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Cuba: Representations of a Quest For a Hybrid Identity

Jennifer Ballantine Perera

Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in Postcolonial Studies

University of Kent
2005

Abstract

The debate surrounding Latin America within the postcolonial field is a continuing one informed by polarised views and the resistance in some Latin American academic quarters to a theory that is not historically relevant or sensitive to the differences between the colonial experiences in Latin America and those of India and Africa. My dissertation locates representations of Cuban cultural identity within a framework that views postcolonialism as part of an ongoing process of disengagements from colonialism and neo-colonialism. In a process that is constantly developing, fluidity and the opportunity to move away from fixed or polarised sites is created. This dissertation interrogates Cuban writings and artefacts, the strategies and manoeuvres adopted by intellectuals and writers around issues of race and cultural and racial hybridity within this postcolonial context. Using postcolonial concepts of hybridity, such as Homi Bhabha's and Salman Rushdie's as points of departure, I question these postcolonial theories within the Cuban context and alongside Cuban constructs of *el mestizaje* and syncretic theories of cultural and racial hybridity, as well as ideological constructs of cultural identity, to analyze their relevance to representations of Cuban cultural identity. I discuss a number of writers and artists through a variety of genre and media, and across emblematic events during the twentieth and opening years of the twenty-first century. In the first cluster of texts I investigate, I discuss Cuban concepts of racial and cultural hybridity though Fernando Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), Nicolás Guillén's performance before the *Sociedad Femenina Lyceum* (1932) and Alejo Carpentier's *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* ([1927] 1933). The next cluster of texts, art works are bridged by two films, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarollo* (1968) and Mikhail Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba*(1964). These are followed by Ana Menéndez's *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* (2001), Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* (1999) and the ceramics of the Cuban artist Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez (2002). I examine the content and complexity of these linkages as a totality to see how connections work together. I examine the binaries of coloniser/colonised which underlie so much postcolonial theory against the presence, in the Cuban examples I interrogate, of multiple internal and external forces that impact on representations of cultural identity. In doing so I suggest how the Cuban example expands or complicates postcolonial concepts of hybridity and engage with the relevance of postcolonial studies to Cuba.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT……………………………………………………………………I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS…………………………………………………………II

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS……………………………………………………V

A NOTE ON REFERENCES……………………………………………………VI

INTRODUCTION-CHAPTER ONE………………………………………………1

I……………………………………………………………………………1

II……………………………………………………………………………3

CHAPTER TWO……………………………………………………………10

FERNANDO ORTIZ, NEOLOGISMS AND TRANSCULTURAL THEORIES OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

2.1……………………………………………………………………………10

2.2……………………………………………………………………………28

2.3……………………………………………………………………………32

CHAPTER THREE…………………………………………………………42

BLACK CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE LIMITS OF RACIAL (IN)VISIBILITY

3.1……………………………………………………………………………42

3.2……………………………………………………………………………46

3.3……………………………………………………………………………53

CHAPTER FOUR……………………………………………………………75

ALEJO CARPENTIER: THE TREATMENT OF AFRO-CUBAN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN *¡ECUE-YAMBA-O!*

4.1……………………………………………………………………………75

4.2……………………………………………………………………………82

CHAPTER FIVE……………………………………………………………99

THE POLITICS OF LOCATION, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND IDEOLOGY WITHIN THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

5.1……………………………………………………………………………99

5.2..109
5.3..116

CHAPTER SIX...128
CUBAN CULTURAL IDENTITY IN MIAMI

6.1..128
6.2..134
6.3..143

CHAPTER SEVEN...159
OFFICIAL IDEOLOGY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF AN UNDERGROUND CULTURAL IDENTITY

7.1..159
7.2..165
7.3..174

CHAPTER EIGHT...181
URBAN SPACES, CULTURAL ARTEFACT, AND CUBAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

8.1.. 181
8.2..188
8.3..200

CONCLUSION...228
BIBLIOGRAPHY..230

I PRIMARY SOURCES...230
II SECONDARY SOURCES..231
III INTERNET SOURCES...238

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Nicolás Guillén, from Martha Cobb, *Harlem, Haiti, and Havana: A Comparative Critical Study of Langston Hughes, Jacques Roumain, Nicolás Guillén*, Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, Inc, 1979.

Figure 2. Salvador Dalí, *Soft-Self Portrait with Fried Bacon* (1941), from Gilles Néret, *Dalí*, Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994.

Figure 3. Domino Park, little Havana, Miami. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 4. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 5. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, interior view of figure 4. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 6. Gutted interior of building under renovation, Havana (2002). Photograph by Richard Perera.

Figure 7. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 8. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 9. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 10. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 11. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, interior view of figure 10. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 12. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 13. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, close-up of figure 12. Photograph by Richard Perera.

Figure 14. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figures 15, 16, 17, Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, close-ups of figure 14. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

A note on references

Havana – This spelling has been the norm throughout this dissertation although it must be noted that I also refer to the Spanish spelling, La Habana, in Chapters Six for the purpose of denoting the distance and differences between Cuba and Miami. I also refer to La Habana Vieja and La Habana Nueva in Chapter Eight.

1. Introduction - Chapter I

> If nation states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical' the nations to which they give political expression to always loom out of an immemorial past - and still more important, glide into a limitless future.[1]

> *Melange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world.[2]

1.1

I first became interested in Latin American, more specifically Cuban writings after having completed an MA in Postcolonial Studies at the University of Kent, where the study of colonial and postcolonial theory and literature had largely centred on the discursive practices and strategies of appropriation found in the writings of places such as India, Africa and the West Indies. The formulations and analytical tools provided by texts such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), provided a strong theoretical platform on which to examine colonial and postcolonial structures at a number of levels; that of the Manichean dialectic created regarding race and colour, coloniser and colonised; modes of linguistic appropriation, and strategies of postcolonial transformation. These were also mainly located within the geographical and historical parameters of British Imperial expansion, or, to a lesser degree, that of the French. Absent in these colonial and postcolonial experiences, were those of Spain and her colonies. This could be explained by the fact that by the time the scramble for Africa took place in the 1880s, during which time the British Empire became further consolidated, Spain had lost most of her colonies and was rapidly becoming a third rate power in Europe. Notwithstanding, Spain had, for the previous five centuries, colonised a substantial part of Latin America and had, during that extensive period, come to signify European imperial expansion. The lack of, or uneven engagement with colonial and postcolonial Latin America within the theoretical and analytical discipline, and certainly within the MA programme at Kent,

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[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1990), p.19.
[2] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London and New York, Granta, 1991), p. 394.

made me think about the reasons why this would be, and how, and under what terms Latin America could be discussed within a postcolonial context. It seemed to me that the colonial and postcolonial experiences of Latin American societies raised core issues about imperial ventures, as about the historical and geopolitical structures that uphold colonialism and continue to inform societies after independence.

