that of the local female sex-worker and the foreign male. Like both of the stories treated above, it records the desperate conditions of the special period and, like La Fountain-Stokes's piece, focuses on the decentering of subjectivity even as it represents the decadent state of the nation and the original revolutionary project. Indeed, it portrays the inverted condition of the revolutionary model of individual identity within the ideal socialist state subsumed in the ideological construct known as "the new man" proposed by Ernesto "Che" Guevara in his letter of 1965 which came to be entitled "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba ("Socialism and Man in Cuba").[23] Santiesteban's treatment of special period reality and its impact on Cuban subjectivity as well as personal and collective experience, corresponds to the very image of the evils of capitalist society as sketched by Guevara. It is a portrait of the increasing alienation of the local subject buffeted by forces beyond his or her control. Subordinate to the law of value, these subjects and their corresponding labor are ultimately reduced to commodities within a capitalist system of exchange. Instead of working in harmony as part of the triumphant and united masses, Cuban citizens find themselves in a competitive

[23] See Ana Serra's *The "New Man" in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution* (2007) for a substantial treatment of the use of the conceptual construct of the new man within Cuban cultural discourse. In particular, Serra studies a broad range of media while focusing primarily on widely distributed Cuban literary texts of the 1960s and early 1970s that discursively employed the construct to suggest ways of realizing the new man (and woman) while at times demonstrating resistance to it. In her last chapter, she considers a very popular series of detective fiction written in the 1990s by Cuban author Leonardo Padura Fuentes whose "novels are a tribute to the withering away of revolutionary ideology and the current search for alternate ideologies or narratives in Cuba" (170). She contends that, "finding out 'what went wrong'" with the revolution forms a central concern as these novels "announce the death of the New Man" (174). See also Sonia Behar, *La caída del Hombre Nuevo:Narrativa cubana del Periodo Especial* (2009) in which the author proposes that the literature of the special period offers evidence at the discursive, thematic, and ideological levels of the "desmoronamiento del ideal revolucionario del Hombre Nuevo [...], paradigma propuesto por Ernesto Guevara como prototipo del buen revolucionario" 'crumbling of the of the revolutionary ideal of the New Man [...], a paradigm proposed by Ernesto Guevara as a prototype of the good revolutionary'(143).

race to succeed ahead of others, a race that Guevara describes as "a race of wolves [in which] he who arrives does so only at the expense of the failure of others" (Man and Socialism 390)—some concerned with their individual survival and material gain at the exclusion of their neighbor and even their own family members. In short, Santiesteban's text continues the focus on life conditions within the throes of the special period and its impact on subject formation—depicting the national family upside down from the heroic utopian society envisioned in the revolution.

Harsh social conditions are foregrounded from the very opening of the story as it portrays the centrality of the laboring female body within the special period economy. As the protagonist, Xinet, arrives home from work:

> Siente en su espalda todo el peso de la noche [...] Como siempre, al bajar del auto se estira el cuerpo y trata de ocultar cualquier malestar; responde a los vecinos que la saludan desde los balcones, los portales, y ella devolviéndolos, uno a uno, pacientemente, sacando de la jaba grande pequeñas jabitas con desodorante, jabones, pasta dental, y las entrega, y ellos estirando los brazos, desesperados, su obligación, dice, su cruz, y logra por fin acercarse a la casa. ("Los aretes" 80)
>
> She feels the weight of the night on her back [...] As always, upon getting out of the car she stretches her body and tries to hide whatever malaise she feels; she answers the neighbors who grett her from the balconies, the doorways, and she waving back to them, one by one, patiently, taking out of the large bag, small bags with deodorant, soap, toothpaste, and she

hands them over and they stretch out their arms, desperate, her obligation, she says, her cross, and she at last manages to get to her house.

Thus, from the beginning, the narrative establishes the desperate state in which the people of her community live and the role that she and her labor contribute toward the alleviation of it.

Her labor will be even more pivotal within her own family, as evidenced when her mother wastes no time to bring her inside and wrest from her the remainder of the goods she carries in her bag: "La madre está en la puerta, halándola por el brazo. Vamos, amor, que no eres Dios, le quita lo que ha quedado de la jaba, y la sienta en el sofá, el esposo le alcanza un cojín para que ponga los pies, y le va quitando los zapatos, las medias, les da masajes, se los besa, la abuela trae una bandeja con café y jugo de naranja" ("The mother is at the door, pulling her by the arm. Come on, my love, you aren't God, she takes what remains of the bag from her, and sets her on the couch, the husband gets a pillow so she can put up her feet, and he goes about taking off her shoes, her stockings, massages her feet, kisses them, the grandmother brings a tray with coffee and orange juice"; 80). Thus, there is a certain form of solidarity between family members, as they all tend to her, showering special attentions on the primary source of their income. Indeed in the micro-economy of the family, Xinet's mother acts as a type of manager or personal assistant to her daughter, complete with a notebook to keep track of phone calls and other items for her daughter's agenda.[24] This includes the request of one of their neighbors for Xinet to introduce and facilitate the entrance of her sister-in-

[24] As Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula point out, as social services decreased and the government weakened, the role of the family—after having been weakened by government policies within the revolution—came to occupy an increasingly central position as a network of survival once again (147). See 144-67 for an overview of the Cuban family and society from 1959 to the mid-1990s.

law—recently arrived from the countryside—into the sex trade because "allá en su provincia la cosa está peor que aquí, dice la madre [...] que no sabe los meses que no dan jabón ni pasta de dientes, la gente lava con hierbas y esas cosas de indígenas, eso para ni contarte de los alimentos" ("there in their province it's worse than here, says the mother [...] she doesn't how many months it's been that they've gone without soap and toothpaste, the people wash themselves with herbs and those Indian things, not to mention the food"; 81). Thus, as it points to the internal migration that also became common during the special period, it in all likelihood refers to one of the eastern provinces such as Cabezas describes: "Internal migrants from the eastern provinces [...] were especially disadvantaged by the dollarization of the economy" (81). Considered a periphery of Havana, this region, known as *Oriente,* historically has "been plagued by higher poverty and unemployment, structural deficiencies in sanitation and water, and lower standards of living than the urban areas of Havana and the western part of the island" (Economies of desire 75). Thus, that region did not have as direct access to dollars as did the western area of the island, which, in turn, triggered migration to the capital.

Conditions must have been bad indeed, for shortly thereafter, the text portrays how Xinet's husband reflects back on their relationship together, a relationship whose trajectory has been reframed and altered by the outbreak of the economic crisis and the choices they have made to cope with it:

> "Mira el lugar en que debería estar la foto de la boda, ahora escondida, evoca imágenes de la luna de miel, la convivencia, después las cosas que comenzaron a faltar, la comida, el jabón, el aceite, las ollas vacías, el día en que sus compañeras

de aula la trajeron con fatiga, la humillación, la certeza de vivir un tiempo de crisis donde hay que apartar el amor para arañar la tierra [...] Asustados por las noticias de enfermedades por mala alimentación" (81).

He looks at the place where the wedding photo should be, now hidden, evokes images of their honeymoon, living together, afterward the things that began to get scarce, the food, the soap, the oil, the empty pots, the day when her class mates brought her back suffering from fatigue, the humiliation, the certainty of living in a time of crisis where you have to set love aside to scratch out a living [...] Frightened by the new of illnesses brought on by malnutrition.

It is here, that the metamorphosis that the couple goes through throughout the story finds its first cause, in the harsh economic conditions and the toll it took on their individual and collective lives, their health and their conjugal space.

Some, such as Xinet, looked for relief through the commodification of their own bodies and sexual labor, a fact which would have rippling consequences throughout her relationships with her family, especially her husband, and even with her inner life and self-conception. Indeed, this situation constitutes the core inversion of the socialist utopia and the ideal, harmonious relationship that Che Guevara envisioned between human beings and their labor within revolutionary society. He explains: "Man truly achieves his full human condition when he produces without being compelled by the physical necessity of selling himself as a commodity" (394); Within socialist society, "[m]an begins to free his thought from the bothersome fact that presupposed the need to satisfy his animal needs by working" (394). In contrast to the petty, self-indulgent desires

of the bourgeoisie, the revolutionary "new man" that Guevara sought to create would be above the frivolous consumption characteristic of capitalist society:

> It is not a question of how many kilograms of meat are eaten or how many times a year someone may go on holiday to the seashore or how many pretty imported things can be bought with present wages. It is rather that the individual feels greater fulfillment, that he has greater inner wealth and many more responsibilities. In our country the individual knows that the glorious period in which it has fallen on him to live is one of sacrifice; he is familiar with sacrifice (398).

Fast forward thirty years and the conditions of sacrifice are once again prominent, the desperation so great now, that the issue of obtaining meat to satisfy "animal needs" such as hunger become the primary goals of labor, and, indeed, of resisting and surviving the scarcity that marked the special period—even to the point of participating in the alternative, capitalist economy of the black market.

This is also seen in the husband, who, upon seeing his wife in the condition of fainting, and desperate, also participated in the informal economy, reselling bike parts illegally until he was arrested, fined, and jailed. Now, as he reflects back on the crisis and the toll it has taken on his marriage and his place within the family economy, he quietly dotes upon his wife, waiting for her to give him some sort of command, so that he can, in some fashion, "sentirse útil" 'feel useful' (81). Shortly thereafter, he and Xinet converse and he explains to her the impotence that he feels: "encerrado entre estas paredes, imposibilitado de poder aportar un dólar a esta casa, esperándote entre dos mujeres, que no lo dicen pero lo piensan, me siento el zángano de la colmena, ¿me

entiendes?" ("enclosed between these walls, unable to contribute a dollar to this house, waiting for you among two women, who don't say it but who think it, I feel like the lazy drone of the hive, you know?"; 82). It is significant here that he doesn't say *peso*, but rather *dólar*, indicating the latter as the most valued monetary unit within special period conditions—the *moneda fuerte* to which "La causa que refresca" refers, indicating, in a similar manner, its hegemonic status.

As we saw in the character of Josué in "De un pájaro las dos alas," entrance and participation in the informal economy brings with it enjoyment of such amenities as access to soap and toothpaste, as well as a broader range of foodstuffs, a fact of which Xinet pointedly reminds her family members as she underscores the difficulty of resuming her studies at the university, and of the consequences of her doing so for the family's access to the niceties they now enjoy:

> "[N]o sé si pueda, mamá, cuando uno entra en esto es difícil salir, he engañado a tanta gente, todo se convierte en una madeja imposible de desenmarañar, los compromisos, abandonar el nivel de vida, porque lo saben, ¿verdad?, se acaban los buenos gustos y volvemos a lo mismo, la abuela se persigna y mira a su virgencita de la Caridad, la madre estruja la libreta de notas y el esposo baja la cabeza" (80).
>
> I don't know if I can, mom, when one gets into this it's hard to get out, I've deceived so many people, everything turns into a tangled knot that's impossible to unravel, the commitments, abandoning our lifestyle, because you know, right?, all the nicities will go away and we will return to the same thing as before, the

grandmother crosses herself and looks at her little Virgen de la Caridad, the mother wrinkles the notepad and the husband lowers his head.

Yet even as her husband lowers his head in shame, the reactions of the mother and the grandmother are prompted by a different cause—the actual threat of doing without the material goods Xinet's work provides them.

Indeed, it will be mostly in these representatives of the two generations previous to Xinet and her husband that the individualistic competitive spirit of capitalism described by the Che as a "race of wolves" will be most clearly manifested. We have already seen this in the opening scene in which her mother's grasping arm competes for the goods Xinet carries against all the outstretched, desperate arms of those in the neighborhood who would greedily snatch up the little sacks she carries. Here, not only is the sense of community solidarity undermined because of the crisis, but also familial love is trumped and one has the idea that material well-being takes precedence even over maternal love, especially as voiced by the grandmother who, after joining her daughter in chastising Xinet for her generosity toward their neighbors—"esa gente [que] no lo agradecen" 'those people [who] aren't thankful' (80)—tells her worn-out granddaughter, who has just informed her of her having to go out for another date soon, "Una cita, ¡ah, qué pena!, lamenta la abuela, pensaba prepararte una comida deliciosa, pero bueno, primero el trabajo, después los placeres" ("A date, oh, what a shame!, the grandmother laments, I planned on making a delicious meal, but well, first work, then pleasure"; 80). Continuing with our ideologically orthodox interpretation of this text and applying it specifically to the egocentric callousness on the part of the grandmother, we point to the

passage of "Man and Socialism in Cuba" in which Guevara, writing in 1965, signals a capitalist legacy that at that point still needed to be combated:

> The new society in process of formation has to compete very hard with the past. This makes itself felt not only in the individual consciousness, weighed down by the residues of an education and an upbringing systematically oriented toward the isolation of the individual, but also by the very nature of this transition period, with the persistence of commodity relations. The commodity is the economic cell of capitalist society: As long as it exists, its effects will make themselves felt in the organization of production and therefore in man's consciousness (390).

Whether the grandmother's reaction is rooted in the psychological residue of a capitalist pre-revolutionary past or not, capitalism has indeed resurged on the island, commodities have assumed central importance and organized production—group unity has become fragmented and the individual seems ever more isolated.

Indeed, this social fragmentation is perhaps best represented by a dream that Xinet and her husband share after the family has entertained a Canadian tourist she brings home to visit. She sees the possibility of establishing a long-term relationship with him so as to obtain a steady source of income to support the family and resume her university studies. After this guest has left and the family has participated in the art of seduction, executing their prescribed roles—her husband playing the part of her brother—Xinet and he go to bed exhausted from the charade in which they have engaged:

> [D]uermen el mismo sueño, una tormenta de viento echándoles arena en los ojos y que los separa mientras ellos tratan de impedirlo bajo la mirada

de la abuela, la madre y el extranjero, que dentro de una caja de cristal ríen estruendosamente, la madre y la abuela lo besan en la boca, se empujan celosas y el hombre ríe, y ríe sin ver las serpientes que se arrastran en su dirección, y se despiertan asustados. (85-6)

They dream the same dream, a wind storm throwing sand in their eyes and which separates them while they try to stop it under the gaze of the grandmother and the foreigner, who laugh thunderously within a crystal box, the mother and the grandmother kiss him on the mouth, they push each other jealously and the man laughs, and he laughs without seeing the snakes that crawl in his direction, and they wake up scared.

As the winds of the crisis of the special period blow, the couple is threatened with being torn asunder and separated, even as their plight is compounded by the complicity of the older generations with the foreign interests that drive the commodification of their sexuality—that sexuality constituting a central basis upon which the couple's union and bond is maintained. Thus, familial love is shaken among and across generations as the work of the youth serves the consumerist desire of their elders who, in turn, fight with one another jealously, as wolf against wolf, isolated from the worst of the storm within their crystal box made of the fruit of their progeny's labor.

But the theme of alienation that passages such as this describe is not limited to intersubjective alienation alone. Indeed, even as the text represents how the family and the couple is alienated one from the other, it documents the process of the individual's alienation from him- or herself. This is most clearly delineated in the character development of the husband whose ability for self-identification is thrown into increasing

turmoil. This is first indicated toward the beginning of the piece after Xinet has arrived from one of her dates. As she showers, he awaits her seated on the toilet. When she asks if he is still there, he, perhaps ironically, answers, "sí, mi niña [...] siempre voy a estar aquí" 'yes, mi child, I'm always going to be here' (81), to which she responds telling him to say something different,: "¿diferente?, sí, algo nuevo, eso, lo importante es que sea nuevo, y él piensa ¿qué puede ser nuevo?, se levanta, mira al techo, las paredes, los pies, y el espejo, y en el espejo hay otro hombre distinto mirándole, que dice "*yo*", y él sigue observando al recién descubierto" ("different?, yes, something new, that's it, the important thing is that it be new, and then he thinks, what could be new?, he gets up, looks at the ceiling, the walls, his feet, and the mirror, and in the mirror there is another, different man looking at him, who says "*I*," and he keeps observing the recently discovered man"; 82). His answers thus point to the new subjectivity currently being produced in him, suggesting the difficulty of assuming the discursive subjectivity of the revolutionary new man, given his experience within the severity of prevailing conditions and his personal feelings of impotence and entrapment. Indeed, even as he doubts the possibility of anything being new, he realizes that a change has occurred, registered in the reflection of the unrecognized Other that looks back at him. This change is further reinforced by Xinet who, as she exits the shower, "mira también al hombre del espejo, después a él, ¿quién es? Y le responde con un movimiento de hombres, ¿te pierdo?, insiste ella ("she also looks at the man in the mirror, then at him, who is it? And he responds with a movement of his shoulders, am I losing you?, she insists"; 82); and, again, after they exchange a few words she "regresa al cuarto y lo deja allí con el desconocido del espejo que mantiene una ligera sonrisa"("returns to the bedroom and

leaves him there with the stranger in the mirror and maintains a slight smile"; 82), thus confirming the alienating metamorphosis taking place in him.

Toward the end of the story, just before the dream sequence treated above, there is a parallel passage to the one just analyzed in which Xinet inverts the question, asking him to tell her something old, "¿algo viejo?, sí, muy viejo, y él piensa, se mira los pies, el techo, se levanta, el espejo que vuelve a decir "*yo*", y se palpa el rostro" ("something old?, yes, very old, and he thinks, he looks at his feet, the ceiling, he gets up, the mirror that says "*I*" again, and he feels his face"; 85). Again she observes him, and once more, confirms what he has seen: "en el espejo hay un anciano" 'in the mirror there's an elderly man' (85). Not only will he be shown as an elderly man, but she an elderly woman as revealed in front of "otro espejo mayor donde observan a un anciano que peina a otra anciana" ("another larger mirror where they observe an elderly man who combs an old woman's hair"; 85). Indeed, this passage not only marks the gradual change of subjectivities and perspectives that occurs throughout the story, but emphasizes that change as one of decline. This process also has been registered in the text's portrayal of Xinet as an individual, who, after recognizing the change in her husband already in the first episode in front of the mirror, realizes that she too has become bifurcated: "Se viste, después el arreglo frente al espejo, y se observa, ¿soy yo?, ¡qué importa!, le dice la otra y sonríe, la de acá mueve los hombros y esboza también una sonrisita cómplice" ("She gets dressed, afterwards fixing herself up in front of the mirror, and she observes herself, is it I?, what difference does it make!, says the other woman and she smiles, the one over here shrugs her shoulders and also draws a little complicit smile"; 82).

The text thus identifies the particular type of bifurcation as a bi-product of, as Guevara might argue, the mode of capitalist production; that is, her engagement in sex work and the concomitant relational alienation that takes place on all levels, including within, as the members of Cuban society so involved must wear a mask for public show. When she leaves for her date, "se inventa una amplia sonrisa que mantendrá hasta el regreso" ("she puts on an ample smile that she'll maintain until she returns"; 82). In similar fashion, as her husband draws near to kiss her goodbye, neither she nor he can posit with certainty which identity interacts with her at that moment: "¿cuál eres?, le pregunta, no sé, le dice, besándole la frente" ("which one are you?, she asks him, I don't know, he tells her, kissing her on the forehead"; 82) Thus, her husband is still in a state of identity confusion, a state which parallels the process through which Xinet herself has undergone, but one that becomes normalized with time as she herself has experienced it: "Al principio siempre es así, piensa, luego se acostumbrará" ("At first it's always like that, she thinks, he'll get used to it later"; 82). In this way, the text suggests and foreshadows what it will later reveal in a surprise scene at the end—her husband's alienation is not only derived as a consequence of her involvement in the sex industry, but is also a result of his own participation in it, as he also one day is picked up by the Canadian tourist who clearly is interested in him sexually.