In his article 'Including America' Peter Hulme refers to Patrick Williams' and Laura Chrisman's postcolonial reader *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* as an example of the geographical concentration of postcolonial studies. The reader, Hulme argues

> reprints 31 articles, 21 of which have some clear geo-cultural reference point: eight relate to Africa, five to India, four to the Middle East, two to the United States, one to the Caribbean, and one to Latin America. This probably is not an inaccurate map of how postcolonial theory as currently understood has developed and of the bits of the world to which it has paid attention.[3]

The reasons for this, suggests Hulme, are not difficult to understand given that the process of decolonisation has primarily been an African and Asian phenomenon, and one that has taken place within the twentieth century. Postcolonial theorists have tended to come from either Africa or Asia and have generally written about their experiences or of these areas, leading to a geo-cultural prioritisation of the 'Old world' as opposed to the new.[4]

Although the colonial experiences of India and Africa have formed the basis of writings of the colonial experience, as have the postcolonial discursive strategies employed by African and Asian writers (strategies that have engaged with their colonial past and the residual impact of remaining institutional and economic structures as they continue to impact on postcolonial societies), it is also important to consider the time scale involved. The 1950s saw the start of a period of decolonisation, and during this time a great number of British colonies gained independence, whereas, by this time, most of Spain's colonies in the Americas had been independent republics for over a hundred years. The fact is that most of Latin America (with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico) had been decolonised by 1829, and these societies were, during these years, dealing with the reality of their

[3] Peter Hulme, 'Including America', *Ariel*, Volume 26, Number 1, January 1995, p. 117-18.
[4] Peter Hulme, 'Including America', p. 118.

hybridised cultures, their colonial cultural heritage and language, and were developing contestatory strategies with which to assert their independent, post-colonial status well before these were recognised within Western academic institutions as postcolonial discursive strategies.[5] Whilst this situation has led me to question why Latin American writings have remained outside the 'canon' of foundational postcolonial theories, it is certainly also the case that I can only read postcolonial theory (as located in Europe and North America) onto Latin America as an area, and into the writings produced there retrospectively, with the critical tools afforded to me by established colonial and postcolonial theories. And this retrospective approach is at the root of the debate that surrounds the validity, even applicability, of what is perceived by a number of Latin American intellectuals and academics as a theory that is not historically relevant or sensitive to the differences between the colonial experiences in Latin America and those of India and Africa. [6]

The historical differences between the British colonial venture and the Spanish, together with the geographical and logistical differences between them have become issues of contention. It is argued by, amongst others, Jorge Klor de Alva that the historical and geographical premises on which colonial and postcolonial theories arose do not distinguish between the process that was began by the Spanish crown in 1492 in the Americas, and the subsequent waves of colonialism that began in 1757 with the British and their incursions in India. The political, financial, even technological differences between both ventures are seen as fundamental issues that need to be addressed for fear that the complexities of the Latin American colonial experience become buried under, and colonised by European theories.[7] Santiago Colas, in his article on Latin American postcolonial ideologies suggests that it is here, in discussing the differences, where scholarship should concentrate, rather than attempt to contain Latin America within a colonial and postcolonial theory that would

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[5] We could look at the Brazilian Oswald de Andrade's 'Anthropophagite Manifesto' (1928), as a text that engages with cultural hybridity, with the digestion rather than consumption of colonial cultures, and in the use of contestatory strategies that we have come to consider as integral aspects of postcolonial studies but have nevertheless been used in Latin American since the first half of the twentieth century.

[6] See Jorge Klor de Alva, 'Colonialism and Postcolonialism as (Latin) American Mirages', *Colonial Latin American Review*, Volume 1, Number 1-2, 1992, pp. 3-23; Walter D. Mignolo, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse: Cultural Critique or Academic Colonialism', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 28, Number 3, 1993, pp. 120-134; Hernán Vidal, 'The Concept of Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse: A perspective from Literary Criticism', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 28, Number 3, 1993, pp. 113-119.

[7] Jorge Klor de Alva, 'Colonialism and Postcolonialism as (Latin) American Mirages', p. 3.

re-colonise it with Western analytical and representational terms.[8] Colas' argument engages with the colonising potential inherent in postcolonial theory's Eurocentric position, and the possible hegemonic effect North American and Western institutions can wield when it comes to the study of Other, colonial countries, and the rationalising of these cultures as objects of knowledge. Indeed Santiago Colas cites C.L.R. James when suggesting that we should not deal with postcolonial theory as 'an instrument that you apply to content', suggesting instead that we look at the content to see how it changes, develops and creates new categories.[9] In this sense, whilst noting the problems inherent in postcolonial theory as a Western concept, Colas suggests an inversion of the theory's premise, and instead, the question asked should be 'what can Latin America contribute to postcolonial theory'?[10] In this respect, Colas brings to the fore the significance of Latin America to the postcolonial rather than subordinating these countries to the area of colonial and postcolonial studies; he also draws attention to, and then away from the one-way motion in which postcolonial theory has travelled, that is, from North America and the West to South America, highlighting the reality that Latin American theories have not always gained currency in Western centres of academic power, whilst noting the significant contribution writings from Latin America can make.

There certainly is a case for this argument, and one that is relevant to the views of Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (whom I discuss in Chapter Two), whose theories of transcultural identities remained for many years contained within a local, Cuban context whilst anthropological theories generated in North American institutions gained wider recognition. Catherine Davies, in her discussion of Fernando Ortiz within a postcolonial framework (she ranks him as amongst the most important postcolonial theorists), draws attention to Ortiz's limited institutional support as a reason for the uneven attention his work has received. The absence of an academic institutional authority in Cuba (or elsewhere in Latin America), one that might have contributed to the development of a Hispanic sociological or anthropological centre, is

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[8] Santiago Colas, 'Of Creole Symptoms, Cuban Fantasies, and Other Latin American Postcolonial Ideologies', *PMLA*, Volume 10, Number 3, 1995, p. 382.

[9] Santiago Colas, 'Of Creole Symptoms, Cuban Fantasies, and Other Latin American Postcolonial Ideologies', p. 382. Colas here refers to C.L.R. James' discussion on Hegelian dialectic and Marxist thinking. The complete quote is as follows: 'Thought in not an instrument you apply to a content. The content moves, develops, changes and creates new categories of thought, and gives them direction'. C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), p. 15.

[10] Santiago Colas, 'Of Creole Symptoms, Cuban Fantasies, and Other Latin American Postcolonial Ideologies', p. 383.

all the more notable when offset against the rise of social and cultural anthropology as a discipline in the English-speaking world. Whereas during the 1930s and 1940s numerous university departments and institutions in the United States were set up to fund, legitimate and diffuse its Anglo-Centric discourse, this was not the case with the Spanish-speaking world.[11] Theories such as transculturation therefore not only failed to influence the development of parallel theories, but they became sidelined by the far reaching disseminating machinery of Western institutions.

Ortiz, in this example, serves as a context in which concerns over institutional neglect or appropriations rest. Indeed, if one looks at Fernando Coronil's 'Introduction' to the 1995 Duke University Press edition of Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), attention is drawn to Bronislaw Malinowski (who wrote the 'Introduction' to the first edition of *Counterpoint*), and his minimal use of the term 'transculturation'; this despite Malinowski's enthusiastic reaction to the neologism, and a 'promise' to use it frequently. Malinowski subsequently only referred to transculturation a few times and did not contribute to the diffusion, in academic circles, of Ortiz's theory.[12] Walter Mignolo also articulates this sense of disregard in his response to Patricia Seed's essay 'Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse' (1991).[13] Mignolo's article deals simultaneously with Latin American texts that have been overlooked as precursors to later Eurocentric postcolonial writings, whilst also critiquing the application to Latin America of colonial and postcolonial theories developed for the colonial experience of another continent altogether. Referring to Edmundo O'Gorman's *La invención de América* (1958), and Angel Rama's *The Lettered City* (1982), Mignolo states a case for both these texts to be located within a postcolonial theoretical framework. Both deal with the deployment of language and discourse in the construction of colonial territories, their theoretical reconstructions, and the recovery of a postcolonial locus of enunciation in Latin America. In this sense, Rama and O'Gorman's theoretical postulations challenge the cultural perspective from which discovery and colonial

[11] Catherine Davies, 'Fernando Ortiz's Transculturation: The Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation', in *Postcolonial Perspectives on the Cultures of Latin America and Lusophone Africa*, ed., Robert Fiddian (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 148- 153.

[12] Fernando Coronil, 'Transculturation and the Politics of Theory: Countering the Centre, Cuban Counterpoint', in Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar,* (1947) trans., Harriet de Onís (Durham and London: Duke University Press,1995), pp. xlvi.