Immediately prior to this, however, the text describes how Xinet is deceived one day by the Canadian, who merely had pretended to be a predictably gullible tourist. Disabused of the illusion that her and her family's acting had easily manipulated the Canadian, Xinet returns from the tourist resort area in Varadero to which she had gone with him, having dreamt of the types of material benefits she could acquire from their

relationship—clothes, gifts for the family, a new television and an air conditioner—only to discover that she and her family were the ones who had proven to be gullible, the man actually a type of procurer involved in international sex trafficking: "se dedica a llevar muchachas bonitas para burdeles donde se las pidan, da a escoger el país que se desea, ¡como si fuéramos bobas!" ("he dedicates himself to bringing pretty girls to bordellos where they ask for them, he let's them choose the country that they would like, as if we were dolts!"; 87) So having asked Xinet the day before if her "brother" had a girlfriend, the foreigner comes to the house and picks up the husband, greeting him and running his hand across his cheek. Instead of responding, the husband looks in the mirror of the car, and, this time, "donde se supone que esté sentado un joven, no hay nadie" 'where a young man is supposedly seated, there's nobody' (87). Thus, the culmination of his metamorphosis, his total alienation, is complete. As he rides in the car, he clenches his fists and teeth, observing a seagull in flight whose trajectory parallels his own. While the bird dives into the sea to also gather its daily bread, he himself assumes the mask of alienation, and, smiling, tells the human trafficker what a beautiful day it is (87).

At its heart, then, "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" is a story that tells the tale of the process of alienation that is taking place among the nation's youngest members, precisely that generation specified by Guevara in "Socialism and Man in Cuba" as the repository of the hope for the "new man" of the twenty-first century: "It is the 21st century man whom we must create, although this is still a subject of an unsystematic aspiration" (396). Indeed, we see this point further brought home as Guevara continues: "In our society the youth and the party play a big role. The former is particularly important because it is the malleable clay with which the new man, without any of the

previous defects [i.e. of the capitalist dominated societies of the 19th and 20th centuries], can be formed" (397). This corresponds directly to the generation of Xinet and her husband. They are the ones who received the education of the revolution, yet, due to the harsh realities of the special period and the impact of foreign tourism on the island, it is a generation in which the new man becomes a decentered subject(ivity). Indeed, Xinet and her husband transform from being a happily married couple to one in the process of alienation, each of them becoming old before their time, their productivity reduced to the commodification of their bodies. Although he suffered when he was unable to contribute to the micro-economy of the family, the very moment that he finally is able to do so is that moment which constitutes his ultimate alienation.

Could this story then be construed as counterrevolutionary? Not necessarily.[25] As will be seen below, the story quite severely critiques the present state of affairs but does so through its affirmation of revolutionary morality and an appeal to an expanded concept of revolutionary history that goes beyond the 26 of July. For example, if one looks more closely at the role that both Xinet and her husband have played in the midst of the crisis, they have indeed displayed a far more self-sacrificing attitude for the well-being of the family as a whole than have the other characters of the story. Such self-

[25] Complicating the determination of what can be considered "counterrevolutionary" or not are the shifting policies of the government, who makes such determinations. For example, this story was first published in 2000 in the anthology of Caribbean short fiction entitled Los nuevos caníbales: Antología de la más reciente cuentística del Caribe hispano (Bobes, Marilyn, et al. Havana and San Juan: Ediciones Unión and Isla Negra 8—7), and later in 2001 as part of a collection of the author's short stories which also explore the island's prison system and the aftermath of Cuba's involvement in the Angolan war (1975-89) entitled Los hijos que nadie quiso, a winner of the Premio Alejo Carpentier de Cuento and published by the Cuban publishing house Editorial Letras Cubanas. Thus, while critical of the state of the nation, it was not censured, most likely reflective of a more tolerant and relaxed atmosphere regarding cultural expression. As Ana Serra notes: "The Cuban regime is allowing writers and artists to participate in discussion forums and publish abroad, displaying considerably more tolerance toward difference in areas such as gender, race, and religion, and widening acceptance of certain topics and forms of creative expression that were hitherto considered counterrevolutionary" (7). See also Sujatha Fernandes Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.

sacrifice is one of the main qualities that Guevara envisioned for the future revolutionary generations as he affirms in speaking of the actions of the Cuban population during moments of national crisis (the Crisis of October and hurricane Flora) when "we witnessed deeds of exceptional valor and self-sacrifice carried out by an entire people," a reflection of the "first heroic period" of the revolution, the period of armed struggle in which "men strove to earn posts of greater responsibility, of greater danger, the fulfillment of their duty as their only satisfaction" (388). It is the inculcation of this attitude that Guevara saw as the chief aim of the education of the new man: "One of our fundamental tasks from the ideological standpoint is to find a way to perpetuate such heroic attitudes in everyday life" (388). Indeed, it is at the level of the desperate conditions of everyday life where a new type of survivalist heroism is displayed, especially by Xinet and her husband.

While the older generations are shown here primarily to be idle consumers, primarily interested in the fulfillment of their desires, their children demonstrate a level of service and dedication to the good of each other, the family, and the collectivity. For example, although participating in what had been historically considered one of the greatest social-ills of pre-revolutionary Cuba—whose supposed eradication was one of the most touted achievements of the revolutionary regime—Xinet displays a level of self-sacrifice that extends beyond just her immediate family to the surrounding community (i.e. "her obligation," "her cross" 80).[26] Furthermore, the story also provides evidence of her ideological orthodoxy, demonstrating solidarity with the ideals of the revolution.

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[26] The following is an excerpt from 1966 of Fidel Castro's address to an assembly of the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women). In it, we see an example of the type of official rhetoric employed in describing both the nature of prostitution/sex work and the revolution's response to it: "The worst job. The most humiliating. The most contemptible. Discrimination. Underrating. That was all a

Thus, in a key scene, the text places her at the University of Havana where she desires to resume her studies. Still possessing a student identity card, she uses that space as a place from which to engage in sex work, bringing books to use as camouflage should police happen by. Indeed, the possession of her student ID has saved her from being arrested before as she was able to convince the officers in question that she was a university student. The following passage, which I quote at length, describes this situation, her core desires, her opinions regarding the work in which she is currently engaged, and the links that Xinet establishes between herself and her revolutionary forebears as she sits on the steps of the *Escalinata*, the flight of eighty-eight stairs that leads to the main entrance of the University of Havana:

> [C]ierra los ojos. No quiere pensar, pero le es imposible apartar la imagen del rector, saber que el sueño de ser una profesional se le escapa [...] se baja y va hacia la escalinata, para que el Alma Mater, la virgen de los estudiantes, le cuide las espaldas. [...] Mira hacia la izquierda, más allá está el rostro de Mella, tan serio y hermoso. Cómo le hubiera gustado haber sido Tina. Reconoce por el lazo las últimas flores que le compró, ya están marchitas. De repente siente vergüenza porque le parece que Mella la observa severo y frío como el bronce, ¿disgustado?, ¿con nosotras?, ¡si solamente intentamos sobrevivir! [...] Xinet cierra el libro rezando: Alma Mater, por favor, concédeme que mi cita venga antes de que esos [policías] den la vuelta; después a Mella con su rostro inalterable, no seas

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woman in our country could expect from capitalism and imperialism.[...] Now no worker, no head of family, finds himself obliged to send his daughter to work for the rich in some bar or at a brothel, because that past, that nightmare, that odious fate that society foisted on Cuban women has vanished forever" (Castro "Fifth FMC." qtd in Serra, 183 n 5).

malito, sabes que no me gusta hacerlo, y sabes que el hambre gusta menos, no olvides tu huelga en la Cabaña, lo flaco que te pusiste, anda, ayúdame en ésta, te prometo traerte flores, pero no me abandones, te lo pido por el amor que tú también tuviste con una extranjera. [Pronto, llega su cita y] Xinet le hace un guiño al Alma Mater, y le tira un beso al busto de Mella, los adoro, dice entre dientes." (83)

She closes her eyes. She doesn't want to think, but it's impossible to get rid of the image of the university president, knowing that her dream of being a professional is slipping away [...] she gets down and goes toward the stairway, so that the Alma Mater, the virgin of the students, watches her back. [...] She looks to the left, over there is Mella's face, so serious and beautiful. How she would have liked to have been Tina. She recognizes the latest flowers she bought for him by the bow, they're already wilted. Suddenly she feels ashamed because it seems to her that Mella observes her as cold and severe as the bronze, displeased?, with us?, but we're only trying to survive! [...] Xinet closes her book praying: Alma Mater, please, grant me my prayer for my date to come before those [policemen] return; afterwards she directs herself to Mella with his immutable face, don't be mean, you know I get no pleasure from doing it, and you know that hunger is even less pleasurable, don't forget your hunger strike in La Cabaña, how skinny you became, go on, help me in this, I promise to bring you flowers, but don't abandon me, I ask you in the name of the love you also once had with a foreigner. [Her date soon

arrives and] Xinet winks at the Alma Mater, and blows a kiss at Mella's bust, I adore you both, she murmurs.

In this portrayal, we see a desperate daughter of the revolution identifying herself within the greater trajectory of a Cuban revolutionary tradition, pointing to the common ground she and Mella share, referring both to his hunger strike in protest of certain university and government policies in which he almost died, to his legendary romantic liaison with the foreigner Tina Modotti, herself a revolutionary figure who accompanied him when he was assassinated in 1929 in Mexico. Mella was also the founder of the *Federación Estudiantil Universitaria* 'University Student Federation' and the *Primer Partido Comunista* 'First Communist Party' as well as the university's newspaper "Alma Mater."[27] Even as she invokes Mella, she also calls upon the statue of the Alma Mater that stands at the head of the Escalinata, turning in solidarity to two icons that come to serve a religious and maternal and paternal function even as she seeks their protection, exoneration, and blessing.

By placing this scene at one of the most culturally symbolic spaces of revolutionary discourse at the university, Santiesteban not only shows how the base logic of survivalist capitalism has penetrated into the very heart of the institutional training ground of the revolution's future generations, but also invokes that space as a discursive vantage point from which to evaluate and judge the current revolutionary period from beyond that period's historical boundaries, suggesting a continuity of revolutionary resistance across generations. In this case, it links Xinet with Mella and Alma Mater in a familial, cross-generational communion and solidarity, her deified, symbolic "parents" pardoning their "daughter's" temporary, forced prodigality and facilitating her escape

[27] Cairo "Julio Antonio Mella".

from the police so she may continue her work, enabling her to resist both official power and the harsh conditions that that power has created.

Thus, far from demonstrating counterrevolutionary tendencies, Xinet is portrayed as a faithful revolutionary at a deep, trans-historical level. Moreover, she reflects and participates in the very economic accommodations made by the state in opening the nation up to global capital through market reforms, especially in the form of tourism, although she does so through participation in the informal economy. As Amalia L. Cabezas maintains, "In a period of instability and complex changes, *jineteras* embodied and symbolized the anxieties, dangers, and transitions that were beginning rapidly to transform Cuban society and culture away from a socialist ethos toward market reforms" (2-3). In this sense, Xinet comes to represent the nation on multiple levels, literally standing in as an example of the common experience of many participants in *jineterismo* in shared economic conditions which cut across class lines regardless of socio-economic and/or educational levels; also as a representative of the generation in whom the revolution, following Guevara's blueprint of the ideal new man, had invested its hope; and finally standing in for the nation as a whole, her plight the plight of the nation in general, as Cabezas points out above.

This latter point is illustrated most clearly, perhaps, in the film adaptation of the story that was produced by *televisión cubana*, in 2008. The film is faithful to the story in most aspects with one crucial difference: it adds a narrative frame which places the action in present-day Cuba of the 21st century, after the special period[28], while specifying that

[28] While most scholars agree that the most extreme of the special period was over by the mid-1990s (see, for example, Pérez 320; Cabezas 73), there is no clear consensus on when, or even if, the special period ended. Whitfield suggests 2005 as a possible end point based on a speech by Castro in which he declared the special period as something the Cuban people were "leaving behind,"and the fact that, "[b]y this time,

the main action of the story is set in 1994, at the height (or depths) of the economic crisis, giving the film a bittersweet, ironic "happy ending" of sorts. Thus, the film opens with the arrival of Xinet to the airport where she is pleasantly surprised by what one assumes is her former husband—now a taxi driver. The film makes a point to distance this present day reality from the past and thus propose that both Xinet and her former husband have done what was necessary to survive, making their connections with foreign capital. In the husband's case this is seen in his first being a *jinetero*, and now, through maintaining his link through the service industry as a taxi driver. He will adduce the latter as providing him with a solid and stable source of income. For her part, she too has remained connected to foreign investment. In addition to her own involvement in the sexual economy, she has also moved to Holland, where she has married and now has two children with her Dutch journalist husband. As she and her former Cuban husband chat and reminisce about their former life together, several tearful moments transpire in which she appears to repent of her decision. In a noble gesture, he offers reassurance that she did what was necessary given the circumstances, adding that he is happy that she was able to find a good life for herself.

Thus, the film suggests that the link between the nation and neoliberal globalized markets, once made, is an inexorable condition, and therefore underscores the necessity of a marriage to foreign interests and capital if the nation's current citizens are to be productive, for it is only through that connection that the man is able to gain access to dollars and a stable income and the woman is able to have a family. The film offers no alternative and no going back. When a teary Xinet asks "Did we?" to her former

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many in Cuba agreed that the special period was over, but pointed to the end of the very worst years rather than hardship per se" (159 n 4).

husband's affirmation that "We survived," the question hangs in the air even as he responds, "We're still here." Thus, the new man, once imagined as united with the masses in national solidarity and internationally in socialist utopia, has become the transnational new man, accommodated and wed to foreign capital interests.

Therefore, running contrary to the model of subjectivity proposed by revolutionary nationalist discourse, "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" portrays, like the other pieces analyzed in this chapter, the enactment of a contemporary variation of the scenario of colonial encounter and the correlative subject positions produced by it. These, like the scenario to which they correspond, are articulated at the individual level through a repertoire of bodily acts "stylized" to fit the changing circumstances and material conditions dominant within the special period. The theatricality of the gestures, movements, and dialogue executed by the distinct social actors as they stage their relationships with the foreign Other is highlighted at several points throughout the text as we have seen in the alienating/alienated public, "smiling faces" that Xinet and her husband wear as part of their sexual labor as well as the playacting in which the whole family engages as they entertain the Canadian visitor whom Xinet brought home. Indeed, the text stresses this theatricality in a scene where Xinet and the Canadian, prior to her discovering his true nature, go to a restaurant:

> [...] él la mira con deseo, Xinet se muestra complacida, las manos agarradas, todavía no se ha dejado besar, "táctica y estrategia", piensa y sonríe, aún no sabe qué sacar de él; multarlo sería rápido y darle una tarifa más fácil, pero le gusta jugar, conocer hasta dónde puede llegar, quizá encuentre al que le saque definitivamente de la calle, no pide mucho, ni

edad ni belleza ni que sea soltero, sólo buenos ingresos para poder terminar los estudios sin fatigas ni mareos; interrumpe el silencio cuando abre el mapa, *¿house?*, rápidamente calcula, cayó en el jamo, puede sacarle algo más (84).

[...] he looks at her with desire, Xinet looks pleased, her hands clenched tight, she still hasn't allowed herself to be kissed, 'tactics and strategies', she thinks and smiles, she still doesn't know what she can get out of him; fining him would be to quick and levying a tariff easier, but she likes to play, to know how far she can get, perhaps she'll find the one who will definitively get her off the street, she doesn't ask for much, neither age, nor beauty nor that he be single, only a good income to be able to finish her studies without hassles; he interrupts the silence when he opens the map, *house*?, she calculates quickly, he's fallen into the trap, she can get some more out of him.

Here the text underscores the calculation behind Xinet's actions, every move designed to achieve a desired effect—her repertoire a variety of, as the text states, "tactics and strategies" deployed to correspond to a sliding level of compensation even as she attempts to ascertain how much she might gain from their encounter. Even after he indicates his wish to visit her house, which she reads as a sign of his effective ensnarement, she continues her act, feigning fright in order to further reel him in: "pone cara de susto, de pánico" 'she puts on a frightened, panicked face' at the suggestion that he accompany her home, because "her family doesn't know." While he insists that they go to her house, she pretends to be pensive 'haciéndose la reflexiva,' as if weighing

whether or not she dare risk it (84). Yet, in the midst of a performance she has repeated often enough that she is able to let her mind run free, Xinet reflects on the similarity of outcomes in this scenario, her actions and her client's reactions following a predictable pattern: "verdaderamente pensaba en por qué las cosas siempre salían iguales, como en un guión" ("she thought about why things always came out the same, like in a script"; 84). The knowledge thus gained through the repeated, successful performance of this repertoire of seduction forms the basis of an accompanying sense of empowerment and assurance: "se reafirma que ya tiene experiencia, cada vez le es más fácil manejar las situaciones" ("she again reaffirms to herself that she already has experience, everytime it gets easier for her to manage the situation"; 84). Yet, as we discover later, the Canadian tourist has outwitted her, demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the script, managing it well enough to ultimately lure her to Varadero where he seeks his own profit through connecting her into the more mobile aspects of the international sexual industry.

In this way, even as Santiesteban's text captures a repertoire of sexualized encounter in the process of formation within a particularly gendered scenario of heterosexual contact between the local female and the foreign male, it points to dynamics that lie at the heart of the special period *jineterismo* staged in the other two works analyzed here as well, showing how she, her husband, her family, and even her neighbors all are complicit in the enactment of roles designed to extract the greatest material benefit possible[29]—correlating, in its own particularized adaptation, to the *vividor* and *joseador*

[29] The story describes a scene when Xinet and the Canadian first arrive to her home. Here we see a further example of survivalist solidarity and complicity: "detienen el auto frente a la casa, los vecinos inventariando las jabas, los niños que se quedan alejados y la saludan con un gesto cómplice" ("they stop the car in front of the house, the neighbors taking an inventory of the bags, the children stay at a distance and greet her with a complicit gesture"; 84).

practices carried out by Josué and his family in "De un pájaro las dos alas" and by the cynical, mocking *jinetero* of "La causa que refresca".

Indeed, all three works, in their modernized, variant restagings of the scenario of encounter, highlight the dialectical social processes, practices and experiences that constitute the "vortex of modern life" within the Cuban contact zone—elements which, as Diana Taylor affirms in reference to the components characteristic of the "social dramas" activated in such scenarios, "are themselves the product of economic, political, and social structures that they, in turn, tend to reproduce" (28). Moreover, these texts also show how not only geographical, physical space, but also the body—embodied experience—becomes a site for the articulation and/or disarticulation of various competing discursive structures as social actors come to negotiate and occupy subject positions produced under the harsh "disciplining" conditions of the special period and articulated through a group of repetitive actions, gestures, movements, and thought processes—i.e. a scripted or "naturalized" repertoire of social behavior.

Thus, the narrator of La Fountain-Stokes's "experimental autoethnography" illustrates the difficulty of articulating a liberatory Caribbean discourse, be it that which was proposed in the nineteenth century as an alternative to the colonial subjectivity residents of Cuba and Puerto Rico were forced to assume under Spanish rule, or the twentieth century socialist utopia offered by the Revolution of 26 July. As we have seen, the text links these discourses only to show how both they as well as the subjects that would be constituted through them come to be decentered, disarticulated—replaced by local social actors whose subjectivities respond to the demands of the conditions and

processes that reduce relationships and social life to the search for "tainted" foreign money by which to survive.

In a similar fashion, Angel Santiesteban registers the weakening and metamorphosis of the ideal of the "new man" as the nation's citizens adjust to their desperate social environment. The processes of social and internal alienation that take place within the story could also be identified as a decentering of revolutionary subjectivities of which only a residue remains as reflected in the generation in which Ernesto Guevara placed his greatest hope. As presented in the story, Xinet and her husband do manifest a lingering concern for the collective as they work to tend to the needs and desires of their family and neighborhood even as the latter are forced ever increasingly into an individualism which accompanies the capitalism with which the nation's socialist system is gradually intermingling. However, the film adaptation, for its part, problematizes the contemporary state of the nation, pointing to its precarious, ambivalent position as a socialist state. On the one hand, it could be read as a defense for opening up to foreign capital, justified by desperate need and the end result of local survival, looking back on the worst part of the special period as a phase that was overcome by self-sacrifice. Yet, even as it does so, the film also suggests that the locus of a productive and "good life" for the nation's citizens lies in an individualism practiced in some other geographical space, in such capitalist countries as Holland, thus placing future happiness and generations somewhere else and ultimately undermining any prospect for a future, national cohesion under socialism.

Thus, the liberatory, utopian ideals and their corresponding subjectivities referenced in the above stories are disarticulated as they are contested and increasingly

displaced by a resurgent discourse that accompanies the international tourism that national policy has promoted—i.e. the very discourse stereotypically portrayed in "La causa que refresca." As we have seen, this story's interior monologue is built of a dialogics of encounter grounded in the discourse of exoticization that has marked "Western" practices and representations of the region since the time of Columbus, showing it as a key discursive underpinning for the consumptive desires of present-day tourism. Indeed, it's title and content exemplify a current rearticulation of the Admiral's prophetic design for the Caribbean as a place of "ganancias" 'earnings' and "refrigerio" 'refreshment', where everything becomes a potential commodity—intimacy, affect, bodies, local space, and even anti-capitalist revolutionary history itself.

Therefore, instead of a utopian refuge where subjects may work together selflessly to build a better, more just and egalitarian society, these stories show how Cuban contact zones of the special period, like their correlates in the Dominican Republic, become individualistic fields of predatory action for the negotiation of the multiple desires embodied in local and foreign social actors. Thus, even as they capture the social conditions and processes that marked this time of Cuban national life, these works register a slippage of the binding address of revolutionary discourses and capture the permutated adaptation of an older, resurgent colonial discourse as the latter comes to be rearticulated through the construction of personal repertoires by which to navigate the Cuban contact zone and there perform a special period subjectivity.

Chapter 3. Cuba Part II: The Staging of a National Abjection

~And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.
Julia Kristeva[1]

Amir Valle's text *Jineteras* (2006), which he classifies as belonging to the *testimonio* genre, and the novel *Tatuajes* (2007), stage, like the works treated in chapters one and two of the present study, the dynamics and realities of the touristic contact zones that result from the encounter between local and foreign subjects as they negotiate their desires. Both this *testimonio* and the novel show how local social actors utilize the contact zone as a predatory field to meet basic survival needs and to seek social and material advancement. Here, they seize, from their comparative immobility, the fleeting opportunities presented to them to extract the most advantage from their contact with the traveling Other while employing tactics of seduction and manipulation similar to those we have seen thus far.

Valle's texts, like those of chapter two, focus on Cuba of the special period and find their closest affinity with "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" by Angel Santiesteban in that they are focused on local social actors, granting only minimal textual consideration to the portrayal of the foreigner. In these works' representations of predominantly local female/foreign male heterosexual sex tourism, male sex tourists, while present, never assume a role as individual protagonists, their part limited to depict the basic dynamics which configure the contact zone and the social experiences that accompany sex tourism within Cuba. Indeed, the texts under consideration in the present chapter are much more concerned with the immediacy of local actors' experiences of the

[1] Kristeva 2.

national crisis in which they are set—the here and now of a moment whose dire characteristics Louis Pérez Jr. describes thus:

> The years of the *período especial* evoked signs of an apocalyptic premonition, especially in the cities: [...] vast swaths of neighborhoods enveloped nightly in total darkness, without street lights, without lights from shops, houses, and apartment buildings [...] Vast numbers of Cubans lived in circumstances of constant adjustment and adaptation, a process given entirely to the fashioning of adequate coping mechanisms and appropriate survival strategies: all with a sense of urgency and a need for immediacy. (295, 297)

This apocalyptic, dark atmosphere and its corresponding social dynamics of survival form the environmental logic of Valle's texts, which focus on the experience of the special period as seen from the marginal spaces that Cuban sex workers and other associated characters that the texts classify as "podredumbre humana" ("human rot") populate. These characters seek to survive amidst the desperate circumstances in which the country finds itself—in particular, within those marginal sectors that sprang up and grew rapidly as the country turned to international tourism as its primary source of foreign currency and the black market grew increasingly important to resolve the affairs of daily life.[2] Indeed, as the author himself states in an interview regarding the phenomena he treats in *Jineteras*: "Precisamente al turismo debemos el estallido de ese mundo escondido de prostitución, droga y corrupción que es la columna vertebral de ese libro. Es decir, aunque es un flagelo que siempre existe en cualquier sociedad [...], es la

[2] On the effects of tourism and the black market on the national economy, See Gott, 290-2 and Pérez, 304-10 as well as chapter two of the present study and notes 22 and 23 below.

conversión del turismo en la locomotora económica de la sociedad lo que abre esa Caja de Pandora" ("It's precisely to tourism that we owe that hidden world of prostitution, drugs, and corruption that is the backbone of that book. That is to say, although it's a scourge that always exists in any society [...], it's the conversion of tourism into the economic engine of society that opens that Pandora's Box")[3]. In effect, these two texts construct the *jinetera* as a sign and symptom of the decadent state of the Cuban nation—a defiling presence whose rapid growth threatens both the nation and the individual self and surfaces in the form of what Pérez describes as one of the "[n]ew fault lines [that] appeared on the moral topography of Cuban daily life and acted to reconfigure the normative terms by which Cubans entered the twenty-first century" (298). These texts must be seen as responding to that shifting moral topography as manifested through the phenomena associated with sex tourism as they themselves seek to shape a moral national discourse in an environment of moral crisis "after belief had failed" (Pérez 298).

Employing Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, I argue that both *Jineteras* and its novelistic complement, *Tatuajes* are the textual manifestations—the material artifacts—of a process of abjection that constructs the *jinetera* so as to identify, discipline, and bring her under textual control, to thereby purge her from the narrative consciousness that calls her into being and, at the same time, purify the Cuban nation with which she is ultimately identified. Yet, in so doing, the male narrative voice that would seek to cleanse himself and the nation ultimately reifies and inscribes her within a patriarchal and misogynistic discourse as the dual embodiment of desire and repulsion.

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[3] Valle "Cuba también." See also note 19, below.

After sketching the general content and structure of the book, in the first part of the chapter, I theorize, drawing on Kristeva's arguments as developed in *The Powers of Horror*, the various ways that *Jineteras* constructs a discourse of abjection surrounding the Cuban *jinetera* in general and how, in particular, a female friend from the narrator's youth assumes a prominent role in that discourse and is fashioned according to it. In the second part, I turn to *Tatuajes* to examine how the discourse of abjection continues as the text depicts the social construction of that same former friend—now the protagonist of the novel—at a critical moment in her career. Here the narrative employs a technique of pornographic scopophilia at key moments to simultaneously construct and fragment her as it reconstructs her life journey, showing how she came to occupy the place she does within a Cuban society whose most salient characteristics are decadence and corruption across a wide spectrum of social sectors.

Jineteras is a text that won the 2006 Rodolfo Walsh award for best non-fiction book. Based on material gathered throughout the 1990s and initially circulated clandestinely as *Habana Babilonia o las prostitutas en Cuba*, it was published as *Jineteras* in 2006 and republished in 2008 as *Habana Babilonia: La cara oculta de las jineteras* and has since been translated into German in 2008 and French in 2009. Originally intended as a novel, it ultimately responds to two overriding writerly impulses: that of the journalist and that of the writer of fiction.[4] Thus, it mixes transcriptions with history, vignettes, and "historias fabuladas" (roughly translated, "fictionalized stories") based on interviews and correspondence he has had with several of the people whom he

[4] Valle Interview by Álvaro Castillo Granada.

portrays in the work. Thus, despite the author/narrator's[5] classification of it as a *testimonio* and his protestations of the veracity of the text over and against those works that treat the theme of prostitution in Cuba but suffer from a lack of "transparency, sincerity, and objectivity and impartiality of analysis" ("la transparencia, la sinceridad y la objetividad e imparcialidad del análisis"; 17), its generic ambiguity automatically problematizes its claims to truth and objectivity, thus, adding additional layers to the debate over the epistemological reliability of the *testimonio* genre.[6] This is compounded by the fact that the author/narrator makes reference to his own involvement in sanitizing the testimonies because of their heavy use of slang and vulgarity/profanity (e.g. 207,260). In addition, the author signals on several occasions where he has altered the text, in one instance pointing out that a letter from a prostitute that he reproduced in the text was actually a "versión fabulada" ('fictionalized version'; 58). Moreover, as regards the central testimony of the book—that of Susimil—the author, in a footnote, states that, "En 1999 [...] decidí agrupar los testimonios de Susimil y *retocarlos literariamente* para ponerlos como columna vertebral de este libro" ("In 1999 [...] I decided to group together the testimonies of Susimil and *touch them up literarily* in order to place them as the backbone of this book"; 60 n 6, emphasis added). All of these things taken together

[5] I use this binarism both to recognize Valle's claims to authorship (i.e. his self-appointed role as the authorizing, journalistic witness to the truth of the text he narrates) and to signal the constructed character of the narrative voice that mediates the text.

[6] As the debate over *I, Rigoberta Menchú* has shown, the claims of the *testimonio* genre as a transparent medium for conveying "objective" and "empirical" information is tenuous due to its being a mediated text. See John Beverly, *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*. Especially the preface and introductory chapter in which, respectively, the author offers an at times acerbic synopsis of the debate and the main points of contention between himself and the main critic of the *testimonio* genre, David Stoll, as well as making a case for the nature and epistemological value of the *testimonio* (1-28). The employment of fictionalizing techniques is present from the very earliest texts to be classified as testimonio in the 1960s within Cuba—e.g. Miguel Barnet's *Canción de Rachel*, which treats the life of a "dance hall girl" during the Machado regime (1925-1933).

leave open to question exactly what is a direct transcription, what has been changed, and how.

Chapters 1 through 6 begin with testimonial accounts of Susimil in which she narrates different aspects of her adult life, from the time of her first marriage to a Cuban diplomat to the time of her residence in Mexico with her second husband, a former client. All of the chapters are then followed by a section entitled "La isla de las delicias" ("The Island of Delights") in which the author recounts the history of prostitution on the island from the time of the arrival of the Europeans to the present. This is followed by several sections which include interviews with and the testimonies of different social actors that are participants in one form or another in the world of Cuban *jineterismo*: jineteras, pimps/procurers, taxi drivers, hotel workers, drug dealers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender sex workers, black market sellers of rum and tobacco, etc.[7]

The text proper begins with two preliminary sections, "Génesis" and the "Proemio" 'Prologue' which, as their titles suggest, the narrator/author utilizes to introduce the theme of the book for the reader and contextualize how it came into being. They also set the general perspective with which the narrative material will be framed and constructed, which, from the very outset, is an unabashedly masculinist point of view which weighs heavily over the text:

> 'Las putas son esas hijas del maligno que nos hacen gozar placeres innombrables sobre una cama', me dijo un amigo católico que confesaba sentirse tentado a todas horas por ese lado oscuro del mal. Entonces se iba a un burdel clandestino en La Habana Vieja de 1990, pecaba y luego

[7] For a definition of the *jineterismo*, see the introductory chapter of the present study, p. 22-3.

> rezaba una montaña de padrenuestros y un rosario de avemarías. 'Así me siento limpio conmigo y con Dios', manifestaba. (11)
>
> 'Whores are those daughters of the evil one that make us enjoy unnamable pleasures on a bed,' a Catholic friend who use to confess to feeling tempted at all hours by that dark side of evil told me. Back then he used to go to a clandestine brothel in Old Havana of 1990, would sin and then recite The Lord's Prayer a lot and say a rosary of *Ave Marias*. 'That way I feel clean with myself and with God," he would declare.

At the core of this text stands a fundamental male ambivalence when confronted with the sex worker/*puta*. She is at once an irresistible temptation, a fount of "unnamable pleasures" with which to satiate desire and a source of contamination of which one must cleanse himself—a "daughter of evil," object of simultaneous attraction and repulsion.

As the author/narrator continues to reminisce, he recalls how that particular memory caused him to consider the fundamental question which generated the book—"¿Una puta es sólo eso?" ("Is that all a whore is?"; 11)—and return to his own experiences of finding "unnamable pleasures" in the "customary" sexual encounters that occurred at the hotels that he frequented in order to attend cultural events (11).

Not only does the author/narrator share, like his friend, in the fraternity of consumers of sexual merchandise embodied in prostitutes, but also the feeling of repulsion that accompanies it. He also remembers, upon thinking of the word *puta* once again, the night in which he accompanied a friend on a *tour sexual* in Mexico City after a drinking bout. As they drove to the red light district, they were confronted by a sex worker heavily scented with cheap perfume who, in a matter of seconds, graphically

listed a whole "menu" of services and their corresponding prices: "'Mamada francesa, cincuenta pesos; clavada turca, setenta; una hora a la cubana, cien pesos; si te gusta el dedo en el culo o que te meta un consolador, son ciento cincuenta, y un cuadro con nosotras tres y ustedes dos son trescientos pesos" ("French blowjob, fifty pesos; Turkish style, seventy; an hour *a la cubana*, a hundred pesos; if you like a finger in your ass or me to stick a vibrator in it, it'll be one hundred fifty pesos, and a group with us three and you two, three hundred pesos"; 12).

Frightened and shocked, the author/narrator insists his friend leave immediately and, after seeing the same prostitute solicit others in the rearview mirror, commands him to halt the car: "'¡Para aquí, compadre; para, carajo!'. Me bajé y vomité la cerveza, el pavo asado que habíamos comido poco antes, trozos de aceitunas, una flema verde amarillenta y el asco por la vida de aquella mujer'" ("'Stop here, man; stop, shit!'. I got out and vomited the beer, the roast turkey we had eaten shortly before, pieces of olives, a yellowish-green phlegm and disgust at the life of that woman"; 12). This reaction is a clear example of what Julia Kristeva describes as *abjection*: "Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage and muck" (2). Fundamentally, the abject reaction is a mechanism by which the subject—the "I"—seeks to protect itself from that which threatens to defile or contaminate it. By depicting his reaction to the confrontation with the Mexican prostitute as he does in the example above, the author/narrator establishes the position both he and his subject matter—the prostitute—occupy relative to one another. Vomiting is a reflexive attempt to reject the repugnant abject which confronts him and thus keep the

two separate, so as to maintain his own integrity as a "clean and proper" self (Kristeva 101).

As Kristeva explains, abjection is a primal reaction rooted in the infantile pre-linguistic state, which remits the subject that experiences it to that moment when it began to differentiate itself from its environment, including from the maternal/feminine of which it had been a part, but during which its differentiation was not yet complete (Kristeva 1-2, 6-7, 10-11, 15). Consequently the abject is simultaneously experienced as the "I" (taking the form of a possible alter ego, 9) and the "not I" and becomes a threat to the individual's identity or subjectivity (2-4). As Kristeva states, the abject is "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). As in the infantile state, the experience of the abject—the reaction known as abjection—is a means through which the individual subject attempts to establish borders between itself and that ambiguous, only partially-distinguished Other that threatens/confronts it. Furthermore, as Noelle McAfee explains: "What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood" (46). So it is that abjection is a lasting possibility and experienced throughout one's life.

Indeed, such is the persistence and power of abjection that societies have been structured around it, particularly as articulated through social institutions and codes—i.e. "Religion, Morality, and Law" (16).[8] In regards to the first of these, religion, Kristeva

[8] It must be recognized here that Kristeva is ambiguous, due to a self-admitted uncertainty on her part, on the point of which comes first, the individual experience of abjection—which gives rise to religious prohibition—or the set of social codes into which each subject is born (as a subject of language) that will

contends that, "abjection accompanies all religious structurings" (17). In monotheistic religions, such as Judaism and Christianity, abjection:

> "takes on the form of a substance (nutritive or linked to sexuality) [and] persists as *exclusion* or taboo (dietary or other) [...] but drifts over to more 'secondary' forms such as *transgression* (of the Law) within the same monotheistic economy. It finally encounters, with Christian sin, a dialectic elaboration, as it becomes integrated in the Christian Word as a threatening otherness—but always nameable, always totalizeable. (17)

Such religious systems and the codes that accompany them can be seen as institutionalized forms of abjection. Each form or system thus identifies and polices its particular abjects, seeking to control them, keep them at bay through prohibition, law, proscription, and the like, prescribing ways of purifying the abject. According to Kristeva, such prescriptions "make up the history of religions" (17).

Therefore, just as the narrator of *Jineteras* vomits his "disgust" and revulsion when confronted with "the life of that woman," thus, protecting and separating himself from her, so too his friend remits himself to religious confession and penance to distance and purify himself from the abject, thus carrying out what he can to "feel clean" and comply with the prescriptions of his religion. At work here is the operation of the function of adherence to social codes as Kristeva describes it: "An unshakable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside" (16). Through his diligent repetition after each transgression, the friend is able to isolate himself from the abject and thus maintain some

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later trigger the experience of abjection as such. As she succinctly puts it, "is the social determined by the subjective, or is it the other way around?" (67).

sense of integrity. In this way he keeps himself distinct from what Kristeva terms "the demoniacal potential of the feminine" (65), which, in this case, is manifested in the "daughters of the evil one" (Valle 11), whose power is such that it threatens his "*own and clean self*" (Kristeva 65).

And yet, both he and the narrator feel an irresistible pull toward the abject. It draws them in fascination as either overpowering temptation and/or continued source of pleasure. For his part, the narrator, immediately after attesting to the revulsion he feels when confronted with the Mexican prostitute, proceeds to talk about all the "occasional lovers," as he puts it, that have passed through his life, giving evidence once again that his encounter with her was not his last with a sex worker. This simultaneous repulsion and attraction experienced in these accounts further exemplify Kristeva's conceptualization of abjection, characterized by "the fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from" those very things experienced as abject: "what is abject [...] the jettisoned object, is radically excluded *and* draws me" (2 emphasis mine). A coincidence of desire and rejection; of looking toward and turning away, this dual tendency found at the heart of abjection will also form one of the main structuring principles of both *Jineteras* and *Tatuajes* and manifest itself in myriad forms throughout the various representations of the individual jineteras that make up his multifaceted definition he constructs in response to the original question: "'¿Una puta es sólo eso?'"