[13] Patricia Seed, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 26, Number 3, 1991, pp. 181-200.

discursive practices had been constructed. Nevertheless, Mignolo argues that they have not been fully considered by Western academia as contributing to the field.[14] Mignolo's position draws attention to, on the one hand, concerns about the potential transplantation of Western ideas onto a Latin American landscape, but on the other, Mignolo outlines the manner in which theoretical material from Latin America has in the past failed to gain the same recognition as similar, later published texts within Anglo-centric institutions. Rather paradoxically, both positions exist side by side, and whilst Mignolo offers resistance to postcolonial theory, he also draws attention to the similarities between, for example, O'Gorman's *La invención de América* and Todorov's *The Conquest of America* (1982), the suggestion being that Latin America has been producing postcolonial theories long before the postcolonial, as a theoretical position, was developed in the West.

All these texts, and the very debate surrounding them, not only provide important platforms on which to discuss Latin America within the colonial and postcolonial field, they also widen the scope for enquiry into this area rather than limit it. As Peter Hulme has observed, the subsequent debate, rather than curb further enquiries, has helped reawaken interest in different forms of colonialism and imperialism, as well as addressing the fact that Latin America barely figures in the map of postcolonial theory.[15] Bill Ashcroft, in his engagement with the Latin American postcolonial debate, argues that the colonisation of Latin America leads us to address the question of postcolonialism at its roots because the structures that inform colonialism have served as the platform from which such postcolonial strategies and analytical tools have been developed.[16] We can certainly further extend Ashcroft's positions by considering Hulme's definition of the postcolonial as a continual process of disengagements from the entire colonial syndrome. As Hulme suggests:

> One misconception is that 'postcolonial' represents some kind of badge of merit, a reward for having purged one's writing or intellect of the evils of colonialism. This move mistakenly perpetuates an old game with the highest scores now awarded for such things as native authenticity and rejection of European languages rather than for the old universals of beauty and truth: as a

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[14] Walter D. Mignolo, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse: Cultural Critique or Academic Colonialism', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 28, Number 3, 1993, p. 122.
[15] Peter, Hulme, 'Including America', pp. 117-23.
[16] Bill Ashcroft, 'Modernity's First Born: Latin America and Postcolonial Transformation', *ARIEL*, Volume 29, Number 2, 1998, p. 13.

> result we get arguments that Achebe is postcolonial, Soyinka is not; Lamming is, Naipaul is not. Such games do us no credit. If 'postcolonial' is a useful word, then it refers to a *process* of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and probably is inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: 'postcolonial' is (or should be) a descriptive, not an evaluative, term.[17]

As a process, rather than a statement, a space is created in which to discuss the wider contexts of colonial and postcolonial experiences. Importantly, Hulme draws attention to the fact that it is not necessarily a question of applying a set of prescriptive tools to an area, or to reading some writers as postcolonial because they conform to a certain 'theoretical correctness' in their writings but of engaging with the structures and discourses that continue to impinge, and inform writings from areas that have been marked by colonialism. Furthermore, and as Fernando Coronil argues, 'postcolonialism is a fluid and polysemic category, whose power derives in part from its ability to condense multiple meanings'.[18] Rather than attempting to fix meanings then, it is more productive to develop the significance of postcolonialism by examining the histories of societies that have been subjected to diverse forms of colonialism. To this end, Coronil highlights the importance of expanding postcolonial studies by building on Latin American critical traditions.[19]

The debate surrounding Latin America within the postcolonial field is an ongoing one. I want to proceed from here by locating my subsequent discussion on representations of Cuban identity as forming part of an continuing process of disengagement from colonialism and neo-colonialism; I will be discussing postcolonialism as constantly developing and responding to external and internal forces, rather that from fixed or polarised sites. My aim is to examine Cuban writings, the strategies adopted by intellectuals and writers within a postcolonial context defined as a product of, and forming part of the recurrent process of engagements and disengagements with the heritage of former and new forms of colonialism. Rather than looking at Cuban writings as having been successfully 'purged' from the 'evils' of colonialism, I will be investigating how the colonial experience in Cuban society recurrently impacts on, and surfaces in subsequent articulations and representations of

[17] Peter Hulme, 'Including America', p. 120.
[18] Fernando Coronil, 'Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonisation', *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed., Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 240.
[19] Fernando Coronil, 'Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonisation', p. 238- 9.

an independent, post-colonial cultural identity. In looking at Cuban writings as responding to a process of disengagements from colonialism, the notion of colonialism as a recurrent force comes to mind, and therefore, I will also be drawing attention to responses to the re-engagements with other forms of neo-colonialism in Cuba.

The notion of postcolonialism as a process is particularly significant in Cuban history if we consider the nation's protracted fight for Cuban independence from Spain, which finally took place in 1898, and the subsequent threat North American military and economic entrenchments posed to the republic's integrity. Independence, even decolonisation was not entirely fulfilled but rather led to a re-engagement with yet another form of colonialism.

The historical differences between the colonisation of Latin America and other parts of the world have been used as one of the points of departure in the debate surrounding Latin America and postcolonial theory. Nevertheless, common ground exists between the re-engagements in Cuba with other forms of neo-colonialism and those portrayed in the writings of, for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ben Okri. In his essay, 'Detention in Neocolonial Kenya', Ngugi draws our attention to the self seeking 'neocolonial ruling minority' that re-open the door to oncoming waves of multi-national enterprises, and in doing so participate in the 'immoral sale and mortgage of a whole country and its people to Euro-American and Japanese capital...'.[20] Ben Okri equally portrays the re-entrenchments of neo-colonial structures in Nigeria through his collection of short stories *Stars of the New Curfew*. The collection's title story carries references to the importation of dried milk and pharmaceuticals that create a local dependency on goods that, as Okri writes 'would later poison them'.[21] In dealing with the impact of Western imported goods in Nigeria, and ones particularly developed for a Western market, Okri underlines how these products undermine the growth of local economies which in turn promote further imports and dependency on them. Both Okri and Ngugi engage with the tensions that exist in postcolonial societies as a result of the drive to project an independent and culturally relevant identity within societies that are governed by elites that replicate colonial ruling structures. Postcolonialism, therefore, rather than

[20] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 'Detention in Neocolonial Africa', *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-Colonial Kenya* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1983), p. 53.
[21] Ben Okri, 'Stars of the New Curfew', *Stars of the New Curfew* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 94.

signalling a cut off point from the colonial period or advertising the start of a new era, indicates instead the ongoing negotiations that take place in the attempts to disengage from the whole colonial syndrome. This last point is as relevant to postcolonial societies in African countries, as it is to Cuba's continued responses to other forms of neo-colonialism, be they economic, cultural or military, or arising from interventions by Spain, North America or the Soviet Union. And a similarity exists in the decolonising process in Asia and Africa as in the Latin American wars of independence, which also involved the preservation of élite privileges and the reproduction of internal inequalities.[22] It is also undeniable that colonialism has introduced cultural and racial hybridity into these societies. A point of reference here could be Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, which he sets in a Bombay that celebrates its Portuguese colonial heritage.[23] The novel's hero, Moraes Zogoiby, is a blend of Catholic, Jewish, Arabic, Spanish and contemporary Indian influences who embodies the hybrid self, and the Bombay he lives in becomes an intertextual site of signs in which hybridity is privileged as a cultural model.[24] When locating or defining postcolonialism then, we have a sense that we are dealing with, on the one hand, a 'syndrome' within which a process of disengagements with the heritage of colonialism are procedurally enacted. On the other, a reality of colonialism is the subsequent merging of histories, races and cultures which have, in turn, contributed to the hybridity found in postcolonial societies and to the development of discursive strategies in texts such as *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

Even as we consider locating Cuban writings within a postcolonial theoretical framework then, situating the material I will be discussing in this dissertation within its local context also raises questions about the similarities and differences that exist between Cuba and other postcolonial nations.

Whilst playing out the ongoing dynamic of postcolonialism as one that continues to impact on Cuban society, the concept of 'the ongoing', or of something that is continually reformulating in response to both local and outside influences is also of particular relevance to Cuba and the recurrent, multiple quests for identity that have permeated the intellectual, artistic, cultural, and political production in Latin America since the nineteenth century. Santiago Colas refers to this recurrence as a

[22] Fernando Coronil, 'Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonisation', p. 230.
[23] Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Vintage, 1996).
[24] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 113.

'tragicomic history of ostensible definitive declarations of independent identity, which have always failed and which are therefore periodically reformulated with renewed conviction'.[25] In Cuban society, these articulations are, I will be arguing, indicative of the way the society needs to simultaneously un-write the imperial nationalism whilst re-writing the new postcolonial one which is formulated in response to both internal and external pressures. But the need to reformulate identity and the belief that each construct is necessary, because the preceding model is no longer viable, locates the process by which identity is formulated as transient; thus questions are raised about the partiality of each expression.

When I refer to Cuban identity in this dissertation I will be locating identity as one that is reformulated in response to, and as a construct of an ongoing development; in putting together the notion of postcolonialism as a process, rather than a position, with a concept of cultural identity that forms part of a recurrent dynamic, I will be hoping to explore the basis on which Cuban cultural identity is represented in each periodical reformulation. My purpose is to explore the connections that may exist between renewed quests for identity and ongoing engagements and disengagements with colonial and postcolonial structures. I also make some distinction between national and cultural identity, not because they function as separate entities but because I want to explore ways in which cultural expression, such as black Cuban culture and ideological differences can become subordinate to national and political imperatives, whilst also recognising the link between culture and nationalism in the formation of a national consciousness, and identity. Indeed, Julio Cortázar in his essay 'Politics and the Intellectual' notes the close links that exist in Latin America between politics and the intellectual, and the intellectual's duty towards the national.[26] As interrogators on the question of culture and identity, they are also necessarily committed to the wider national drive. As such, I will be referring to national and cultural identity as expressions that individually and together stage the dialectical divisions of the society that produces them.[27]

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[25] Santiago Colas, 'Of Creole Symptoms, Cuban Fantasies, and Other Latin American Postcolonial Ideologies', p. 385.
[26] Julio Cortázar, 'Politics and the Intellectual in Latin America', *The Final Island: The Fiction of Julio Cortázar*, eds., Jamie Alazraki and Ivar Ivask (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), p. 38.
[27] Robert J.C. Young, 'The Overwritten Unwritten: Nationalism and its Doubles in Post-Colonial Theory', *(Un)Writing Empire*, ed., Theo D'Haen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: P. Rodopi, 1998), p. 17. See also Robert Young's *Torn Halves: Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press), 1996.

My aim is to suggest that this approach will generate questions about how and why cultural identity is (re)formulated in Cuban society, the function of each renewed representation of cultural identity, and explore the role changing concepts of Cuban nationalism and ideologies play in these representations; to investigate how, in the conjunction with the postcolonial (as an ongoing process), and periodic reformulations of identity, a site is created where conflicting, contradictory and diverse concepts of cultural identity meet.

Strong links have existed in Cuba between the cultural and the nationalistic, and indeed, nationalism can be considered as a form of culture (as much as a political ideology or a movement) that represents the sentiments or aspirations of the nation.[28] Nationalism impacts on cultural expression and on how individuals see themselves and others, on how they think of themselves as members of the same group and how such views become justified. Notions of identity, therefore, are not necessarily spontaneous expressions of culture but are also ones that are shaped by interest groups and local hegemonic forces which are often in conflict with each other. Culture further becomes identified through political drives. These have been discussed by Robert Young in terms of cultural politics that in themselves form a counter culture that challenges 'mainstream' or hegemonic cultural views, the origins of which can be found in forms of cultural revolutions produced by non-European socialists such as Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. Deployed to resist forms of colonial and neo-colonial power, Young suggests that the production of culture under these 'counter' conditions 'served as a means of unifying the fractured societies produced by colonialism, [and] of producing an anti-colonial counter hegemony'.[29] To this end, the emerging cultural expression is informed by a nationalistic drive that aims to challenge one that is produced by colonial authority. The drive towards national reconstruction in Cuba, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century was centred around resistance to U.S. incursions on the island. Unity became the central motif in this drive. Functioning as a bridge between racial and cultural differences in Cuba, and with the aim to present a firm counter hegemonic stance, unity demanded a level of constancy and stability in the attempt to hold together all fractions of society. Although counter-colonial, cultural expression was also institutionally formed and

[28] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, Las Vegas, London: University of Nevada Press, 1991), p. 72.
[29] Robert J.C. Young, *Torn Halves: Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory*, p. 109.

reformulated by Cuban elite interests groups that in themselves formed a hegemonic power within the island and did not necessarily reflect the values or needs of wider society.[30] Thus, although anti-colonial in premise, the formulation of a cohesive cultural identity, even a hybrid one, does not necessarily allow for local difference since internal politics are also informed by their own particular power relations. Ever changing, or morphing models of cultural identity would tend to challenge if not frustrate nationalistic imperatives for fixity, yet this is what appears to occur with each reformulation, with each claiming to be 'new' and 'authentic' at the same time. Demonstrating positions that are in conflict with each other, Robert Young discusses literature produced within the context of competing nationalisms as both deconstructive and nation forming, and as an example of the site where postcolonial meanings can be achieved.[31] Young's discussion here, again affords an interesting site in which to discuss Cuban writings within a postcolonial context, one that further moves away from polarisations. Referring back, however, to this introduction's opening quote by Benedict Anderson, if we consider nations to be simultaneously 'historical' and 'new', and that it is in the intersection of both that cultural identity is expressed, then the site on which the new nation state finds expression can also be considered as a site in which meanings are informed by tensions and conflicts. Certainly conflicts prevail between the 'historical' and the 'new', but, if we look more closely at the demographics of Cuban society, the racially and cultural diverse components of society, the ideological (particularly after 1959), and the degree of selectivity informing the appropriate 'historical' foundation, we also find that the diverse parts that constitute Cuban society need to compete, often unevenly, within the national for expression. Young further suggests that these tensions demonstrate the complexities of political nationalisms; he argues that in the conjunction between the old and the new, and in the un-writing of colonial nationalistic discourse together with the rewriting of a postcolonial one, a doubling is created between discourses, positions, the past and the present. [32]

[30] Robert J.C. Young, *Torn Halves: Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory*, p. 109. In his discussion of the counter hegemonic and revolutionary ethos informing cultural politics he notes that the institutional formation of these very positions lead to their institutional containment despite the production of antithetical 'dominant' versus 'subversive' structures.

[31] Robert J.C. Young, 'The Overwritten Unwritten: Nationalism and its Doubles in Post-Colonial Theory', p. 18.

[32] Robert J.C. Young, 'The Overwritten Unwritten: Nationalism and its Doubles in Post-Colonial Theory', p. 19.

Although a sense of divisiveness informs such a dialectic Young, as Anderson, locates this system of oppositions between a past and a present and forming part of the process which ensures continuity. Young refers to the 'dialectical culture' of nationalism as providing continuity between the colonial past and the postcolonial present. The conjunction of the 'new' with the 'old' could involve the recovery of a pre-colonial culture, and in this sense, the recalling of a 'historical' past attempts to bridge the rupture caused by colonialism, although prevailing colonial institutional, political and economic structures continue to impact on that society. In Cuba the recovery of a pre-Columbian past is a different matter altogether given that the island's autochthonous population was virtually killed off within the first century of Spanish rule. Black slave labour was subsequently imported, a factor that contributes to the racial composition on the island, and one that further complicates cultural or historical recovery and constructs of identity. The question, therefore, of origins, and their recovery is moot with every move towards a new beginning since the past is not a resolved matter but rather, an uncertain one.