On the one hand, beyond the ambivalent experiences narrated thus far, the narrator offers an account of the musings of his "intellectual" friends and himself over their definitions of the prostitute based on personal experience (12). He discovered that they, as well as he, not surprisingly, conceived of sex workers primarily in terms of their

use value and, furthermore, a conglomeration of fragmented and depersonalized objects: "Una puta entonces comenzó a ser eso: partes apetecibles, lujuriosamente apetecibles, de una mujer sin rostro que se ocupaba de darnos placer, a veces prohibido por la moral, a veces clandestinamente necesario para vaciar viejas frustraciones matrimoniales, a veces público para acrecentar la hombría" ("A whore began to be just that: appetizing parts, lustfully appetizing, of a woman without a face that employed herself by giving us pleasure, prohibited by morals at times, at times clandestinely necessary to empty old matrimonial frustrations, at times publicly to increase our manhood"; 12). Within this fraternal order of users, the women become a faceless collection of disjointed body parts and bodily functions at the service of male appetite, desire, and ego—a fact that the narration drives home in considerable length as it lists the distinct types of prominent buttocks he personally recalls ("flácidas, celulíticas, macizas, paradas o caídas" 'flacid, cellulitic, firm, erect, fallen'), as well as those memories of his friends which highlight "dark and swollen nipples, " a "strident mewing upon penetration," or "a horrible scar running across a deflated buttock" (12).

On the other hand, in contrast to these dehumanized and fragmented sex workers who populate the experience and imagination of the narrator, it will be his encounter with a legendary *jinetera*, "de belleza proverbial, casi mítica [...] la muchacha de ademanes de reina, caminar de reina, vestidos de reina y voz de dios"("of a proverbial beauty, almost mythical [...] the girl with the manners of a queen, the gate of a queen, queenly dresses and a voice of god"; 13), that will be the main catalyst for the writing of the book, due to the crisis it provokes in the author/narrator. As opposed to the faceless bodies whose disparate conglomeration of anatomical peculiarities he has just enumerated, the

legendary *jinetera* he meets for the first time turns out to be a woman he had known as an adolescent some fifteen years before when she had been the first love of a close friend of his who was now deceased. It is she who will open many doors for him in the marginal world of Havana and whose story will form a narrative backbone of the testimonio *Jineteras* which, in turn, will also become the primary narrative material out of which the novel *Tatuajes* will be fashioned. This woman, who was known to him as Susimil, has since changed her name to Loretta, and has also been reduced to her anatomy, now known throughout Havana as "La Faraona, El Culo más Espectácular de La Habana" ("The Egyptian Queen, The most Spectacular Ass in Havana"; 15).

Thus, a certain ambiguity enters into his conception of the *jinetera* for, here, the "*puta*" gets a face and the author/narrator is forced to rethink his definition and behold the person who is at once known and unknown, a former object of veneration and currently a focus of abjection. The following description of their first encounter establishes the basis of her enigmatic quality:

> apareció *ella*, endiosada en mi recuerdo como la primera mujer y el gran amor de la vida de mi amigo [...] ella había sido un ángel con el que una vez soñó tener una familia, un hijo y envejecer.
>
> Sus ojos seguían siendo los más tiernos del universo. Una mirada de animalillo indefenso que provocaba en quien la miraba un instinto paternal de protección casi sobrehumano. Vestía una saya corta que apenas terminaba en la punta de las nalgas y una blusa transparente, negra, que cubría su busto aún perfecto. (14)

> *She* appeared, deified in my memory as the first girlfriend/woman and the great love of my friend's life [...] she had been an angel with whom he once upon a time had dreamt of having a family, a child and grow old. Her eyes continued being the tenderest in the universe. A look of a defenseless little animal that provoked an almost superhuman paternal instinct in whoever looked at her. She was wearing a short skirt that barely ended at the tip of her buttocks and a transparent, black blouse that covered her still perfect bust.

What confronts the author/narrator is the dual embodiment of purity and corruption—the deified adolescent of yesterday in whom once resided the investment of patriarchal hope and the temptress of today identified with the pleasure giving potential of her anatomy.

Upon closer examination however, the dichotomy between past and present imaginings and the split between the pure and the impure proposed as inhering respectively in those two temporal frames is problematic. Even in her younger, deified representation, she embodied an ambivalence that challenged male hegemony. She was both goddess and angel, incarnating the divine while also allied to the earthly and the animal. Indeed, the text suggests that this union of the divine and the animal reflected in the apparent frailty of her look, exerted an almost supernatural influence over the males with whom she entered into contact, amplifying their territorial instincts to "superhuman" levels. She was thus an object of paternalistic veneration and adoration but also a force that would have found her ideal expression and place contained within the bounds of heterosexual domestication through the marriage that was never consummated. As will be seen, the woman before him, now both prostitute and adolescent ideal, is, like the

feminine in general, abject, "an 'other'" (Kristeva 58), embodying an "unnamable otherness" that can be a source of abjection and fright as well as *jouissance*/pleasure (59).[9] She is a deified angel who bears the "demoniacal potential of the feminine" and thus threatens the male's "own and clean self" with "an asymmetrical, irrational, wily, uncontrollable power" (Kristeva 65, 70).

It is precisely the power that is reflected in Susimil's eyes which will later betray the change that has come about in her as the fallen angel and goddess Loretta—now a *jinetera* who thus has crossed over the patriarchal threshold, inverting the relationship of power to become an even greater threat. As the narrator approaches her upon recognizing her in an airport, her eyes register her duality once again as well as the metamorphosis she has undergone: "Tras un ligero escape de estupor, asombro y ternura en su mirada, sentí el cambio hacia una agresividad ríspida, hiriente, ajena. Una seña de su mano y un hombre bajito [...] se paró detrás de ella mientras yo me acercaba" ("After a light release of stupor, astonishment, and tenderness in her look, I sensed a change to a surly, wounding, alien aggression"; 14). As Susimil confronts the past to which the appearance of the narrator links her, the narrative invests her look with the tenderness and affection associated with the period when the two knew each other. But these sentiments are quickly stifled to be replaced by the wounding look of an aggressive and alienated being who quickly warns the author/narrator "no tengo pasado, no lo olvides" ("I don't have a past, don't you forget it"; 15).

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[9] Kristeva posits the feminine as abject based primarily on the primal need to separate and distinguish oneself from the maternal as a necessary step in the formation of the self/subject (13). Seen primarily in purification rites and rituals, this primary process of abjection becomes extended to the feminine or woman as a category. For example, certain biblical prohibitions and female purification rituals related to child birth as well as the rite of circumcision point to the operation of the symbolic order within hierarchical societies that make "defilement," "impurity," and "abomination" all attributable "to the mother and to women in general" (100).

Whereas before Susimil's power extended to passively provoking protective instincts in the males around her, she has, since becoming Loretta, learned how to harness the violent potential of male power. Both goddess and fallen angel, she is dangerous, wielding a power which wounds and converts men, such as her body guard, into an extension of her will, a parallel, perhaps, to the "archaic Mother Goddess" to which Kristeva refers, a threatening deity "who actually haunted the imagination" of the ancient Hebrews who sought to separate themselves and maintain their purity through male circumcision, female purification rites, and scriptural codification (Kristeva 100). In like fashion, the author/narrator, as he constructs the meta-*jinetera*, will continually make recourse to biblical injunctions and proscriptions—Scriptures designed to protect the male from the defiling potential of sexual immorality and the sexually unclean woman, insisting on the maintenance of female purity.

From the very beginning of the book the text locates its subject matter within the light of the Holy Writ of the Judeo-Christian symbolic system and frames both the prefatory section of the text, entitled "Génesis," and all subsequent chapters according to the condemnatory logic of scriptures which deal not only with prostitutes, but with other sexual behaviors biblically condemned, warning both women and men not to defile themselves through improper sexual dalliances. These scriptural injunctions take the form of epigraphs that preface each chapter. Some are directed at women (11, 18, 277), while others are general warnings to both sexes regarding deviant sexual behavior (59). Still others address themselves to men warning them to keep themselves pure from the ways of "evil" women (102, 145). Among the latter, we find a Scripture from the book of Proverbs in which the male reader is reminded that the commands of God are a light

which will guard him from the 'mala mujer' ("evil woman") and 'la mujer ramera' ("the harlot") because of whom, 'el hombre es reducido a un bocado de pan; y la mujer caza la preciosa alma del varón'("man is reduced to a mouthful of bread; and woman hunts the precious soul of man"; 102). Because the female, and particularly the sex worker, represents within Scripture a fundamental, aggressive threat against the purity of the male, he is cautioned against illicitly copulating with her because of the threat she represents to his integrity as a separate, pure, and clean subject.

This is also the central logic at the heart of the epigraph taken from 1 Corinthians 6.16-18: "'¿No sabéis que el que se une con una ramera es un cuerpo con ella? Porque dice: "los dos serán una sola carne" [...] Cualquier otro pecado que el hombre cometa está fuera del cuerpo; mas el que fornica, contra su propio cuerpo peca' ("Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.' [...] All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."; 145; *New International Version*). Thus, the Scripture calls for a separation from the unclean and abject woman who threatens the integrity of the male body and soul. In this way, the author/narrator, in a parallel fashion to his penitent Catholic friend, appeals to the symbolic code of religion, invoking "Prohibition and Law" to hem in and "thrust aside" the "perverse interspace of abjection" (Kristeva 16) so as to cleanse and purify.

At the same time, the narrative utilizes Scripture to fulfill a contestatory, political function, such as evidenced by the very first epigraph taken from Revelations 17.1-4 by which the work in its entirety is prefaced: "Vino entonces uno de los siete ángeles que tenían las siete copas y habló conmigo diciéndome: 'Ven acá, y te mostraré la sentencia

contra la gran ramera, la que está sentada sobre muchas aguas; con la cual han fornicado los reyes de la tierra, y los moradores de la tierra se han embriagado con el vino de su fornicación"' ("One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.'"; 11; *New International Version*). Thus, from the outset of his *testimonio*,Valle draws on the book that deals with final judgment and the end of history to pronounce doom over that which is in its genesis: the abject found in the text itself. That is, the defiled spaces and the unclean persons who occupy them. Given the purpose and content of the work, this biblical passage constitutes a not-so-thinly-veiled allegorical reference to the current state of the nation, connecting the island and the prostitute who "sits on many waters" and who has opened herself, through sex tourism, as the convergence point for the "kings" and "inhabitants" of the earth—read sex tourists—to fornicate with her. In this way, the text points allegorically to Cuba as part of an attempt to construct a moral discourse which addresses the national crisis and counter what the author has stated as the denial or silencing on the part of official discourse of the realities he portrays.[10]

[10] For example, in an interview which took place approximately a year after the Cuban government denied him reentry into the country, Valle highlights the censorship that his works have received and the contestatory nature of his work, while alleging the government's denial of the existence of *jineterismo* and other social ills: "El gobierno cubano es intolerante. [...] Y en mi caso, cuando mis obras no se han publicado en Cuba se debe a que trato temas que el gobierno quiere ocultar, aún cuando ya no pueda hacerlo. Por ejemplo, quieren negar el asunto de la prostitución y a finales del 2005, en una encuesta que se hizo en Europa un consorcio de agencias de viajes, más del ochenta por ciento de los entrevistados en el acápite de turismo individual, coincidieron en que viajaron a Cuba y República Dominicana para 'probar el calor de la carne caribeña' [...] Cuba está en el planeta tierra y que sus dirigentes piensen que allí no pueden existir esos fenómenos no impedirá que existan. Mientras tanto, sigo esperando respuesta a las preguntas que he hecho en Cuba en muchos escenarios, respuesta a las mismas preguntas que hago en mis libros." Valle "Cuba también." On Valle's exile, see Valle "When Crime Fiction is a Crime."

Therefore, through this incorporation of biblical injunctions, Valle seeks to simultaneously call forth and objectify the woman who has indeed crossed over into the world of prostitution so he may then *abject* her. For she forms part of Cuba's "bajo mundo" ("underworld" Valle 16) and is associated with human rot or putrefaction ("podredumbre humana" 16) that endangers both the individual self and Cuban society. Thus, the author/narrator assigns the many women like Loretta their abject space as abject beings, so that they, through his textual representation, become, "in the specific history of each person, the abyss that must be established as an autonomous (and not encroaching) place and distinct object" (Kristeva 100). Through his textual confrontation with the abject, Valle seeks to maintain a clear line of demarcation between defiler and (potentially) defiled, placing Scripture at the head of each chapter as the textual marker or limit set to contain that which constantly menaces to break and overflow boundaries.

The connection between religion, the abject, and literature is indeed close. As Kristeva points out, the abject lies at the center of artistic experience, which, in turn, "appears as the essential component of religiosity" (17). Being found alongside "all religious structurings," abjection is articulated through art, "that catharsis par excellence," which "utters and by the same token purifies" the abject (17). This, of course, extends to literature, which, for Kristeva, constitutes "the abject's privileged signifier" (208). *Jineteras* and its associated novel *Tatuajes* stand at the crossroads of these tendencies, combining the elements of the religious and the artistic expressed through the literary, always with the abject at their heart as the driving force. In addition, Valle exemplifies what Kristeva holds up as the relationship of the writer to the abject: "The writer, fascinated by the abject, imagines its logic, projects himself into it, introjects

it" (16). Entering their world, he reconstructs the *jinetera* through his personal contact with the many women who form the composite image of the phenomenon. In this way the text calls into being the abject object to be separated, summoning that which it seeks to cast aside and, thus, illustrates what Kristeva has identified as one of literature's key relationships to the abject: "literature may also involve not an ultimate resistance to but an unveiling of the abject: an elaboration, a discharge, and a hollowing out of abjection" (208). Thus Valle's text articulates—even as it resists the "underworld" filled with "human putrefaction'—a marginal contact zone where the author/narrator places himself at risk as he penetrates the abject spaces of *jineterismo*, casting himself as a self-appointed warrior to confront and engage in battle with that which holds him simultaneously fascinated and repulsed.

Indeed, the personal struggle out of which the book is generated revolves around the crisis provoked within the author upon encountering Susimil/Loretta in the airport and his subsequent contact with her. We discover that he actually becomes jealous of one of Susimil's lovers when she tells the author/narrator that she likes him (38). But that confession of hers will pale in comparison—as will his reaction—to her more explicit proclamation: "—Me gusta hasta como me clava" ("'I even like how he fucks me'"; 39), before which he has to lower his head because, "No quería que viera la humedad repentina de mis ojos, la crispación de mi rostro: esa Loretta que hablaba como una puta cualquiera nada tenía que ver con la Susimil que trataba de salvar en mi memoria" ("I didn't want her to see the sudden dampness of my eyes, the twitching of my face: this Loretta that spoke like a common whore had nothing to do with the Susimil that I was trying to save in my memory"; 39). The personal crisis that he documents here before the

dichotomous creature Susimil/Loretta exemplifies abjection: "On the edge of nonexistence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture" (2). It will be precisely from and in culture where the abject will be summoned forth and unveiled to be purified. Out of the narrator's internal conflict between the attraction which causes him jealously and the repulsion caused by the "common whore" Loretta, will eventually be born the book *Jineteras* and, incidentally, a pretext to craft an aspect of his own persona as heroic crusader against government denial and the "underworld" of "human rot".

At first, the heroic impulse is blocked by an inertia abetted by fear. After the confrontation with Susimil/Loretta that brought him to tears, he confesses the following: "Intenté olvidarlo todo, con el miedo ahí, cincelándome el cerebro, pero también me fastidiaba pensar en un futuro en el cual tuviera que avergonzarme por mi cobardía y silencio." ("I tried to forget everything, with fear there, chiseling my brain, but thinking about a future in which I would be forced to be ashamed of my cowardice and silence also vexed me." ;39). Soon, his concern for his own failure to confront the angel/demon for the future's sake overcomes his apprehension and prompts him to action: "La rebelión vino sola y se metió en la sangre, desterrando poco a poco, pieza por pieza, el fantasma del miedo" ("The revolt came of its own accord and entered my blood, banishing little by little, bit by bit, the phantom of my fear."; 39) and launches him on a quest to "buscar datos, ver gente, publicar" (search for information, see people, publish"; 39). Thus the "phantasmagoric" dual split of the fallen angel Susimil/Loretta embodies his fear but also serves as the catalyst toward the purifying catharsis of writing the *jinetera*—the symptom

and invasive, impure body that threatens to corrupt not only the author/narrator, but Cuban society as well.

Hence, as he insists toward the end of Jineteras, one of his chief aims in writing the book was to make the reader aware of the existence of a "terrible" world that they should fight and from which they ought to protect themselves (281). Furthermore, he outlines how he conscientiously crafted the text toward that end, choosing his materials to provoke a singular effect among his reading public:

> Asumí el derecho de no incluir [algunas] entrevistas para reforzar la visión apocalíptica de muchos de los protagonistas de estas historias reales, precisamente para que el lector recibiera sin tibieza el impacto de un mundo amoral, sucio, denigrante y absolutamente inhumano. Sólo de ese modo creí lograr lo que pretendía: que la gente sufriera, se molestara, se asqueara, se preocupara. (281)
>
> I assumed the right to not include [some] interviews in order to reinforce the apocalyptic vision of many of the protagonists of these real stories, precisely so that the reader would receive, undiluted, an amoral, dirty, denigrating and absolutely inhuman world. Only in that way did I believe I could achieve what I intended: that people suffer, be bothered, be disgusted, and become worried.

Just as he had vomited when confronted by the sex worker in Mexico City, so he reacts here in a different type of abjection process. Through these texts the narrator will purge himself of all the faceless body parts he has consumed to find among the many voices and faces of the women he has interviewed, a way to piece together the object he seeks to

expel, converting a personal into a collective catharsis through the power of the symbolic word. From the vomit-inducing Mexican sex worker, to the women with whom he enters into contact during the writing of the book, to finally encountering his fallen angel Susimil/Loretta, he has found in the *jinetera* the ultimate object to purge textually. As Kristeva argues: "By suggesting that literature is [abjection's] privileged signifier, I wish to point out that, far from being a minor, marginal activity in our culture [...] this kind of literature, or even literature as such, represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and serious apocalypses" (208)[11]. Indeed, both *Jineteras* and its novelistic companion, *Tatuajes* find their function as a primary means to unveil and discharge the abject—a literature carefully crafted to call forth the apocalypse, provoke loathing, and warn against that which it brings into being: the defiled and defiling symptom and incarnation of what populates and moves through the apocalyptic landscapes of the Havana of the special period.

In the remainder of my consideration of the text *Jineteras*, I focus more closely on the interactions of the narrator with two other sex workers so as to more thoroughly analyze the symbiotic dialectic of attraction/repulsion that has gone into the production of the narrative's abject. I place particular emphasis on the attraction side of the binary as manifested in male desire. In this way I hope to balance what has thus far primarily demonstrated the repulsion the narrative has registered in its articulation of the abject.

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[11] By "this kind of literature," Kristeva refers to the works of the French author Céline whose texts she adduces as exemplary of literary abjection and to which she dedicates almost half of her essay (see 133-210). I note here also that this passage demonstrates Kristeva's uncertainty as to the question of whether all literature is, as a product of the artistic experience (which itself is "rooted in the abject"), an act of abjection, or just certain works such as Céline's. Although this seems to be unsolvable, I see some texts, such as the ones under current study, clearly as works of abjection.