In needing to be historical, moves have to be made back to a (selected) point of origin, which in turn needs to be recovered and articulated so that any perceived relevance can come to bear on the present. But moves back in time, together with assertions of newness create tensions between the past and the future, the colonial and postcolonial, as do the imperatives behind reformulations of the national expression at any particular moment in time. Nevertheless, constant assertions for a cultural identity, and their interrelatedness to nationalistic imperatives for panoply, led me to ask questions of how each move to assert cultural identity is held together in Cuban society. This is all the more relevant when we consider how the Cuban national cultural standard presents itself as one that is, above all, united.

1.2

The question of unity and the application of such a concept need first be discussed in the historical context in which a united Cuba became a driving force within the national. An island united in arms against Spain was seen as fundamental to gaining independence and was fully drawn upon during the first War of Independence, The Ten Years' War. The war commenced in 1868 with the 'Grito de Yara', when Cuban separatists proclaimed Cuban independence and the establishment of a provisional republic. By the early 1870s the separatists' uprising had attracted an estimated

40,000 supporters from all classes, racial background, from freemen and slaves and throughout the island and the Caribbean.[33] Although certainly an indication of solidarity, Louis A. Pérez Jr. notes that the separatist movement was Creole led, and the motives for independence were also led by their interests.[34] Whereas opposition to Spanish rule had changed from the political to the military, there was no fundamental change to the reformist character of the Cuban Creole. The separatist manifesto renewed, albeit in different form, many of the Creole demands for lower taxation, free trade and representative government. Although they called for the 'universal manhood suffrage', they also defended slavery and separatists incorporated into their programme the slave-owners' version of abolition which called for the 'gradual and indemnified abolition of slavery'.[35] The financial viability of Creole enterprises and business were dependant on the continuation of a slave population so the hope of maintaining some form of indentured work force was high in the Creole agenda. Planters who had emancipated their slaves upon the onset of war later impressed them into military roles to fight in the insurgent army for their former owners. Neither did

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[33] Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 121.

[34] Indeed, in the decades leading up to the Ten Years' War Cuban élites had had time to think about the consequences of independence to their business and they could not contemplate the prospects of independence without first considering the potential social and economic cost of political change. Louis A. Pérez explains the Creoles' economic and political dilemma as follows: 'They understood well the political economy of colonialism and appreciated even more their stake in that order. They understood too that the quest for political power risked the loss of privilege and property: that the colonial structures that sanctioned unequal political relations, to which they were victim, were the same structures that underwrote unequal social and economic relations to which they were beneficiary. They understood their system and acted accordingly...Creole property owners were prisoners within structures partially of their own making. Unable to articulate the larger needs to their society, they pursued the narrow interests of their class'. Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Between Reform and Revolution*, p. 104. It was not until Spain enacted the Law of Abolition and Repression of the Salve Trade in 1845 that Creole interests became threatened since the suppression of the legal slave trade added expenses to production and undermined profits. Although an illicit slave trade grew rapidly, the new costs, and the fact that Spain could at any time clamp down on this trade led to thoughts of rebellion. At the same time, a much safer option was sought through the Creole advocacy of annexation to the United States. Since slavery remained intact in the Southern States the Cuban Creole class believed that annexation would ensure that slavery in Cuba would remain intact as would their plantation economy. Annexation sentiments subsided around the mid-1900s and the American Civil War saw an end to discussions of annexation as a means to resist abolition. Slave emancipation and the Creole resistance to this appear as a central dilemma in the decision to fight for independence in the lead up to the Ten Years' War, with the economic taking precedence over nationalistic drives. Ironically a rebellion initiated to safeguard slavery risked creating the conditions that could well destroy it. Demands for reform nevertheless continued but these were met by increased repressive action from Spain during the 1860s, which included the silencing of the press and the banning of political meetings. In March 1967 Spain imposed a new series of protectionists duties on foreign goods which the island so depended on, and to which the United States responded in kind by levying a tax on all Cuban goods, actions that served to finally bring about Cuban rebellion in 1868. See Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, Chapter Five, pp. 104 -128.

[35] Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, p. 122.

all slaves emancipated by insurgents obtain freedom. Nevertheless, many free men of colour, amongst them Antonio Maceo, joined the rebellion because for them the emancipation of slaves was as important as national independence. Aline Helg suggests that black mobilisation during the war was facilitated by an existing underground network linking free blacks and mulattos to plantation slaves. These networks were uncovered in the wake of the alleged Conspiracy of The Escalera in 1844 in which thousands of slaves and free people of colour were accused of jointly plotting to end slavery and Spanish domination. The fear of a slave uprising led to the killing of thousands of black Cubans and brought about racist legislation that restricted the rights of free people of colour. Their exclusion from 'free' society brought them closer to slaves, leading to the growth of underground networks rather than their demise. Past repression and retribution led to the association by black Cubans of abolition with that of independence since this war gave them the opportunity to fight for their own cause within the national agenda. The conflation of both drives subsequently led to high levels of black voluntary participation.[36]

Nevertheless, as Helg further suggests, the call for unity was deployed by the white Cuban Creoles out of the practical need to create a fighting force strong enough to fight the Spanish. This could only be achieved by integrating black free men and slaves into their forces and by encouraging such analogies between independence and black emancipation to be made. It must be noted that la *raza de color* was a category constructed by the dominant Spanish and Cuban whites to exclude free people of African descent, demarcating difference and national belonging through colour. Although reversed by white Cubans in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the question of race and the place of black Cubans in society remained problematic.[37] White Creoles were ever fearful of the visibility of the black army and of the black rising up against them. Estimates suggest that about fifty to seventy five percent of all troops during the wars were black, which in turn led to deep-seated tensions between the white Creole leadership and a largely black army, led by strong black leaders such as Antonio Maceo. [38] Fears that the black component of the army would rise up against the Creoles contributed to the inconclusive end of the First War of

[36] Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 4 -5.
[37] Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912*, p. 14.
[38] Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), p. 22.

Independence in 1878 with the signing of the Treaty of Zanjón, which led to the general feeling that the Creoles had ended the war without a decisive Spanish victory because they feared a black presence more than they did Spanish rule. Although Zanjón paved the way for political dialogue with Spain and reforms, the Treaty also opened up new political schisms within the island. Reformism split separatist ranks between those who agreed with the terms of the Zanjón peace settlement and those who did not. Excluded, therefore, from the new political alignments, irreconcilable veterans of the Ten Years' War chose expatriation as an alternative to submitting to continued Spanish rule. Held together by a vision of a free Cuba the ranks of Cuban separatists in exile formed expatriate revolutionary clubs as a sign of their commitment to the armed struggle.[39]

Unity became a central and important drive in the separatists' propaganda written by José Martí (1853 –1895) during the years leading up to the 1898 War of Independence. Martí was active politically from a young age and although all his life was dedicated to the liberation of Cuba from Spain, he only lived in Cuba for the first seventeen years of his life. He was arrested and tried in 1870 for supporting the Ten Years War and conspiring against the colonial state for which he was sentenced to six years hard labour. Although his sentence was later reduced, Martí was deported to Spain during 1871 at the age of seventeen.[40] After this he was to spend years in exile, living in Spain, Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela and in New York, where he lived for the longest period of his life and from where, in 1880, he volunteered his services to Cuban Revolutionary Committee. On March 14, 1892 Martí founded the newspaper *Patria* as a mouthpiece for the Cuban émigrés, and to intensify the revolutionary campaign. *Patria* remained in publication until the end of the 1898 War of Independence, its last edition being published December 31, 1898. Martí's article, 'La Acción Unánime' from the newspaper's first edition calls for a unity of action between the four *Clubs Revolucionarios* in New York; '*Un tiempo pudo haver en que, por una razón u otra, andaban mas sueltos que unidos, a la raiz de la catastrophe,*

[39] The separatist sentiment was such that a new war of liberation was their ultimate and inevitable aim. Only months after Zanjón plans were completed by veteran General Calixto García, who in 1879 organised the Cuban Revolutionary Committee in New York and subsequently led a force into Cuba, marking the start of 'La Guerra Chiquita' (1879-80), which was short lived due to misfortunes and bad organisation. Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, pp. 134-4.
[40] Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Introducción a José Martí* (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, Casa de Las Americas, 1978), p.14.

los cubanos independientes'.[41] This call is then further extended to incorporate other clubs and exiled communities across the United States.

> *Que no hay una sola voz cubana en Nueva York, una sola que ose o desee echarse fuera de la virtud, y poner mancha, o alzar la menor duda, sobre la nobleza y justicia con que ven nacer, según su plan y su Estatudos, el Partido Revolucionario Cubano.* [42]

Whilst certainly aiming to draw together Cuban factions under one ideological, revolutionary banner, Martí's words also draw attention to an intrinsic divisiveness within Cuban societies in the United States as well as noting that sentiments on the island were not aligned with those of the separatists now in exile. The emergence of a Revolutionary Movement in New York in 1879 is an important indicator of the location of different interest groups which, although operating outside Cuba and the island's political alignments, function within (and towards) a Cuban nationalistic scheme.[43] Martí draws a distinction between geographical locations when he addresses his audience in the North and his aim in this first instance is to unite the revolutionary front that at the time was almost entirely located outside the island. In an article written in June 1892 Martí addressed both *los cubanos de afuera y los cubanos de adentro* in recognition of the political schism and geographical distance that prevailed between both positions and locations. Indeed, the discord was used as a tool by Spain, who, keen to prevent a second war, encouraged such antagonisms.

> *El Gobierno español cree, con poco conocimiento de la verdad, y de nuestro corazón, que del desden legítimo, y hoy sin causa en nuestras condiciones nuevas, del cubano agusto que ponía a la guerra el pecho, al cubano emigrado que malgastaba o enviaba mal los recursos de guerra, puede perpetuarse la discordia entre los militares de antes, y los que con ellos de la mano continúan sin obra, puede levantarse la discordia entre los revolucionarios de ayer que viven en Cuba y los revolucionarios de ayer que fuera de Cuba continúan, en el Partido Revolucionario Cubano, la obra actual de la revolución - y echa sus agentes, por aulas y talleres y caminos y*

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[41] José Martí, 'La Acción Unánime' (1892), *Obras Completas I* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p.325.

[42] José Martí, , 'La Acción Unánime'(1892), *Obras Completas I* , p. 327.

[43] Expatriate interests groups and the formation of a corresponding cultural identity following the 1959 Revolution are discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation. Although the consolidation of the Cuban stronghold in Miami together with the powerful and influential Right Wing Lobby is seen as symptomatic of the ideological rift brought about by the 1959 Cuban Revolution, parallels can be drawn between the present position and that of the late nineteenth century in that both examples use the United States as a base from which to organise and eventually expedite a military force. See for example the case of 'La Guerra Chiquita' (1879-80) and invasion of 'Playa Girón' (1961).

visitas y salones a revivir en el corazón lastimado de los héroes leales el desdén de los cubanos de la emigración a rebajar el primer esfuerso metódico y unido de las emigraciones cubanas por la independencia, el esfuerzo en que trabajan mano a mano los generales y los presidiarios y los desterrados de la guerra pasada, con los elementos nuevos, útiles e imprescindibles de la generación nacida de ella.[44]

Although the fight is against the Spanish machinery of misinformation we also have a situation whereby Martí sets up the Cubans in exile as the loyal supporters of independence and they are the bearers of the message of liberation. The Cubans on the outside are also the ones that disseminated the revolutionary ethos across clubs and exile communities. They come to represent standard bearers, and as agents for the revolution they physically move between locations, making connections as they move from one to another. In the above quote Martí is certainly concerned with the organisation of such a movement and in legitimising a move (to Cubans both inside and outside the island), that essentially involved the invasion of the island by a revolutionary military force. When he refers to '*el primer esfuerso metódico y unido de las emigraciones cubanas por la independencia*' Martí notes the lack of unity of action that had informed the separatist movement. He believed that past failures lay within the movement itself and their lack of political organisation through which to promote the call to arms.[45] At the same time, organisational and ideological coherence formed only part of the unifying mission since Martí was concerned with social reform and the elimination of socio-economic injustice in Cuba. In a letter to General Maceo (1882) ten years earlier Martí laid out for Maceo what he saw as the problems facing Cuba and the solutions:

Ni tengo tiempo de decirle, General, cómo a mis ojos no ésta el problema cubano en la solución política, sino en la social, y como ésta no puede lograrse sino con aquel amor y perdón mutuos de una y otra raza, y aquella prudencia siempre digna y siempre generosa de que sé que su altivo y noble corazón está animado. Para mí es un criminal el que promueva en Cuba odios, o se aproveche de los que existen. Y otro criminal el que pretenda sofocar las aspiraciones legítimas a la vida de una raza buena y prudente que ha sido ya bastante desgraciada.[46]

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[44] José Martí, 'Los cubanos de afuera y los cubanos de adentro'(1892), *Obras Completas I* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 476.
[45] Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, p. 145.
[46] José Martí, 'Al General Antonio Maceo' (1882), *Obras Completas I* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 172.

Martí's mission was twofold in that logistical requirements demanded unity of expression and action but independence only represented a phase of a larger process of reform for Cuban society since the solutions were to be found in social reform. The recognition that internal racial, social and economic factors were at the core of Cuban disunity is significant since Martí refuses to ignore social injustices for the sake of individual interest groups. For Martí, independence signified a Cuba free from racism and oppression and responsive to the needs of all Cubans.[47] In his essay 'Nuestra América' (1893), Martí outlined a foundational template for his socially aware, humanitarian and racially inclusive ethos.

> *No hay odio de razas, porque no hay razas. Los pensadores canijos, los pensadores de lámpara, enhebran y recalientan las razas de librería, que el viajero justo y el observador cordial buscan en vano en la justicia de la naturaleza, donde resalta, en el amor victorioso y el apetito tubulento, la indentidad universal del hombre. El alma emana, igual y eterna, de los cuerpos diversos en forma y en color. Peca contra la humanidad el que formente y propague la oposición y el odio de las razas.*[48]

Martí deals with unity at a number of levels; his words are certainly concerned with unity and intellectual discourse, in bringing together words with action, but the suggestion is that revolutionary action cannot succeed unless racial unity is achieved. In attempting to remove the emphasis placed on colour, Martí re-focuses the question of racial identity to that of a universal one, based on the 'natural', on good will, cordiality and love. He asks the reader to look beyond outward appearances, and to realise that all men are the same inside. He does, however, appear to go much further that to advocate racial unity when the first line in the above excerpt from 'Nuestra América' proposes that racial divisiveness in Cuba is a non-issue because for Martí, racial distinction did not exist. The stress placed by Martí on racial unity forms part of the national enterprise; in identifying a 'beyond race' paradigm as a model that leads to national unity, Martí places race at the centre of the nationalistic drive, but even as racial difference becomes dissolved (and the aim here was certainly a move towards undoing inequality), difference also became disavowed and the promotion of a 'beyond race' model of cultural identity provided a framework which denied black

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[47] Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, p. 145.

[48] José Martí, 'Nuestra América', in *Nuestra América*, 'Introducción de Pedro Henriquez Ureña (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1939), p. 22.