As we have seen, through the combination of Holy Scripture and his own writing, the author/narrator effects an act of abjection to protect both himself and his society from that which constantly threatens to invade, undo and corrupt. Secondly, we saw that his confrontation with the enigmatic figure of the angelic/demonic Susimil/Loretta produces a crisis from which he ultimately emerges, having conquered his fear to take on a heroic persona. Consequently, just as holds true for the construction of the females within the narrative and the text as a whole, the author/narrator is born in and as an act of abjection.

Thus, after his tear-provoking encounter with Susimil, the author/narrator's first interview with a *jinetera* will take place as a result of a type of consecrating chance chivalric episode in which he will rescue a woman from her abusive pimp as the latter beats her—a corrupt police officer who has four women who work for him and whom the narrator will attack by kicking him repeatedly and, subsequently, assist the sex worker to make an escape. In this way, this episode establishes an identity for the author/narrator that places him on the "clean" and separate side of the abject spaces through which he moves and distinguishes him from the abject denizens with whom he comes into contact. Nevertheless, abjection is always marked by a simultaneous repulsion and attraction and these qualities will mark the text throughout even as we have seen with Susimil/Loretta.

This is again seen in his interaction with Greta, the abused woman he rescues from the policeman/pimp. Upon arriving to her apartment in Old Havana, a once luxurious building now in decay and whose steps inside are filled with the stench emanating from a puddle of urine at the bottom flight, the narrator makes the following contrasting impressionistic description as the sex worker he has recently rescued urinates: "Sentí el chorro de orines, fuerte, largo, y luego su vaho caliente, sensual, regándose por

el cuarto, bien distinto de ese otro que había olido en la escalera, allá abajo. Este era un olor muy suave, dulzón podría decir, y aún lo respiraba, disfrutándolo, cuando ella salió" ("I heard the stream of urine, strong, long, and then smelled its hot and sensual fume, spreading throughout the room, quite distinct from what I had smelled on the stairway, there below. This was a very smooth odor, sweet you could say, and I was still breathing it, enjoying it, when she came out.";40-1). And so, not only does he rescue the fallen damsel in distress—a self-legitimating act and/or a form of purification, perhaps—but his attraction also makes clean that which her body excretes—a substance "normally" associated with the abject, as was demonstrated by his reaction to the urine on the stairway. Continuing in his state of pleasurable fascination, he describes her scopophilically as he denudes her textually. Aroused, he is unable to speak and, therefore, fails to answer her when she asks if he'd like sex in repayment for his having rescued her. Instead he continues to describe for the reader the spectacle that she presents to his senses and the pleasure he derives from it:

> Estaba de espaldas. No me turbé cuando la vi quitarse la blusa, desabotonando los diminutos botones de su espalda. Tenía un lunar de pelos casi justo en el centro. Y sólo entonces sentí un latigazo entre las piernas y lo calmé con un apretón en los güevos que disimulé rascándome después la parte interior del muslo. Ella se había quitado el leotardo y de un golpe de vista descubrí que no llevaba blúmer. La seguí con la mirada mientras caminaba desnuda hasta la cómoda, a un lado de la cama, y no pude dejar de suspirar, casi de alivio, cuando la vi ponerse una bata de casa de florones amarillos. (41)

> She had her back to me. It didn't really bother me when I saw her take off her blouse, unbuttoning the tiny buttons in back. She had a hairy mole exactly in the middle. And only then did I feel a lash of the whip between my legs which I calmed with a squeeze of my balls as I pretended to scratch my inner thigh. She had taken off her leotard and with one glance I discovered that she wasn't wearing any underwear. I followed her with my eyes while she walked up to the chest of drawers in the nude, to one side of the bed, and I couldn't help sighing, almost in relief, when I saw her put on her yellow-flowered housecoat.

Thus, it is once again the abject which attracts him. As in the case of her pleasurable and enjoyable urine it is the abject hairy mole which actually arouses him. Bound in morbid fascination by the gradual disrobing of the sex worker, he is further held captive by her every move and the presence of her body and bodily functions. When she at last covers herself, interrupting his view, he is released from the thrall in which he has been held, able to breathe a sigh in relief.

To further explore such representations and the role that male desire and the male gaze play in the organization and content of the narrative portrayals of the women found in *Jineteras,* I turn to Laura Mulvey who, in her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," borrows on psychoanalytic theory to deconstruct the way in which Hollywood film, as an expression of a patriarchal symbolic order, has objectified women for male pleasure (15).

In the filmic medium objectification is organized and carried out principally through the operation of scopophilia—the obtaining of pleasure through looking—which,

as Mulvey contends, grounding her argument in Freud's theories, is "associated [...] with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (16). The cinematic lens, as a tool of "patriarchal culture," is an extension of the "determinant" "male gaze" and a tool of scopophilic practice through which the male protects himself from the threat of castration that the woman's anatomy represents (15-9). On the one hand, scopophilia may construct the woman as a fetishistic object, rendering her a "reassuring rather than dangerous figure" through augmenting "the beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself" (21). On the other hand, Mulvey maintains that scopophilia may express itself as a sadistic voyeurism in which, at times, the pleasure obtained through the objectification and control of the woman manifests itself as the desire to "investigate the woman, demystifying her mystery [and] ascertaining her guilt [...] asserting control and subjugating the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness" (21-2). These characteristics that Mulvey associates with voyeurism are also present in *Jineteras.*

Remembering that *Jineteras* has been generated precisely to investigate the mystery of the *jinetera* ("Is that all a whore is?") and demystify her with the express purpose of exposing and purging the threat she represents, it can be argued that the text, written from the male perspective, indeed seeks to control and subjugate these "daughters of the evil one." As scriptural prohibitions policing the narrative, the epigraphs proclaim the guilt and final punishment of all who participate in the abject actions associated with commercial sex—woman, client, and "king" alike. Furthermore, women in Valle's narrative are indeed organized around a scopophilic logic in which we see a construction of the female according to both fetishistic and voyeuristic impulses, which accompany

and complement the operation of attraction and repulsion characteristic of the abjection process. Therefore, in the above voyeuristic description of the narrator's encounter with Greta and the mute, almost breathless state in which he beholds her disrobe, fetishization mediates the confrontation with what in most cases would constitute the abject—urine and a hairy mole. This, in turn, triggers a pleasurable reaction of erotic arousal with hints of sadomasochistic enjoyment (the "lash of the whip between my legs"). The narrator's desire thus attaches to the woman/object that meets his gaze and other senses and is constructed according to the pleasure and/or repulsion she provokes.

However, most often the narrative constructs a frustrated fetish—an idealized woman who then becomes threatened by and threatens with defilement, her attractive, ideal quality tarnished and, consequently, the object of frustration, lament, and disgust. Such is the case of Susimil, "la endiosada" 'the deified', whose idealized being and image the author desperately tries to preserve even in the face of Loretta. Yet, as we have seen, even in her "angelic" state, she was the bearer of a supernatural and threatening power. Alternatively, in her abject state as the prostitute Loretta, her enticing "perfect bust" and the way her skirt barely comes to the bottom of her buttocks hint at the pleasure to be obtained by viewing (and describing) her. In this way, the fetishism and voyeurism of the scopophilic often appear as tools for the construction of distinct female subjects (objects?) according to the impulses of attraction and repulsion that constitute the abject and thus create an ambivalent object of a frustrated desire that alternates between cleanliness and libidinous indulgence.

One finds a further illustration of this scopophilic abjection in the author/narrator's description of the fifteen-year-old Taty, "la Fabulosa" 'the Fabulous,'

his encounter with whom constitutes one of the most difficult and troublesome "por ofensiva, por hiriente" ("because of being offensive and wounding"; 206) he experienced. As he articulates his simultaneous attraction and repulsion, we are told that she is of such a "proverbial beauty" that "[p]ocas veces la naturaleza reúne tanta perfección en una mujer" ("rarely does nature bring together such perfection in a woman"; 206), and given her diminutive size, she carries about her appearance a "magic halo of innocence" ("una aureola mágica de inocencia"; 206). And yet this beauty and apparent purity become a pose and a tool of seduction as she practices her "unnatural" and "abnormal trade," using this added quality to entice tourists. In addition, her "indecent" and extremely "offensive" language also work to ruin the air of youthful innocence that surrounds her. Again, the libidinous male gaze is operative in the author/narrator's account of this young sex worker as he continues to describe his simultaneous repulsion and instinctual attraction upon viewing nude photos of her "en poses tan provocativas eróticamente, tan pornográficas, que resultaba asquerosa, repulsiva, aunque algunas despertaran también ese libido que la decencia oculta en algún rincón del cerebro de los que no estamos acostumbrados de ningún modo al ataque cotidiano de la pornografía" ("in such, pornographic, such erotically provocative poses, it ended up being repugnant, repulsive, although a few of the poses might manage to awaken that libido that decency hides in some corner of the brain of those of us who are not accustomed in any way to the daily attack of pornography"; 206). Using such statements as the latter to separate and distinguish himself both from her and the types of people who are frequent users of pornography, he yet documents his arousal upon seeing her at the same time he protests his disgust.

Taty is also an object of what could be termed the *aural-* or *audio*philic pleasure of the author/narrator and his friends. As the former circulates the cassette tape of his interview with her, it quickly becomes "el casete más oído por mí y por todos mis amigos" ("It was the most listened to cassette by myself and all of my friends" (207). And yet, at the same time, he feels driven to cleanse her language of its abject corruption, sanitizing the transcription from the linguistic detritus of "una vida consagrada desde la más temprana edad a la podredumbre y la mierda" ("a life consecrated from the youngest age to corruption and shit"; 207).

Taty thus parallels Susimil in her innocence and Loretta in her perverse, "fallen" state, combining the best and worst of both possible worlds for the author/narrator who shows himself to be fascinated by their youthful and adolescent beauty, which he spiritualizes, making of them both angelic creatures. Yet, at the same time, he suffers a paradoxical consequence of his particular instance of abjection, both wounded and aroused by their fallen state. Taty simultaneously incarnates both the angel and the demon and thus provokes for the author/narrator a rehearsal of his trauma before Susimil/Loretta—the enshrined, yet fallen, goddess.

Thus, the women within the narrative are constructed as part of the process of abjection, according to the logic of the scopophilic male gaze which employs a voyeuristic and fetishistic dual lense that articulates the attraction and repulsion inherent in the narrative object as abject. At times absolute in its denouncing of what it identifies as disgusting, at others, brimming over with libidinous pleasure, this dichotomy produces a contradictory text that revels in that which it condemns and thus reflects what Kristeva holds as part of the contradictory nature of textual abjection: "as the sense of abjection is

both the abject's judge and accomplice, this is also true of the literature that confronts it. One might say that with such a literature there takes place a crossing over of the dichotomous categories of Pure and Impure, Prohibition and Sin, Morality and Immorality" (16). Thus, *Jineteras* is fundamentally an ambivalent text in that it creates abject spaces and objects corresponding to the voyeuristic subject positions of the male gaze, simultaneously pronouncing judgment even as it takes pleasure in the spectacle of what it classifies as human rot and putrefaction.

Because of its centrality and importance to the narrative, being the only story and testimony to which textual space is dedicated in all chapters but the last, I now offer a brief synopsis of the rest of Susimil/Loretta's trajectory as outlined in *Jineteras*. Thus far we have looked primarily at the point at which author/narrator meets up with the friend of his adolescent years after she is well established as a *jinetera* of some renown within the marginal sectors of Havana. Basing his narrative reconstruction of her life primarily on a mixture of interviews and correspondence with her, he retells parts of her courtship and marriage at eighteen years of age to a young *machista* diplomat from Havana, the psychological and sexual abuse she would suffer at his and his father's hands, and their subsequent separation. She left him when he began prostituting her among former associates and acquaintances for favors and cash after falling into disgrace with the Castro regime and losing his privilege and access to money. Freed of him, she began to work as a *jinetera* in the tourist sectors of Havana where she met a wealthy Mexican client who fell madly in love with her and set her up in an expensive apartment, which she then converted into a high-class brothel for the women whom she eventually employed. With the money she earned from this enterprise, together with that garnered

from her husband, she eventually leaves him behind and moves to France where she once again changes her name to Selene, falling in love with and wedding a French actor (223-8). According to the narrative, her time in France was brief, for, having only arrived in the spring of 1995, she died in the summer of 1996 of AIDS, infected by her French husband who had died earlier without having ever told her of his illness. Her body was found in a room of a rundown hotel in a marginal sector of Toulouse (228). The author/narrator was informed of her death when he received a telegram from a mutual friend. He thus closes his treatment of Susimil, but not before reminding us once again of the final abject state in which she was found: "Avisado por la policía francesa gracias al pasaporte cubano que encontraron, Armando Fernández, un amigo común, fue semanas después a la morgue de la ciudad y reconoció que era ella, Susimil, Loretta, Selene, el cadáver inflado que había aparecido en un cuartucho de hotel en un barrio marginal" ("Notified by the French police thanks to the Cuban Passport that they found, Amrmando Fernández, a mutual friend, went weeks later to the city morgue and recognized that the bloated cadaver that had appeared in a rundown room of a hotel in a marginal neighborhood was she, Susimil, Loretta, Selene"; 228).

Yet, there is a note of hope, since their mutual friend had received a post card from her a few weeks prior with a note that said: "Perdí el miedo a la muerte gracias a Cristo, espero irme junto a él" ("I lost my fear of death thanks to Christ, I hope to go be with him"; 227) to which the narrator comments: "Podemos suponer la liberación espiritual que significó para ella su muerte" ("We can assume the spiritual liberation that her death meant for her"; 228). That is, in her death abjection has been made complete, her purification realized in the extinguishing of her material existence. Furthermore, the

text informs us on the dedication page at the beginning of the book of an addition that was made to the original dedication as a result of the news of Susimil's death. Here, we find the following: "Por eso, y porque ella, en sus últimos días, entregó su alma a nuestro Salvador: A Loretta, La Faraona, / El Culo más Espectacular de La Habana, / o lo que es igual: /A Susimil, sencillamente; amiga siempre, / ojalá en brazos del Señor" ("Therefore, and because she, in her last days, surrendered her soul to our Savior: To Loretta, The Egyptian Queen, / The most Spectacular Ass in Havana, / or, what amounts to the same thing: / To Susimil, plain and simple; a friend always, / hopefully in the arms of the Lord"; 7). And so, stripped and purified of her grand title as the abject *jinetera*, she becomes once again simply his friend Susimil. However, with the use of "ojalá" 'hopefully', the narrative still places in doubt whether or not she is finally restored and fully made clean, perhaps a lingering uncertainty as to which side of her dual nature in the end won out—the angel or the daughter of the evil one.

However, even as this book accounts in some measure for the existence and import of Susimil and her final end, the textual work of abjection inspired by Susimil is not yet exhausted. For she will form the protagonist of the novel *Tatuajes*, set at a crucial moment in her own life and that of the nation, which finds itself at the height of what Louis Pérez Jr. terms the "apocalyptic phase" of the *período especial* (320). Indeed, the slow yet inexorable deterioration of Havana weighs heavily over the narrative present of the novel whose action occurs some two to three years after her entrance into the world of commercial sex within the tourist zones of Havana after abandoning her abusive husband. The novel will thus continue the work of abjection begun in *Jineteras*, offering a more in-

depth portrayal of the overdetermined marginal spaces through which Loretta must walk as a *jinetera* as well as the social processes involved in her becoming an abject being.

Yet, even while we as readers of the novel accompany her in her struggles for survival through the urban decay and "podredumbre humana" of which *Jineteras* speaks, we also follow, by way of a series of letters and flashbacks, what has brought her to that point—her gradual [d]evolution from a naïve, young, and rustic girl from the country to the streetwise *jinetera* who stands before us now. In this way, the narrative constructs a narrative in which the protagonist, living within a predatory web of self-interest, finally, at the end of an almost fatalistic series of events, turns from being a somewhat ingenuous and ignorant woman to one who erases her past, hardens her heart, and fully commits to a survivalist individualism, assuming the nocturnal lifestyle of the Havana sex worker. In short, this novel traces the social forces and personal choices that will lead an old friend to an alienating and decisive moment in her life, molding her into the character that will one day confront the author/narrator of *Jineteras* in an airport to warn him with an aggressive and wounding look to forget her past.

In this way, as *Tatuajes* continues the abjection process begun in *Jineteras*, it will incorporate some of the same materials surrounding Susimil and some of the other characters—at times recycling them verbatim, while also expanding and incorporating new narrative material. In addition to the more lengthy and detailed portrayals of the urban landscape of the Special Period, among the most notable of the new elements are her mother's influence, who is almost absent from the *testimonio*, and a pivotal role for her friend Farah, previously mentioned only briefly. In addition, not only has the first term of the progressive duality of identity Susimil/Loretta been changed to Blanca—

symbolically underscoring and intensifying the adolescent purity and innocence of the woman before the fall—but also, and perhaps most strikingly, the identification of Blanca/Loretta as *mulata*—that overly-determined racialized and hyper-sexualized discursive figure, which, since the nineteenth century in Cirilo Villaverde's novel *Cecilia Valdés* has assumed, as Vera Kutzinski argues, prominence within the Cuban literary imaginary as "a product of mostly white and distinctly masculine desire" (12). However, as Loretta informs a recent arrival to the world of *jineteo* whom she befriends: "soy mulata, es decir, la raza codiciada por el noventa por ciento de los turistas" ("I'm a mulata, that is, the race that ninety percent of tourists crave"; *Tatuajes* 23), thus signaling that the Cuban mulata is a point of fixation not only within the Cuban national imaginary, but also a highly competitive object of *Euromale* desire within the contact zone.

Structurally, the novel consists of seven chapters whose contents alternate between the present and the past, employing flashbacks and unsent letters of confession that Loretta writes to her mother to reconstruct her life and indicate what has brought her to this point. These chapters are framed by an opening and a closing section respectively entitled "Paraíso" 'Paradise' and "Infierno" 'Hell'. In the opening lines of the former, we find the protagonist at the funeral of one of her few dear friends in the marginal world of *jineterismo* she now inhabits, a gay sex worker known as Farah La Suprema. With the loss of Farah to AIDS and herself suffering from an unidentified STD for which she self-administers shots of penicillin, she falls ever more deeply into a crisis of uncertainty and fear, having lost a confidant and counselor who helped her survive her early days as a *jinetera* (*Jineteras* 186-7). Indeed, Farah's advice forms the final articulation of the

central lesson that Blanca/Loretta learns as part of her character development—a lesson of self-interested survival that has been taught to her since she was a child.

Before analyzing the novel in its entirety, I begin at the end—at that crucial moment which marks the climax of the novel and a turning point within the protagonist's life trajectory. It is here at the end that the full weight of the repressive external and internal factors of abjection reach their maximum as she ponders the lessons of her life and to what she has been reduced against the backdrop, or, rather, from within the putrid and oppressive built environment that marks the Havana of the *período especial*, which serves as the stage for her protagonism as she finally decides to, "empinarse desde la mierda" that the Havana of the special period represents.