Cubans a platform from where they could lobby for their rights. Questions are then raised as to whether racial difference and racial divisiveness are synonymous issues, or if the drive to undo differences actually leads to the perpetuation of inequality. Within such a paradigm race is rendered quite invisible although it is evident from his earlier cited letter to General Maceo, that Martí is suggesting that the solution to Cuba lies not only in the success of the separatist movement but most particularly in social reform. Whilst informed by a certain degree of idealism, Martí's letter is candid about racism and economic differentials between classes in Cuba. In his essay 'Mi Raza' (also written in 1893), Martí discusses race in another universalising move that aims to dissolve racial difference under a Cuban banner that promulgates equity across the board. As the title of his essay suggests, Martí sets himself up as an ideal example of his own theories; he projects his demeanour and philosophical creed as the norm whilst aiming to pacify tensions between blacks and whites. In his essay Martí states that

> *en Cuba no hay temor alguno a la Guerra de razas. Hombre es más que blanco, más que mulatto, más que negro. Cubano es más que blanco, más que mulatto, más que negro.*[49]

It is interesting that Martí first defines men or mankind as a generic model, and Cubans need to follow this example as one where racial differentials are obsolete. Martí therefore appears to be referring to a philosophical and ideal concept of man and the suggestion is that all Cubans need to be educated to this standard. Although the onus is placed 'equally' on both white and black Cubans to rise above the racial, equality did not exist between white and black Cubans. Martí further suggests that as a Cuban, his race is that of all Cubans thus setting a standard based on his race and creed. Still, in asserting '***mi** raza*', as his own, he stood, as a white Cuban, exemplary of the very theory he was projecting. The 'universal' mode Martí embodies demonstrates an apparent white façade in which race is rendered a non-issue (invisible). Yet race remained a very real presence in Cuban social life. As a white Cuban, Martí's discourse raises questions about the location and significance of *el mestizaje* as a national symbol within Cuban society. Martí wrote in 'Nuestra América';

[49] José Martí, 'Mi Raza', *Obras Completas 2* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 299.

> *Por eso el libro importado ha sido vencido en América por el hombre natural. Los hombres naturales han vencido a los letrados artificiales. El mestizo autóctono ha vencido al criollo exótico. Noy hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza.* [50]

From being a non-issue in 'Mi Raza', racial difference here is seen as an amalgam of the *blanco*, *mulatto* and *negro* to create *el mestizo* who appears as a democratically configured autochthonous figure. The need to develop the concept of an autochthonous Cuban is significant given that firstly, few if any of the aboriginal inhabitants of the island remained. Secondly the call to arms against the Spanish was a decolonising act and as *los mestizos autóctonos* Cubans were assured moral and legal legitimacy over their claim to their lands. As mentioned above, the racial divide in Cuba during the Wars of Independence was wide and the separatist movement was mainly led by white Creole economic demands. The alignment of race with independence ensured the firm embedding, within the national culture of myths of racial unity.

Martí's desire for reform is nevertheless evident in the cited letters above, but he died in 1895, during the opening months of the 1898 War of Independence and it is difficult to know how these at times idealised theories of racial unity would, or could have led to reform. Still, Martí's ideals have become integrated in the national within a dialectical structure that denies racial equality on the basis that racial difference is non-existence in Cuba. As Aline Helg suggests, whites produced myths and icons of fear in order to justify the subaltern position of blacks and their supremacy and in apparent contradiction to white supremacy, the most important myth produced by the elite claimed the existence of racial equality in Cuba. José Martí's role here is fundamental and the function of such a myth was twofold. First, it diffused the idea that Cuban slaves had been freed after the Ten Years' War. Slave emancipation was projected as an act of kindness by white slave owners, and this absolved the slave owners, in their minds, of their obligation to compensate for past mistreatments. It so followed that blacks ought to be grateful for their freedom, and fall into the social and racial hierarchy of society. The myth further inculcated that racial equality had been achieved in the Cuban military forces that had fought against Spain and by extension across the island, thus avoiding the uncomfortable questions raised by the overrepresentation of black Cubans in the forces during the Wars of Independence,

[50] José Martí, 'Nuestra América', *Nuestra América*, 'Introducción de Pedro Henriquez Ureña, p. 14.

and their subsequent under-representation within the political and social institutions of the new republic. By denying the existence of discrimination on the basis of race, such a myth allowed one to stigmatise as racist those black Cubans who struggled for equality. Blacks who protested could and were considered as anti-white racists. The repression of black political mobilisation was thus justified, and in this sense, the myth was instrumental in sustaining racism against Afro-Cubans.[51] The founding of the Partido Independiente de Color by Evaristo Estenoz in 1908 and other Afro-Cuban veterans of the Wars of Independence is one such incident of black mobilisation that lead to the racist repression of blacks in what has become known as the 1912 Race War. The arrests and executions of the party's leaders was legitimised by the rhetoric that the PIC threatened racial democracy and the republic. Alejandro de la Fuente notes how 'one editorial opined, "those who follow Estenoz are evil because they prefer to be Blacks rather than Cubans". ("La raza de color y los racistas", *La Lucha,* 14 May 1910)'. The PIC leaders were then invariably labelled as 'racist' because their actions signified that they placed race above a national cultural identity.[52]

Myths of racial democracy become integrated into, and co-exist alongside theories of syncretic cultural diversity such as Fernando Ortiz's 'transculturation'. Questions are then raised about the basis on which syncretic models of cultural identity function and if they promulgate yet more myths? Who were the men and women who contributed to the meaning of nationality in the republic, and were they able to (or prepared to) represent all of Cuban society? And can we locate these syncretic and hybrid models of cultural identity within the field of postcolonial studies where theories of hybridity are central? As a prominent arbiter of cultural identity and of the elite, Ortiz's point of enunciation requires further scrutiny. Martí's writings founded a theory of racial hybridity that equated Cuban cultural identity within a mode that, whilst valorising *el mestizaje* also gave rise to tensions between the idealised projection of hybrid identities and the disavowal of racial difference. We appear then to have conflicting views of race although both function within a scheme based on equity.

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[51] Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912*, p. 16.
[52] Alejandro de la Fuente, 'Myths of Racial Democracy: Cuba 1900-1912', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 34, Number 3, 1999, p. 63.

The ethos, therefore, underpinning notions of a united Cuba is complex in as far as that meaning is ascribed by interest groups who do not necessarily represent all Cubans. Unity can be seen as a nationalistic slogan that veils racial and ideological tensions, as well as a device through which issues of racial inequality can be evaded. Unity, therefore, has functioned at the highest level in Cuban nationalism as a fundamental symbol of an island united in its struggle, primarily against Spanish colonialism, but also later, against North American military and economic incursions. To be united was to be patriotic, to draw attention to divisive elements in Cuban society, unpatriotic. Nevertheless, the need to assert a 'new' and independent cultural identity after 1898 raised questions about how this united *Cuba Libre* could be achieved. Which, if not whose, historical origins could, or would writers and intellectuals retrieve to make their society both 'new' and 'historical'? Who were these intellectuals, on whose behalf were they speaking, and to whom? How would questions of racial diversity, and racial tensions be dealt with given the massive imperatives to project a united nation? The emerging nationalism was seen as a positive and liberating drive that promised to do away with the former colonial hegemonic narratives, but the question of nationalism within a postcolonial context is fraught with tensions. Although counter-colonial nationalistic narratives function as liberating discourses that aim to unravel colonial authority, they are in themselves hegemonic and often located within specific interest groups that are often unable or unwilling to reflect the needs of wider society. The continued assertions to recreate cultural identity anew also suggest a dynamic in which the process of unravelling leads to a site which is simultaneously constructive. Tensions are nevertheless evident between both drives of what are after all, competing discourses.