Indeed, the capital city will be portrayed unflinchingly as a place of filth and decay while "mierda" 'shit' assumes the prominent position as an urban descriptor: "Cuánta suciedad se acumulaba en aquella ciudad. La Habana era un lugar hermoso, sí, cree que incluso agresiva, modernamente hermoso, pero podía compa-rarse [sic] a una fábrica enorme, de excremento y churre" ("What a great amount of filth accumulated in that city. Havana was a beautiful place, that much was true, she even thought that it was beautiful in an aggressive and modern way, but one could compare it to an enormous factory of excrement and grime"; 43-4).[12] The description continues pointing out the dung produced by the dogs throughout the city, the rubble of decaying buildings that continues to mount upward to the sky, the overflowing trashcans filled with worms that invaded dwellings, the rivers of urine flowing over the street corners to run down the

[12] The decaying urban environment of Havana forms a central theme of many works written by Cuban authors during the special period. Some of the most well known texts include: the novels *La nada cotidiana* (1995) and *Te di la vida entera* (1996) by Zoé Valdés; the novels Trilogía sucia de la Habana (1998), *El rey de la Habana* (1999), and *Animal tropical* (2000) by Pedro Juan Gutiérrez; and the short story "Un arte de hacer ruinas" by José Antonio Ponte (2000).

street, plastic shopping bags filled with excrement and tossed into the street by people who preferred that method to using the collective bathrooms used in many of the apartment buildings.

At last the lengthy narrative description reaches its climax, showing the truly abject nature of the city: "La Habana era, vista así, una ciudad donde se rendía culto a la fealdad, un sitio convertido en el estercolero de millones de personas ya acostumbradas a vivir en la mierda, reproducirse entre la mierda, comer tranquilamente rodeados de mierda, oler a mierda y grajo y polvo seco y salitre y gasolina" ("Havana, was, seen from that angle, a city where ugliness was worshipped, a place turned into the dung heap of millions of people who were already accustomed to live in shit, to reproduce among shit, to eat tranquilly while surrounded by shit, smelling like shit and BO and dry dust and saltpeter and gasoline"; 44). In its employment of the technique of accumulation, the text thus unequivocally constructs the abject stage upon which to emplot its abjection of Blanca/Loretta.

In a parallel passage at the end, the novel evokes this same landscape. As Blanca/Loretta climbs to the rooftop of the building in which she lives to confront her past and face her future, we are presented with the following scene:

> Desde el piso le sube en efluvios aislados el hedor del orín y la mierda seca de los perros. Era cierto. Cuando se mira la ciudad desde una azotea como aquella, se tenía la idea de que todo estaba lleno de mierda, de que la gente se paseaba entre las plastas, los latones de basura en las esquinas, los desagües y las cañerías rotas inundando las calles con piscinas de agua

> pestilente y los escombros de los edificios cubriéndose de bolsas de nylons llenas de basura, como enormes montañas con los picos nevados. (187)
>
> From the floor the stench of urine and dried dog shit emanates up to her. It was true. When one looks at the city from a rooftop like that one, one has the idea that everything was filled with shit, that people strolled among the turds, the trashcans on the corners, the drains and broken sewer pipes flooding the streets with pools of pestilent water and the rubble of the buildings becoming covered with plastic bags filled with trash, like enormous snowcapped mountains.

Indeed, the abject quality of the environment is so pronounced, its burgeoning, putrid growth so potent, that it corrupts the smell of the sea which has been tainted even beyond the power of its own salt to purify it, the built environment paralleling the text's portrait of a society in decay.

It is from this vantage point that Blanca/Loretta considers her past, her present, and future, pondering her life experience and remembering the words of her deceased friend Farah who reminded her exactly of the nature of the stage which she occupies and the futile fact that, however hard she may fight, she lives "en una ciudad de perdedores, en un país de perdedores, en un mundo de perdedores" ("in a city of losers, in a country od losers, in a world of losers"; 186)—words which echo her thoughts of a few moments before as she contemplated her own loneliness in a context in which she has experienced such profound change: "Era cierto: estaba, estaría, seguiría eternamente sola. La Habana, el mundo, el planeta había cambiado tanto que a nadie importaba los sueños de una mujer como ella" ("It was true: she was, she would be, and would continue to be eternally

alone. Havana, the world, the planet had changed so much that the dreams of a woman like her didn't matter to anyone"; 186). It is within this setting of rot and human selfishness that she realizes that she must come to terms with the fact that "sólo significaban algo sus propios sueños" ("only her own dreams meant something"; 186). Words which, in effect, summarize the ultimate teaching of Farah who, prior to dying, told her that, for one who dwells within the ever tightening concentric circles of a society and world filled with lost people, "no se puede dejar que el corazón piense" ("you can't let your heart think"; 186), and that therefore, "Debes tatuarte el corazón [...] Debes escribirte con el punzón de tu vida que sólo te importes tú misma, que el resto del mundo es una mierda" ("You should tatoo your heart [...] You should carve on yourself with the dagger of your own life that you're the only one you care about, that the rest of the world is shit"; 186). And so it is this acidic and naturalistic logic of survivalist solipsism that constitutes what Blanca/Loretta must learn, even as she contemplates all that has transpired in her life to bring her to that abject place from which she must decide her future direction. Feeling overwhelmingly desolate, she asks herself:

> ¿Tendría sentido seguir? [...] ¿Hasta dónde tenía que llegar para darse cuenta de que todo era una mierda? ¿Sería aquél su destino? Si lo era, y Farah tenía razón, entonces la alternativa era única: joderse, empinarse desde la mierda y seguir caminando buscando ensuciarse lo menos posible en toda aquella podredumbre que la rodeaba. ¿Valía la pena soñar? (186)
>
> Did it make any sense to go on? [...] How far did she have to go until she realized that everything was a piece of shit? Was that her destiny? If it was, and Farah was right, then there was only one alternative: fuck it, lift

> herself up out of the shit and keep on walking and try to get the least dirty as possible in all that rot that surrounded her. Was dreaming even worth it?

There on that shit-filled and urine-soaked rooftop, Blanca/Loretta must come to terms with the ultimate question of the point of continuing on alone—a decision that she soon comes to, when a few moments later, she absently takes out the unsent letters to her mother that contain not only the memories of the bad experiences which have served to shape her, but also the dreams for her future she recorded in them. Wondering why she ever wrote them, she slowly sets fire to them until "desaparece el ultimo vestigio de blancura bajo el negro retorcido de la ceniza" ("the last vestige of whiteness disappears under the twisted blackness of the ash";188). With the destruction of the whiteness associated with her past, Loretta finally releases herself from the last vestiges of the innocent, ignorant Blanquita of yesteryear, to assume a decisive consciousness directed toward serving the self.

And so, complaining aloud to Farah of the intensity of the pain she feels from the tattoos he recommended she place on her heart, she "loses herself" amongst the buildings—"monstruos de la noche, deformes, enormes y cuadrados" ("monsters of the night, deformed, enormous, and square"; 189)— where she "[s]e hunde en la noche. Las sombras caen como un manto negro y frío sobre su cabeza" ("sinks into the night. The shadows fall like a cold and black mantle over her head"; 191). In this way, the text offers the final portrait of a woman who, despite overwhelming pressures, decides to exercise what limited agency she can within a world which is portrayed as overwhelmingly abject. At the same time, it constructs the turning point in the life of the

author/narrator's old friend Susimil and how she came to be "[t]hat Loretta that spoke like a common whore" who provoked him to take up the textual abjection of the blight of *jineterismo* that plagued the nation when he ran into her one day at an airport (*Jineteras* 39).

Thus, having looked at the ending of the story and the turning point in her life trajectory, I now examine the text's proposal of what has brought her to that place. I first focus on its depiction of Blanca/Loretta's social construction and subsequently move to a consideration of the text's narrative use of the scopophilic gaze. I then conclude with the examination of a particular type of discourse that the text produces and links with a patriarchal social structure.

In its portrayal of the protagonist's character development, the text offers a representation of those social forces which have produced Blanca/Loretta as an abject being, and by which it also effectuates its abjection of her—that is, through the text's representation of the social vectors of gender, class, and race that intersect and converge in what sociologist Patricia Hill Collins terms a "matrix of domination" (221-38) within which the protagonist moves and must negotiate her existence and vital life experience even as it shapes and molds her from the time of her childhood.[13]

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[13] Hill Collins, in her development of her theory of "Black feminism" offers the following working definition of her analytical approach: "Instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, Black feminist thought sees these distinctive systems of oppression as being part of one overarching structure of domination [...] Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination" (222, 226). While applied by Hill Collins particularly to the experience of African-American women, it is an analytical approach which has gained currency for the study of the experience of other groups and is sometimes called "intersectionality." Compare the similarity of the following definition by Floya Anthias: "Gender, ethnicity and class are primary social divisions involving distinctive relations of differentiation and stratification, which in relation to one another, provide the formation of both life conditions and life chances" (846). I here use these same categories to analyze the social formation of Blanca/Loretta proposed by the text.

The first social factor in Blanca/Loretta's formation that I analyze is that of social class. Her mother will be the conduit of Blanca's first lessons in the economic realities that mark her inheritance as a *guajira* ("peasant") from a poorer, small rural town in Santiago de Cuba. Writing to her mother while working as a *jinetera* in Havana, she remembers the stark contrast between her carefree and wasteful opulent life with her diplomat husband, Raydel, and "esa filosofía que te vi sentir, defender y hasta sufrir cuando estaba con ustedes: 'lo que consigues hoy tienes que distribuirlo para que te dure mañana y pasado mañana, a ver si en ese tiempo cae otra cosa'" ("what you get today you have to stretch out so it lasts you until tomorrow and the day after, and see if in that time something else comes your way"; 62). Thus, subsistence living, hand-to-mouth, marked her early years. Indeed, reflecting back on it, she wonders what exactly of worth she inherited from her mother in contrast to the nepotistic favoritism and "vida fácil" ("easy life") that "pasaba como herencia de padres a hijos" ("passed like an inheritance from fathers to sons"; 62) within the upper echelons of the Cuban government among whom she later moved when married to Raydel. In stark contrast to this type of luxury, she pointedly asks of her mother: "¿Qué heredé de ti? La tristeza. La resignación [...] heredé la costumbre de vivir en la miseria sin quejarme, sin aspirar más que a conseguir un bocado y ya eso era la felicidad, como les pasa a millones de gente en este paisito" ("What did I inherit from you? Sadness. Resignation [...] I inherited the custom of living in misery without complaining, without aspiring to more than getting a mouthful of food and that was happiness enough, like what happens to millions of people in this little country"; 62). Even as it underscores Blanca/Loretta's social class, the text offers

oblique, embedded criticisms of the regime and the economic disparity even within the Revolution.[14]

The core of her mother's economic wisdom is best summarized, perhaps, in the following passage spoken to Blanquita when she was just a child: "'—Cada persona trata de sobrevivir del modo en que pueda hacerlo, mi'ja'—dijiste también--. 'Cuando seas más grande, tendrás que buscar por ti misma tu manera de vivir, no se te olvide" ("'Everybody tries to survive the best way they can, honey,' you said too. 'When you're bigger, you'll have to look for your own way to make a living, don't forget it'"; 91). Indeed, this survivalist maxim will serve her well when, in the throws of the *período especial*, she abandons Raydel to fend for herself in the streets of Havana.

The basic need for individual involvement in seeking to survive is not the only lesson to be learned, but also the necessity of learning how to play the system, for the above quote occurs as part of a harsh childhood lesson her mother imparted to her as the result of Blanquita's having complained of their town's Communist Party leader and boss at the local lemon oil factory whom she considered "buena gente como hay pocos y resolvía nuestros problemas" ("good guy like very few and he would resolve our problems" ;91). "El gordo Rafael" ("fat Rafael") read almost the exact same speech every year during the national holiday on July 26. Because Blanquita pointed this fact out to her mother in Rafael's presence, her mother slapped her so hard she saw stars. Later admitting to Blanquita that the latter had indeed told the truth when she complained

[14] Although the text underscores the disparity of material wealth between the privileged and underprivileged classes that it proposes as characteristic of Cuban society, it also underscores that even a *guajira* like Blanquita was able to receive a good education, even though the dreams invested in, and resulting from, that education, never came to fruition within Blanca's life, in part, because of her decision to marry Raydel at 18 years of age, and perhaps, as a result of the massive underemployment that marked the special period. On the latter, see, Pérez, 294 and Gott, 291.

about Rafael's speeches, her mother gave her a crucial lesson, explaining: "'Es que la verdad, mi'ja'—me comentaste, entonces mirándome a los ojos--, 'aunque una la conozca, no siempre debe decirse'" ("'It's just that the truth, honey,' you said to me, looking into my eyes, 'even if one knows it, shouldn't always be spoken'" ;91). In this way, Blanca is taught what will later be reinforced by her husband Raydel who tells her that "en este país todo era la apariencia" ("In this country, appearance is everything"; 61), explaining how, through publically feigning austerity, he and his father were able to maintain their ill-gained wealth undetected—until they were caught in the fallout of the Ochoa case of 1989.[15] Thus, Blanca writes to her mother, "descubrí, mamita, que la simulación, aquello que intentaste explicarme cuando yo era una niña, es una arma muy eficaz cuando uno quiere lograr algo" ("I discovered mommy, that [dis]simulation, what you tried to explain to me when I was a little girl, is a very effective weapon when you want to get something"; 61).

In this way, the novel portrays the influence that economic factors related to her class position since childhood will have on predicating the lessons she must learn: she will have to survive on her own, following the logic of subsistence living, advancing socially through the cultivation of relationships with those in power who can grant favors, and dissimulating for appearance's sake. In other words, Blanquita learns survivalist strategies and tactics to serve in a corrupt, hostile and individualistic world.

[15] Although not identified explicitly in the text, the latter points to the fall of Raydel and his father due to the investigations of official corruption that took place as a result of the government having "brought down" a general that was caught in trafficking (108), an oblique reference to the prosecution and subsequent execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa on charges of corruption and drug smuggling. For a detailed account of the case and its repercussions, see Gott, 279-86. Here, we see how even those in the highest echelons of power are corrupt, abject.

Indeed, these lessons find their permutations and particular applications within the second, interrelated, social vector portrayed by the text—that of the male-dominated social field within which the protagonist develops. This is a patriarchal system still reflective of that which marked prerevolutionary society and that Vera Kutzinsky describes as "the institution of paternalistic heterosexuality that guaranteed the sociosexual subordination of all women" (Sugar's Secrets 178).[16] Moreover, the patriarchal system will, as part of its operations and maintenance of its hegemony, extend beyond the merely interpersonal relationships of man/woman to include class also, in a fashion similar to what Eve Sedgwick posits as characteristic of the ruling classes in ancient Greek society: "The system of sharp class and gender subordination was a necessary part of what the male culture valued most in itself" (Between Men: 2437). These two prongs of patriarchal domination are inextricably intertwined within *Tatuajes*.

Indeed, this is evidenced in Blanca/Loretta's earliest education on gender relationships, which comes by way of her mother once again, who imparts the following core "truth":

> 'A los hombres, hay que usarlos, mi'ja', soltaste, como quien dice la verdad más absoluta del universo, 'ellos te usan para gozar y vaciarse y una tiene que ser inteligente para hacerles ver que nos dominan y nos usan, aunque los estemos usando. Ese tipo tiene dinero, buena posición en este paisito donde eso importa mucho, y una buena casa en La Habana, ¿oíste?, en La Ha-ba-na. Ahora sales de

[16] This, seemingly in spite of legislation and attempts at reform, such as the 1975 Family Code, directed at more gender equality within the revolutionary context. As Smith and Padula point out: "The new socialist code called for an elimination of the sexual double standard, the establishment of monogamy, and sincere attempts at mutual sexual satisfaction, all anathema to patriarchal traditionalism" (175). As will be seen within the context of her role as wife of the upper crust of revolutionary Cuba, Blanca is subjected to a very virulent form of patriarchal standards and practices which resonate closely with Kutzinsky's assertion quoted above.

> este pueblo de mierda, te vas para allá y mientras te dure, lo aprovechas; después haces tu vida y ganaste la batalla'. (26)
>
> 'You have to use men, honey,' you burst out one day, like someone who was asserting the most absolute truth of the universe, 'they use you to feel good and get off and a woman has to be intelligent to make them see that they dominate us and use us, even though we're using them. That guy has money, a good position in this little country where that matters a lot, and a good house in Havana, Did you hear?, in Ha-va-na. Right now you get out of this shithole town, you go there and while it lasts, you take advantage him; afterward you make a life for yourself and you've won the battle.'

Here we see how, as viewed from the lower classes, the economic enters as the core logic that underlies and, ultimately, governs gender relationships, which are cast as an antagonistic struggle with material gain being the ultimate objective. She thus learns the primacy of the economic sphere over all other considerations, including that of the relations of affect and intimacy between males and females. In short, her mother teaches her that all relationships are a type of prostitution in which the woman feigns submission to gain materially.

However, even though the text shows that factors attendant on social class play an important role, these will be subsumed within the virulent, almost hyperbolic, patriarchy that obtains in her relationship with Raydel and the homosocial world associated with him. Indeed, in the following analysis of the effect of the patriarchy on the protagonist, we will find exemplified the following assertion of Hill Collins: "gender oppression seems better able to annex the basic power of the erotic and intrude in personal

relationships via family dynamics and within individual consciousness" (226). Thus, within Blanca's socialization, the operation of the above two social vectors—class and gender—crystallize in the novel through her relationship to Raydel. The first of the factors, class distinction, is underscored between the *guajira* and the diplomat from the capital Havana as seen early on during their courtship, which the text reconstructs through Blanca's letters home to her mother: "Me miró de un modo raro, altanero, como siempre miran los habaneros a los guajiros, pero puedo jurarte: me gustó que me mirara de aquel modo. Eso tú no lo sabes" ("He looked at me strangely, haughtily, like the people from Havana always look at the *guajiros*, but I swear to you: I liked it when he looked at me that way. That's what you don't know"; 27-8). This quote is not only indicative of the type of social stratification that exists between the country and the city but, more importantly, the fact of the naturalization of social hierarchies as seen in Blanca's acceptance and internalization of them witnessed in the pleasure she derives from being recognized by the desiring gaze of the powerful.

Yet, the full nature of what that hierarchical positioning means for her will gradually become clearer as she enters into a romantic relationship with, and eventually marries, Raydel. The disparity of power and the place assigned to her within a patriarchal household become abundantly clear on their wedding night. In a scene reminiscent of a *telenovela*, Raydel, upon seeing his new bride as she presents herself to him in the nightgown that had been passed down generationally from her grandmother to her becomes the target of derision and violence as he, after first brusquely and violently taking her virginity, rips the nightgown off of her, complaining that he feels as though he "'fucked an old woman'" ("'me parece que me templé a una vieja'"; 63), throws it to the

floor and there sets it aflame. To underscore the point that he won't tolerate the vestiges of her rural upbringing, he then warns her: "'—Olvida las costumbres de la plebe' – dijo entonces y me miró fijamente—. 'Ya eres una de la alta sociedad y aprenderás a serlo de verdad aunque tenga que molerte a palos'" ("'Forget the common people's customs,' he said to me, fixing his gaze on me. 'Now you're a part of high society and you'll learn to be that if I have to beat you senseless'";63)[17]. Here then, is an example of patriarchal dominance, achieved through the union of marriage, sex, and violence, which imposes male superiority simultaneously over both class and gender.

During the first few months of their marriage, while she still thought that a loving relationship may be possible with her husband, Blanca began to learn her role regarding the antagonistic nature of gender relationships that her mother taught her, for she begins to discover that the power she has within the patriarchy derives from her sex and its effect over Raydel. "Sentía placer en verlo desnudo, sudando, empequeñecido como un animal que ella domaba con el calor de su vagina, después de quitarle la máscara de tipo duro" ("She felt pleasure in seeing him naked, sweating, diminished like an animal that she tamed with the heat of her vagina, after taking his tough guy mask off of him"; 54). Perhaps this pleasure can be seen as compensation for the fact that she very rarely achieves orgasm with him, owing to the fact that, after satisfying himself, he would "se viraba a roncar como un cerdo" ("would roll over and snore like a pig"; 53), thus, once

[17] Although this passage and its language may seem a bit anachronistic and/or incongruous with the supposed egalitarian ideal of the Revolution and its corresponding discourse, the same passage appears almost verbatim in *Jineteras* (26), which the text affirms as taken from actual testimonial evidence provided through correspondence with Susimil/Loretta before her death. Thus, the author/narrator is making a truth claim for what transpired and, as part of his criticism of the state of Cuban society, uses it to point out the social disparity between different sectors and, ultimately, the failure and the corruption of the Revolution's ideals. For more on Valle's criticisms of the Castro regime and its betrayal of the Revolution, see Valle "A 50 años de la revolución."

again underscoring the stereotypical selfish male within a patriarchal society.[18] Indeed, Blanca's objectification is underscored by the fact of her worth deriving from her body—a main motivating factor in Raydel's taking her from the country to marry him and live in the capital: "'Una guajira como tú no merece aquel pueblito—continuó Raydel—. Con ese cuerpazo mereces vivir aquí, donde se goza de lo lindo'" ("'A country girl like you doesn't deserve that little town,' Raydel continued. 'With that hot body you deserve to live here, where you can really enjoy life'"; 46). Here we see the operation of patriarchal logic in the assigning of gendered roles and positions, as well as the part that both gender and class distinction play in the assessment of the worth of certain objects within the male-dominated sexual economy. We also see how the above feeds in to the perpetuation of male hegemony.

A further example of patriarchal self-reproduction is to be found in the particular type of homosociality represented through Raydel's family. Here, Blanca finds herself the target of her father-in-law's advances, sexual molestation, and rape in her husband's absence. However, the sharpest blow that she receives at the hands of a social system that thoroughly objectifies her is her discovery upon overhearing a conversation between Raydel and his father that the former has had full knowledge of his father's activities and indeed approves of them as preferable to his father's dalliances with inexpensive sex workers from the streets, though cautioning his father that he be careful lest he have a heart attack from the pleasure he derives from Blanca (115). In this way, she learns to what she has been reduced: "Ya en ese entonces había notado que yo no representaba nada en aquella casa, salvo en el momento en que tenían deseos de vaciar su semen en

[18] Indeed, the gratification of the male sex drive without regard for the female partner's needs was one of the targets for correction of the 1975 Family Law. See note 16, above.

algún lugar seguro, barato y limpio" ("By that time she had noted that she didn't represent anything in that house, except for the times when they had the desire to empty their semen in some safe, cheap, and clean place"; 113). Fundamentally, her mother's lesson proves itself, as Loretta's function is that of a cleaner and safer version of the *putas* that her father-in-law visits.

The above then, is an example of male domination that elucidates the definition of patriarchy given by Heidi Hartmann: "'relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women'"("Unhappy Marriage" 14; qtd in Sedgwick, "Between men" 2436). In his sharing his wife with his father, Raydel thus keeps her subjugated not only to him but to the family and, thus, to the patriarchal social codes which have structured their particular homosocial arrangement.

Blanca's objectification within this context and a further example of how homosociality has worked to carry that objectification out will reach its climax when Raydel has been reduced to being a party representative at a farm after being recalled to Havana from Mexico in disgrace. In desperate need of cash, he sells Blanca's body to a business acquaintance from abroad who comes to the island in search of some beachfront property in which to invest. After agreeing to accompany her husband's associate at the former's request and ignorant of the arrangements the two had made, she finds herself being drugged and then used sexually six times. When the man returns her to Raydel, she witnesses Raydel receive cash from the man.

Thus Blanca fulfills a dual function as object within the particular patriarchal arrangement into which she married. In as much as the text shows her metonymic

reduction (Blanca = "hot body") and subordination within a particular homosocial arrangement that ultimately ends up commodifying her, it depicts a particular expression of patriarchy as identified as ascendant in Cuba at least prior to the Revolution. In that context, women had traditionally been cast into one of two roles, the virginic, pure woman and the woman who would ignite and tend to the sexual passion of the man. The former was usually sought after as a marriage partner whose sexual pleasure was subordinated to her reproductive function while the latter was seen as a necessity to slake uncontrollable male urges and typically took the form of a mistress or a sex worker (Smith and Padula, 169-171). In this case, Loretta, a virgin upon marrying Raydel, satisfies the necessity of marrying a pure woman, while, at the same time, serves as the object of masculine ardor and, in the last instance, is converted into a piece of commerce, her objectification complete. In this way, the novel demonstrates the continuance, well into the revolution, of an older patriarchal legacy.

Shortly thereafter, Blanca finds herself leaving her husband after he once again tried to sell her to a manager at a factory near the farm where he worked (163). Leaving with a suitcase and heading into another part of Havana, she soon finds herself lured into the world of commercial sex and it is there where the third social vector of domination—her race—will come to the fore as a shaping and molding force in her life. Whereas earlier in the narrative little was made of her racialized identity, it is within the context of the touristic contact zone that it assumes prominence, being, as she explains to a new arrival to the trade, it will be remembered, an identifier coveted by ninety percent of the male tourists who travel to the island (23).

Her objectification by way of foreign desire is demonstrated in her fleeting relationship with an Italian visitor to the island: "La noche anterior había encontrado en aquella plaza loca de bailoteo y puteo a un italiano platudo nada miserable que había decidido vaciar sus ahorros de quién sabe qué tiempo con *esa mulata hermosa que revolvía su trago daiquirí en una mesa solitaria, alejada de la barra*" ("The night before she had found in that plaza gone mad with dancing and whoring a not-too-miserable-looking Italian with money that had decided to empty his savings of who knows how long with *that beautiful mulata that was stirring her drink at a solitary table at some distance from the bar.*";19 emphasis mine). And so she poses for the tourist gaze, alone and available, performing *Euromale* desire to lure the one who is searching for the exotic mulata. By this point, a seasoned veteran of her trade, having already worked two years as a *jinetera*, she quickly takes advantage of her encounter with the Italian. Still sick with the STD she had picked up in her work and desirous to take a few days off, she deftly steals his wallet and the two hundred dollars it contains and quickly flees the nightclub while her victim visits the bathroom (19-21). Thus, we see the way in which she has grown cunning and become an active rather than a passive agent, having more fully grasped her mother's lesson regarding the antagonistic and material model for male and female romantic relationships, lessons reinforced by her recently deceased mentor and friend Farah La Suprema who, becoming a substitute of the voice of maternal wisdom, points out how Loretta had failed to take material advantage of her marriage to Raydel, and therefore found herself in "la cochinada en que vives" ("the pigsty in which you live"; 35). Therefore, Farah stresses that what Loretta needs to do is to start to use what she has: "'Tú misma, la mulata más sabrosa, más hermosa de toda La Habana, el Bombón

de Río Seco, la Faraona de tu raza y de tu oficio'" ("'Yourself, the most delicious, most beautiful mulata in all of Havana, the Bon-Bon of Río Seco, the Queen of your race and trade'"; 35). Thus, within the space of the touristic contact zone, Loretta's main personal capital is found precisely in her sexual and racialized identity.

Just as we saw in the character of Yajaira of Arias' "Novia del Atlántico" in chapter one of the present study, Blanca, now Loretta, is mystified by the desire of the foreign sex tourist gaze. She has also become adept at the arts of her trade, playing on the desire inscribed in her body as the following account of her dalliances with a tourist "con alma de comunista y traje de ricachón" ("with the soul of a communist and a suit of a rich man"; 99) attests: "el hombre se movía encima de ella, desesperado, decía, por el fuego de su vagina, por el contraste de su piel blanca uniéndose y separándose en cada penetración con la tez morena de sus muslos" ("the man moved on top of her, desperate, he said, for the fire of her vagina, for the contrast of his white skin uniting and separating itself from the brown skin of her thighs with each penetration"; 99). Thus, Blanca, now Lorettta, has learned to take advantage of her position within global gendered hierarchies, utilizing the interracial desire of her Other for material gain, her mother's words applicable to her current context to the letter: "'A los hombres hay que usarlos, mi'ja' [...] 'ellos te usan para gozar y vaciarse y una tiene que ser inteligente para hacerles ver que nos dominan y nos usan, aunque los estemos usando'" ("'You have to use men, honey,' [...] 'they use you to feel good and get off and a woman has to be intelligent to make them see that they dominate us and use us, even though we're using them'"; 26). Loretta has learned to implement the element of deception contained in this advice, for, even as the tourist enjoys his dalliance with her, she seeks to augment his excitement,

acting "como si refocilara de lo lindo en el artificio aprendido para que los hombres se vaciaran rápido y todo acabara de una vez" ("as if she were thoroughly exhilarated in an artifice she had learned so that men would come quickly and everything would be over right away"; 99), thus minimizing her investment of time and bodily labor.

Furthermore, even as the description of the above scene continues, the text correlates Loretta's current existence and the logic governing it to that of the animal world through the use of a naturalistic metaphor—precisely, that of the spider and the moth whom she espies as she lies on her back, feigning pleasure, waiting for her client to finish. The text spends some length tracing out the parallelism that exists between the spider, its prey, and Blanca/Loretta's life experience and so is a theme that I briefly analyze here.

According to the text, spiders and their webs have always fascinated Blanca from the time of her childhood, when she could be found observing for great lengths of time what transpired there (101). It's presence in the above scene, however, clearly establishes an equivalence to Loretta and the situation she is currently living. As she observes, the spider: "se esmeraba en tranquilizar a una mariposa [...] caminaba hacia ella y retrocedía, calculándola, y sólo cuando Loretta sintió que el tipo se estremecía y se venía dentro de ella, la araña lograba clavarle a su presa sus dos garfios venenosos" ("was taking great pains to pacify a butterfly [...] it would walk toward her and would back off, probing her, and only when Loretta felt that her client shuttered and came inside her, would the spider manage to spike its two venomous fangs into its prey"; 100). With the synchronization of the tourist's ejaculation and the spider's injection of venom, the text would seem to suggest Loretta as helpless victim, the tourist, the predator—a point that is

repeated in a parallel passage in which the spider again remains completely immobile until the tourist reaches climax once more (100).

This metaphor of her victimization seems to be further reinforced when she takes the now-dead butterfly from the web in her corner, noting how full of life it still looks even though dried out. She passes a pin through it and fixes it above a picture of her atop the Pyramid of the Moon in Mexico, a souvenir of a high point in her life as the wife of a diplomat and the fulfillment of one of her dreams. Yet, the placement of the dead moth may symbolize a recognition that, even though apparently full of life at that moment among the opulence and privilege she enjoyed, she was perhaps metaphorically sucked dry by her abusive husband and his father. This would be consistent with her observation early in the book that one of the lessons of life that she's learned is that "se podía tener todo el dinero del mundo, un infinito poder para manejar a su antojo, sin recetas ni límites, y ser también la porquería más grande del universo" ("you could have all the money in the world, an infinite power to wield at your whim, without restrictions or limits, and also be the biggest piece of rubbish in the universe";19).

Yet, as she looks back on that time she also remembers her freeing a favorite spider upon their recall to Havana, the former an act which affected her thus: "de pronto se sintió más tranquila, liberada de algo que aún no sabe," (suddenly she felt more tranquil, liberated from something of which she is still not sure"; 107) perhaps a foreshadowing of her own liberation from Raydel after returning from Cuba and, thus, an empathetic association between her and the spider. Upon closer examination, the text implies this quite clearly. As the narrative returns us once again to the present, it captures Loretta looking at her arachnid "friend," mentioning that she would like to be a spider

and, furthermore, signaling her discovery that: "disfruta paso a paso el ritual de inmovilizar a sus víctimas, envolverlas en su tela y luego extraerles hasta el último de sus zumos vitales" ("she enjoys step by step the ritual of immobilizing its victims, wrapping them up in her web and then extracting the last drop of their vital juices"; 107). This, of course, parallels what the text has described as her goal in feigning pleasure so as to be done more quickly with her clients, thus indicating, perhaps, that it is the client who is the victim.

Thus, far from establishing a static, direct correlation between the spider/victim and Loretta/clients binaries, the text points to the base antagonism of relationships within the contact zone, which are characterized by a dialectic of predator/prey, in which a social actor can assume either posture separately or simultaneously. Indeed, the nature of the majority of the relationships that Blanca/Loretta has with men bear out this very logic imparted to her at an early age—a perfect preparation for the time when she will transform from "Blanquita, la mulatica culona del pueblo" ("Blanquita, the town's little nice-assed mulata"; 134) to "Loretta, la Faraona, la mulata más linda de toda La Habana" ("Loretta, the Egyptian Queen, the prettiest mulata of all of Havana"; 87), finally equipped to survive as best she can through the apocalyptic urban landscape of the Special Period.

Thus, the novel portrays the social construction of Blanca/Loretta and the part that each of the three intertwined vectors of gender, class, and race that constitute the "matrix of domination" has played in her formation. As it does so, it simultaneously borrows from and participates in a tradition within Cuban nationalist discourse as signaled by Vera Kutzinsky in *Sugar's Secrets*, illustrating how, "the iconic mulata [...] is a symbolic

container for all the tricky questions about how race, gender and sexuality inflect the power relations that obtain in [...] postcolonial Cuba" (7). However, as opposed to those authors that Kutzinsky studies whose interest lay primarily in constructing an image on which to found a Cuban national ontology and who drew on the discourse of *mestizaje* that emerged within Latin America in the nineteenth century to do so (4-5), Valle, from his vantage point at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty first centuries, from within a country that suffers no lack of officially defined national discursive formations, seems much more interested on what the nation is becoming—corrupt, metaphorically prostituted to global economic forces through tourism and the attendant explosion of commercial sex and drug trafficking that he sees as a result.[19] Thus, I argue that his concern as stressed in these texts is primarily on the *condition* of the nation, rather than on the national *essence*, although the former may influence the latter. As we have seen in our earlier analysis of *Jineteras*, he is particularly concerned with purifying and cleansing the nation from its corruption. Thus, Valle, in part, utilizes the discursive tradition surrounding the mulata as part of his larger project of social abjection. That is, not only is Blanca/Loretta constructed as abject by apparently overwhelmingly determinant forces, but she also serves as a device by which to explore the abject state of Cuban society as seen from its margins, be these the most privileged or impoverished of social classes.

Yet, the process of abjection which the text seeks to effect on its protagonist does not only occur as a result of the social order portrayed within the text and within which

[19] See Valle "La novela negra"; "Cuba también." In these interviews, Valle cites various causes for the rise in the sexual commerce in the Caribbean, among them the marked poverty of the special period, in which sex work became a survival mechanism. He also points to the explosion of tourism as the nation opened itself up to international interests to become a tourist driven economy as well as a sex tourism destination.

the plot unfolds, but also as a result of discursive formations articulated through narrative perspective and dialogue—in particular, through a *pornographic* discourse. In so doing, the text indeed contributes to a tradition of Cuban literature that Kutzinsky identifies as "a racialized national discourse that is prominently masculinist and frequently misogynistic" (*Sugar's Secrets* 15).

To begin, I recall my earlier discussion of the scopophilic tendencies at play within *Jineteras* and how that particular narrative presence and optic betrayed male desire, reflective of the first term of the binarism that constitutes abjection: attraction/repulsion. It's presence within *Tatuajes* creates a similar effect, textually effectuating the pleasurable looking at the heart of the voyeuristic impulse central to pornography.[20] This is exemplified in the following scene in which the narrative lense displays Loretta's nude body, as she seeks relief from symptoms related to the STD she has contracted: "El ventilador la refresca. Tiene las piernas abiertas y deja que el aire seque sus vellos, acaricie su sexo con esa corriente fría y por eso se abre cuidadosamente los labios menores, permitiendo que la frialdad penetre por el agujero de su vagina, abierto también por sus dedos, deseando que el ardor cese" ("The fan refreshes her. She has her legs open and allows the air to dry her pubic hair, she caresses her sex with that cold current and therefore carefully opens her inner lips, letting the chill penetrate the hole of her vagina, also held open by her fingers, wishing that the burning would cease"; 80). Here the camera-like qualities of the narrative description stand out as the textual "lens" slowly zooms in for a close up of the female genitalia in a pose typical of filmed pornography. That this scene is allied with this type of voyeuristic gaze is highlighted immediately in the next sentence, which describes a past moment when she was in the

[20] See Mary Caputi, 15.

same position "abierta de muslos, sobre la cama, desnuda" 'thighs open, on the bed, nude' and discovered she was being watched "for a long time" by her friend from the Cuban elite classes, Clarissa, who admiringly praised the perfection of Blanca's body (80). Shortly thereafter, the text describes how Blanca dreamt of walking through a field of strawberries when little round and red animals began to bite at her buttocks and sex, moistening them: "primero suave [...] después algo más fuertes, rápidas, pequeñas, luego mordidas desesperadas y un jadeo que crecía y crecía" ("first smoothly [...] later somewhat more strongly, quick, rapid, small, then deperate bites and a panting that grew and grew"; 83). Upon slowly waking, she discovers that it is Clarissa who is biting her buttocks and panting, "una mano frotándose el sexo, los ojos cerrados, mascullando algo que Loretta no entendía" ("one hand rubbing her sex, her eyes closed, murmuring something that Loretta didn't understand"; 83).

In this way the text objectifies Loretta, reducing her metonymically to her vagina and buttocks, in a manner reminiscent of the masculinist discourse of the author/narrator's friends from *Jineteras* in which the sex workers with whom they had come into contact are fragmented and depersonalized. Indeed, this is a main effect of the scopophilic pornographic lense. As Mary Caputi argues :

> pornography's fragmentation equates women with their distinctly female bodily parts [...] pornography does not merely enhance these female features but presents them in such a way that they stand in for the woman to whom they belong: they become a form of shorthand for the woman herself. [...] Pornographic images are objectifying, but also fragmenting

> of women: they display the female body in such a way that it becomes equated with the woman herself. (18-9)

As we have already seen, scattered throughout the text are multiple references to Blanca/Loretta's defining corporeal attributes –e.g. her prominent, "spectacular" buttocks, her social value accruing from her "cuerpazo" 'hot body' etc—but perhaps the most salient example of her objectification and metonymic reduction is the harsh chastisement that her mentor and friend in the marginal spaces of Havana, Farah, delivers when he discovers all of the opportunities for personal, material gain upon which Loretta failed to capitalize during her time with Raydel: "Te repito: fuiste boba. Con menos que eso, en este paisicito hay unas cuantas mujeres viviendo la vida. Pero tú eres bruta, ¿sabes? Yo no sé en qué lugar de tu *coñito negro escondiste la inteligencia*" ("'I repeat: you were an idiot. With less than that, in this little country there are quite a few women living the good life. But you're stupid, you know that? I don't know in what place of your *little black cunt you hid your intelligence*'" ; 67 emphasis mine) At the same time Farah collapses Loretta's main attribute of personality—intelligence—into her sexual organ, he also highlights the latter as the locus of convergence for the two vectors of race and gender that serve to subjugate her. Thus, it will be Farah who articulates throughout the text the most base and crude of patriarchal discourse in which racism and sexism combine to produce a pornographic discourse, further exemplified in the following passage as he relates a dream/fantasy he has had in which Loretta's former father-in-law accosts her in the kitchen:

> "Desnudita," 'te dice,' "como a mí me gusta," 'y camina hacia ti que de momento agarras un cuchillo de mesa y lo sueltas también de momento,

pues por tu cabecita negra pasa fugaz, rápida, agilísima, la idea de que los negros siempre pagan los platos rotos y nadie te creería que habías matado al ilustre señorón porque era un maníaco sexual. Así que te resignas a no clavar y ser clavada, y te recuestas al fregadero. Sientes el frío del metal inoxidable penetrando por tus nalgas y clavándose tu barriga, en tu vejiga y de golpe te entran tremendos deseos de orinar, sobre todo cuando ves que viene hacia ti dispuesto a quién sabe qué obscenidad.' (95-6)

"Naked," 'he tells you,' "just like I like it," 'and he walks toward you as you suddenly grab a table knife and you let it go just as suddenly, because the idea that blacks always pay the consequences passes fleetingly, rapidly, nimbly through your little black head and no one would believe that you had killed the illustrious old gentleman because he was a sex maniac. You therefore resign yourself to be screwed and not screw, and you lean back against the sink. You feel the cold of the stainless steel penetrating your buttocks and nailing your stomach, in your bladder and all at once an overwhelming urge to urinate comes upon you, especially when you see him coming toward you ready for who knows what obscenity.'

Here, Farah employs the scopophilic lens to narrate his fantasy, rehearsing/melding racist social tradition and the violent penetrative aggression of the male sex drive to reify the frail, helpless, and docile female who acquiesces before this patriarchal onslaught—casting her as the stereotype of the pornographic imagination. However, in spite of its soap-opera-like hyperbole; in spite of its melodrama and exaggeration, at core, it is a

variation that Farah creates of an actual episode about which Loretta had spoken in which her father-in-law violated her by performing anal sex on her during one of Raydel's absences.[21] The inclusion of Farah's version reiterates the earlier episode, magnifying and calling attention to the raw, driving force underlying the will to dominate to which Blanca has been subjected.

The above amply demonstrates what Catharine MacKinnon argues regarding the relationship of pornography, patriarchal hegemony, and female subjectivity: '[P]ornography institutionalizes the sexuality of male supremacy, which fuses the eroticization of dominance and submission with the social construction of male and female. Gender is sexual. Pornography constitutes the meaning of that sexuality.' (qtd in Caputi, 16-7) Indeed, such is the potency of the patriarchal system that Loretta's gendered experience within its objectifying processes has produced its naturalization within her, as she has come to internalize its metonymic, fragmenting logic and assumed, in essence, a pornographic ontology.

The above is exemplified as she makes clear in one of the letters she has written to her mother. In it, she outlines the primary reason, as she sees it, for her having accepted Raydel as a suitor when she was an adolescent in spite of the fact that she had known him only six days and, within that short amount of time, had grown to have misgivings about him, even though she liked his frenzied and almost "sick" ("enfermizo"; 28) pursuit of her. As she puts it: "Claro, Mamita, las mujeres somos brutas y a veces, la mayoría de las veces, cuando de hombres se trata, pensamos con el

[21] In fact, Farah's fantasy ultimately has to do with his self-insertion as protagonist of his own pornographic fantasy, "heroically" taking the place of Loretta, to gladly subject himself to sexual domination by Raydel's father. See *Tatuajes* 96.

clítoris y no con el cerebro, y yo mandé a la mierda todos mis miedos y lo acepté, precisada además porque otras muchachitas lo estaban asediando" ("Of course, Mommy, we women are stupid brutes and at times, the majority of the time, when it comes to men, we think with the clitoris and not the brain, and I sent all my fears to hell and I accepted, compelled in addition because other girls were after him"28). What her thirty years of life-experience have taught her—what she has internalized—is, in effect, her own metonymic fragmentation such that, as Farah had pointed out earlier, the seat of personality—the mind—becomes equated with her clitoris, itself the seat of sexuality and, now, psychosexual subjugation.

However, Loretta is not completely without agency, and, in the end, she will not just acquiesce to the predations of those who would seek to take advantage of her while offering nothing in return, for, in short, she has learned the early lessons that her mother taught her, later reinforced by Farah within the contact zone of sexualized encounter—a space where she has learned to fully apply the survivalist solipsism that her two mentors sought to inculcate in her. Thus, even though limited by her experience of the patriarchal sexual economy that would reduce her to a pleasure-giving fragment; even though she has come to lead an overdetermined existence like that of a "gata callejera [...] un bicho de hábitos nocturnos condenada a vagar por los rincones más oscuros de la ciudad en busca de alguna presa" ("alley cat [...] a creature of nocturnal habits condemned to wander the darkest corners of the city in search of prey"; 37) similar to the spiders that have so fascinated her since she was a child (37), she does rise to the challenge to survive, assuming the mantle of the night. And, thus, it is on a shit-filled, urine soaked roof in a shit-filled city, that she frees herself from her past, burning the unsent letters that

contained past memories and once-upon-a-time dreams, to face a future alone in a geographic space filled with elements of abjection. In a corrupt city, in a corrupt country, in a corrupt world filled with "losers" 'perdedores', she contemplates those losers nearest to her and the lessons they taught: Farah, dead of AIDS, and her mother, disfigured and crippled due to her attempted self-immolation prompted by her husband's unfaithfulness.

And so it is at precisely that moment, in that high risk environment, left to her wits, will, and her own racialized and gendered body that "'the most delicious and beautiful mulata of Havana [...] the Queen of [her] race and trade'" ("'la mulata más sabrosa, más hermosa de toda La Habana [...] la Faraona de tu raza y de tu oficio'"; 35), preying on the mobile travelers of the global economy, at last decides to harden her heart and, thus, fully embrace the ground rules of a game of survival that Zygmunt Bauman in Liquid Modernity identifies as characteristic of the current phase of globalized modernity and its attendant compulsion toward privatization or "individualization":

> What used to be considered a job to be performed by human reason seen as the collective endowment and property of the human species has been fragmented ('individualized'), assigned to individual guts and stamina, and left to individuals' management and individually administered resources [...] the emphasis (together with, importantly, the burden of responsibility) has shifted decisively towards the self-assertion of the individual. (Liquid Modernity 29)

Indeed, even as the nation partially opened itself to liberalization in the face of the crushing crisis of the special period,[22] the logic of self-interested privatization assumed

[22] As Louis Pérez Jr. affirms: "As the 1990s wore on, the harsh realities of the deepening crisis took their toll on the resolve of Cuban leaders [who] sought ways to relieve desperate—and deteriorating—conditions [...] Ideological rigidity yielded to pragmatic improvisations" (303). Among these was the increasing integration of the nation's economy into the world market (Pérez 304).

new proportions as much of the Revolution's egalitarian ideals suffered (Gott 291-2).[23] Therefore, it is precisely in this context that Loretta applies a logic tailor made for the type of survivalism required in such times.

Nevertheless, the agency she is able to exercise is extremely limited as the text underscores in the final scene, utilizing tropes of darkness to underscore Loretta's plight and the choices before her. In spite of having learned the lessons she was taught and walking with head held high, resolute and hardened to face life head on, it is the night and shadow into whose embrace she advances. After venturing down from the rooftop where she had burnt her unsent letters, she crosses to the *malecón* to look out over the sea: "Loretta mira al mar, a lo negro, al sitio donde debe encontrarse el horizonte, a ese hemisferio donde ahora, en ese instante, es de día y hay luz" ("Loretta looks at the sea, at the blackness, at the place where one should find a horizon, at that hemisphere where now, at that instant, it is day and there is light"; 190). Here, future horizons are indiscernible, covered in the same darkness that presently cloaks the city to fall over her head like a "black and cold mantle" ("un manto negro y frío"; 191) as she slips between the buildings, "monstrous de la noche, deformes, enormes y cuadrados" ("monsters of the night, deformed, enormous and square";189). This, then, is the space she is to occupy, the only other alternative lost in the darkness of an indistinguishable horizon. And so the novel leaves her walking the streets and, "Loretta de pronto sólo escucha sus pasos en la oscuridad. Camina. Sólo camina. No sabe adónde" ("Loretta now only hears her steps in

[23] Once again, at the level of the everyday citizen, this is seen in the black market and the reintroduction of the dollar into the Cuban economy: "[The dollar's] increasing dominance within the internal economy [...] created deep divisions in Cuban society in the course of the 1990s between those with access to dollars and those without. Those with dollars—obtained chiefly through the tourist trade, the black market, and remittances from Miami—became significantly wealthier than those who had none. The egalitarian ethic that had been such a proud boast of the Revolution was further undermined" (Gott 291-2).

the darkness. She walks. Just walks. She doesn't know where to"; 191). Thus, even though the ending of the novel is open, the future it does point to through its employment of the symbolic negativity associated with darkness is not hopeful. Indeed, it would seem to be a portent of the future of the woman on whose life the protagonist is based, and thus consistent with Susuimil/Loretta's ironic end in a seedy hotel in Toulouse, having died, like Farah, of AIDS—the corruption of her bloated, abject body complete.

And so, *Tatuajes* must be seen as part of the same abjection process that began in *Jineteras*. The multiple, faceless, and fragmented women portrayed in the *testimonio* as the author/narrator set out to resolve the ontological mystery of the *puta*, eventually coalesce into the protagonist of the novel, there finding a face in Blanca Loretta. But the employment of the scopophilic narrative technique employed in *Jineteras* also continues in *Tatuajes,* realizing its potential as a tool for the articulation of a pornographic discourse which, in turn, is reinforced principally through Farah's derisive monologues in which he chastises and ridicules Loretta, voicing the crudest reductive elements of patriarchal discourse. Thus, having made her whole, the narration once again fragments the *jinetera*, delivering her up for elimination and expulsion.

In this way, the text, despite granting her limited agency, ultimately portrays her and the environment in which she moves as abject. From her early education and development, to her racialized, gendered, and sexualized identity within a patriarchal society, all seem to conspire against her in one long process of molding and shaping her into the Loretta that ultimately lives "'en una ciudad de perdedores, en un país de perdedores, en un mundo de perdedores'" ("in a city of losers, in a country of losers, in a world of losers" ;186) This is a setting where the dark, scatalogical and decadent built

environment parallels the official corruption—from street-level police/pimps to the abusive and greed-driven party elites—that governs the marginal worlds which flourish within flows of globalized sexual and economic desire under the auspices of a failed system. These contact zones form the last spaces of opportunity for survival and escape for a woman who, under the disciplining and misogynistic gaze of scopophilic textual authority, ultimately falls under apocalyptic judgment together with the society which has produced her and of which she is the sign: "'la gran ramera, la que está sentada sobre muchas aguas; con la cual han fornicado los reyes de la tierra, y los moradores de la tierra se han embriagado con el vino de su fornicación"'("the great harlot, she who is seated over many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have fornicated, and those who dwell on the earth have become drunk with the wine of her fornication"; *Jineteras* 11). Thus, *Jineteras* and *Tatuajes*, as they execute a *pornographos*—a "writing of harlots,"[24]—remain, in the last instance, the textual artifacts of a special period's abjection.

[24] "Pornography." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. 2002.

Conclusion: Toward a Dialogics of Sexualized Encounter

> *[H]oy es evidente que representamos e instituimos en imágenes lo que a nuestra sociedad le sucede* en relación con otras. *porque las relaciones territoriales con lo propio están habitadas por los vínculos con los que residen en otros territorios...*
> *~Néstor García Canclini*[1]

Throughout this study, we have seen ways in which authors from the Hispanophone Caribbean generate "ethnoscapes" of their contemporary cultural reality, in this case, textually sketching scenarios of encounter in which local and foreign social actors enter into contact with one another within the context of tourism in general and sex tourism in particular. Through their portrayals of the "contact zones" of commodified sexuality, they offer an important piece of the Hispanophone Caribbean's emergent cultural imaginary and, from that optic, explore the multiple social forces, daily life events, and historical processes and discourses that constitute everyday vital experience and contemporary social space. In this way, these texts ultimately represent and archive the social [re]configurations taking place within the Hispanophone Caribbean that result from volatile, transient relationships with others—one manifestation of the current condition of globalized interconnectedness of which García Canclini reminds us in the epigraph above.

At the most direct "sociological" level, these texts represent ways that social space is produced through a dialectic of human interaction within conditions of marked socioeconomic disparity between wealthier, mobile outsiders and less mobile local residents, both of whom seek to utilize each other to fulfill and achieve their desires. For

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[1] "Today it is evident that we represent and institute in images that which happens to our society *in relation with others*, because territorial relationships with that which is one's own are constituted through links with those who reside in other territories" (*La globalización imaginada*, 62).

the majority of foreign travelers represented in these narratives, airports, beaches, restaurants, hotels, dance floors, open-air bars, national monuments, homes, streets, and bodies are all used as sites of hedonistic indulgence, as liminal spaces of atemporal potentiality for personal renewal and [re]creation, and for ideological, affective, and sexual fulfillment. For some, commodified sexuality also is a site for gaining wealth through their ownership of "adult resorts" and participation in international sex trafficking. On the other hand, those same sites are also used and configured by local subjects as loci of socioeconomic agency and opportunity, as gateways through which to gain access to the wealth and mobility that characterize these localized nodal points of transnational travel. In short, within the contact zone, island space functions simultaneously as a paradisiacal [re]creational playground and a predatory field of action.

At the discursive level, we also see how several of these texts engage in a direct dialogical relationship with their cultural Other even as they register the convergence and production of disparate discourses, tracing the interaction of subjects and the production of subjectivity within local sociocultural fields. Indeed, as we have seen in several authors, the "chronotope" of the contact zone becomes a site for the local narrative Self to textually apprehend, question, explore, and dialogue directly with the volatile, transient Other represented by the [sex] tourist. Such is the case in Arias's works in which the earlier stories revolving around scenarios of encounter position Dominican cultural space within the discursive tradition of the West at its periphery—"the end of the world"—and from there directly address the foreign visitor in the second person. Here, the narrative voice seeks to explain within that discursive horizon the [il]logic that guides and governs daily existence on the island at the same time as it suggests the visitor's historical

implication in current local social conditions. The indecipherability of the foreign traveler is explored in "Hotel Radiante" in which the narrative voice also directly addresses its interlocutor—an absent, ephemeral male sex tourist—while trying to apprehend and reconstruct him and his impact on the experience of the local women with whom he has entered into relationship. The figure of the elusive male traveler will eventually be "captured" in his wanderings in the form of the itinerant "drifter tourist" and "postmodern" nomad James Gatto, the metonymic *Euromale* who wanders the Caribbean in search of *la vida verdadera*. Rehearsing the inherited discourses of coloniality, he construes local women as populating an exotic and primitive "wide open frontier," a space located outside of any restrictive normativity, ruled only by the laws of instinct and a stage on which to enact his "adventurous" protagonism.

The construction of the Other and the Self according to exoticizing discourses are also at the heart of the relational dialogics articulated in Sánchez's "La causa que refresca," which echoes both Arias's "¡Oh Bavaria!" and "Hotel Radiante" in its technique of directly addressing it's foreign interlocutor even as it points out the forms which Columbus's dual prescription of "refreshment and gain" 'refrigerio y ganancia' have taken in special period Cuba. In this staging of sexualized encounter, the *jinetero* narrator constructs both his female interlocutor, himself, and their relationship to one another according to a shared colonial discursive tradition by which she reenacts the position of white, foreign, and desiring Self and he the hypersexual local brown male Other. As he fulfills her fantasies, he simultaneously seeks his own material refreshment through contact with her, converting his exoticized positioning into cultural capital.

Furthermore, the text points to how even the ideals and discourse of the Cuban revolution have come to function as a commodified attraction and fantasy for foreign consumers.

Larry La Fountain-Stokes's narrator displays an ill-at-ease, multivalent subjectivity and serves as an ideologically committed Caribbean counterpoint to Arias's *Euromale* and the counterpart of the female interlocutor of Sánchez's text, serving to voice the perspective of one who travels in Cuban socio-cultural space of the special period. Also narrated in the second person, the narrative voice is in dialogue, not with his Other, but rather with himself. In this case, the discursive project consists of representing the [dis]articulation of a Self and the liberatory anti-colonial revolutionary discourses with which that Self is identified. However, within the context of the special period, such ideals and the corresponding subjectivities they propose are geopolitically emptied, gutted, and rendered highly unlikely, if not impossible, to attain.

This dilemma is at the forefront of the discursive concerns that mark the texts of the remaining two Cuban authors treated in this study and forms the basis upon which they engage their sociohistorical present—primarily at the level of national discourse. These texts are also concerned with the production of subjectivities particular to the Cuban special period. For example, in Cuban writer Angel Santiesteban's "Los aretes que le faltan a la luna" we witness the almost complete undoing of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's ideal of the "New Man" in the context of a social atmosphere which cannot provide the material or moral support necessary for its realization. Indeed, as seen from the optic of the ideal, the story portrays a world upside down, demonstrative of the selfish individualism associated with the capitalism to which the Cuban nation has opened itself. This has produced the gradual alienation of a young couple representative of the

generation in which Guevara had placed his revolutionary hope, now reduced to only a pale echo of that self-sacrificial revolutionary subjectivity proposed by the Che. This story in its discursive work thus stands as an indictment of the contemporary state of affairs within Cuba as it appeals to a broader tradition of revolutionary discourse by which to measure and judge the latter's institutional articulation during the special period.

Amir Valle's texts *Jineteras* and *Tatuajes,* for their part, form part of a discursive project that examines the most sordid side of what it terms the "human putrefaction" that comprises *jineterismo*, seeking through the discourse it generates to ultimately cleanse the Cuban nation. Here the individualization unleashed by the infusion of capitalism within Cuban society pointed to by Angel Santiesteban is explored at length in graphic detail and brought to its culmination in the character of Loretta, who is ultimately constructed as an abject subjectivity. In these texts, the space of sexualized encounter becomes a textual setting by which to represent the *jinetera* as a product not only of the opening of the nation to tourism, but also of a misogynistic and racist patriarchy and decadent social system. In spite of their express attempts at discursive purification, however, these texts, driven by the impulse of abjection, ultimately reify the *jinetera* as a simultaneous object of repulsion and desire, their discourse a fragmenting and misogynistic *pornographos*.

Thus, as the authors treated in this study focus on those nexus points where global processes flow across and intersect the islands, their works tell us something not only about tourism and commodified sexuality as experienced by individual subjects, but also reveal the complexity and richness of social processes, structures, experiences, and discourses that constitute the texture of the contemporary sociocultural landscape of the

Hispanophone Caribbean. In this way, they demonstrate how the logic of refreshment and gain first prescribed and prophesied by Columbus unfolds more than five hundred years later.

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