1.3

A duality arises therefore, between Cuban Creole demands and those of other social and racial groups, one that draws attention to the splits in Cuban society between the official discourse and other, less official sides of society. I will be arguing that Cuba as a society is divided across racial, ideological and geographical lines that are subsumed under an ethos that, whilst promoting unity, fails to engage with the underlying, deep-seated divisions in society. To this end, I intend to call attention to the evasive manoeuvres that Cuban writings perform around the splits and diversity in their society. My question will be that since we are also dealing with hybrid cultural

and racial identities, how can, or does, the hybrid that, by its very nature creates an unsettling presence, fit into the national? And for that matter, how is difference, be it racial or ideological, dealt with in a society that aims to contain and subsume difference?

Postcolonialism, both as a process and as the locus of hybridity is central to my discussion of representations of Cuban cultural identity. Although (and as discussed above), Rushdie celebrates hybrid cultural manifestations as symbols that enrich the landscapes and identities he describes, and as a discursive strategy that creates a form of postcolonial contestation, in the case of Cuba tensions seem evident between the deployment of hybrid forms and the valorisation of racial difference. As a consequence, whilst the hybrid *mestizo* has come to represent a figure of national cultural significance in Cuba, such as José Martí's nationalistic exaltation of the *mestizo* as a symbol of national and racial equality, the disjunction between racial hybridity as a counter hegemonic sign that displays the norms of equity, and the preservation of racial inequalities in Cuban society, raise questions about the terms under which hybridity as a counter-colonial national cultural signifier is deployed in post-independence Cuba.

Theories proposed by writers like Homi Bhabha proceed from a consideration of the types of hybridisation postcolonial societies have produced. Bhabha discusses concepts of hybridity in terms of alterity, and the appropriation of colonial culture by the colonised to produce a radically different discourse. Received history is rewritten, tampered with and realigned from the point of view of the colonised. Thus, a challenge is posed to colonial authority, both in the realignment of colonial discourse and in the terms under which identity is constructed and sustained. In his theoretical discussion of mimicry Bhabha outlines the contradiction inherent in the process by which the Other is constructed. In arguing that the colonial drive to fix and control identity leads to the desire for a reformed recognisable Other, Bhabha proposes that colonial authority is confronted with a subject of difference that reflects the deep-seated ambivalence inherent in authority. As Bhabha continues,

> Colonial mimicry is a desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called

> mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power...
>
> The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in normalizing the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms. The ambivalence which thus informs this strategy is discernible, for example, in Locke's Second Treatise which *splits* to reveal the limitations of liberty in his double use of the word 'slave': first simply, descriptive as the locus of a legitimate form of ownership, then as a trope for an intolerable, illegitimate exercise of power. What is articulated in that distance between the two uses is the absolute, imagined difference between the 'Colonial' State of Carolina and the Original state of nature. [53]

In creating an identity for the Other a dynamic of doubling and mimicry is initiated that undermines colonial authority. In reforming the colonial subject colonial discourse needs to simultaneously produce a likeness, and disavow it, since the (self) image produced presents a disturbing presence of identity that, upon first sight, recalls authority only to displace it by revealing the difference inherent in the hybrid. Bhabha describes this doubling as falling between mimicry and mockery, and a process by which colonialism's reforming mission is challenged by the gaze of its disciplinary double, who looks back at colonial authority exposing its inherent ambivalence. The ambivalence of mimicry produces a slippage whereby the identity of the colonial subject is necessarily the same (so that authority over the subject can be fixed), whilst simultaneously displaying the difference that prevails between the civilising mission and the slave, as between the colonial authority and colonial subject. Bhabha argues that the ambivalence of mimicry not only ruptures colonial discourse but renders it uncertain and partial in such a way that even as identity is fixed, the colonial subject is presented as the outcome of an incomplete or virtual process, one that reveals a flaw in the very source of colonial authority.[54] Colonial discourse produces a particularly appropriate form of colonial subjectivity, one that is partial because it is modified (even watered down) to prevent the transferral of any knowledge that would threaten its own authority. But in presenting a limited imitation of colonial discourse

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[53] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 86

[54] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', *The Location of Culture*, p. 86.

the partial reflection created mocks the very authority that produces it.[55] Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry demonstrates how dominant discourse constructs Otherness in such a way that the trace of ambivalence or anxiety in its authority rebounds, leading to a fundamental contradiction that opens colonial discourse to the possibility of fracture from within. The process of 'repetition and displacement' instigates ambivalence at the very site of imperial authority, one that betrays a build-in resistance in the construction of any dominant discourse. Opposition then is virtually an inevitable effect in the production of cultural difference and this very difference threatens colonial authority with its greatest fear, that is, the reminder of such ambivalence, which is invariable exposed by the presence in the colonial subject of hybridization or colonial mimicry.[56]

Bhabha's theory is based on a dialectic defined through the relationship created between discourse and subject, reflection and disavowal and mimesis and mimicry, and in this sense, the slippage inherently produced in hybridity serves as a marker for the incomplete transferral of colonial authority. The hybridity displayed by *el mestizaje* deployed in the writings of the Cuban poet and writer Roberto Fernández Retamar engages with (as Bhabha does), the dialectical relationship underpinning constructions of identity in the Caribbean. In representing Caliban as a paradigmatic source of identity, Fernández Retamar takes on the challenge of colonial authority by appropriating the terms under which identity in the Caribbean has been historically produced and sustained. Differences are nevertheless noted between Bhabha's and Fernández Retamar's theories of hybrid identities.

In tracing the discourse through which the Carib Indians became 'deformed' and transformed into cannibals, Fernández Retamar demonstrates that constructs of Caribbean identity are underpinned by the 'degraded vision' of the coloniser. He identifies Caliban as a complex symbol that, as Shakespeare's anagram for cannibal, represents a process of signification that over-determines him: as a bestial figure living in the margins of civilisation, Prospero's reforming and colonising mission is justified. Referring to Montaigne's influential essay 'On Cannibals'(1580), and Shakespeare's liberal use of it in his play *The Tempest* (1612), Fernández Retamar locates two interconnected albeit competing discourses as they come to bear on the

[55] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', *The Location of Culture*, p. 87.

[56] See also Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London, New York, Routledge, 1989), p. 178.

representations of Caliban and his island. Fernández Retamar suggests that Shakespeare was led by the ideology of the bourgeois, mercantile world of his epoch, and these drives informed constructs of Caliban's bestiality and served to legitimise Prospero's usurpation of his island. At the same time, Fernández Retamar draws attention to the utopian vision of Montaigne's essay, as it resurfaces in *The Tempest.*

> What has happened is simply that in depicting Caliban, Shakespeare, an implacable realist, here takes *the other option* of the emerging bourgeois world. Regarding the utopian vision, it does indeed exist in the work but unrelated to Caliban; as was said before, it is expressed by the harmonious humanist Gonzalo. Shakespeare thus confirms that both ways of considering America, far from being in opposition, were perfectly reconcilable. As for the concrete man, present him in the guise of an animal, rob him of his land, enslave him so as to live from his toil, and at the right moment exterminate him; this latter, of course, only if there were someone who could be depended on to perform the arduous tasks instead.[57]

Guided by Montaigne's essay, Shakespeare uncovers (and deploys) the double edged ideology informing humanism. A subtlety exists here in that Shakespeare, in projecting Gonzalo's views, expresses Montaigne's beliefs surrounding difference: ones which recognise alterity without its demonising. [58] Caliban nevertheless needs to be barbaric so that Prospero's utopian mission can be fulfilled; identity is therefore shaped accordingly, with Shakespeare's discourse driven by the need to justify geographical and economic ventures of the time. Fernández Retamar makes the distinction between the description of Caliban's island, that is rendered paradisiacal, and Caliban; both descriptions distort identity, and although Caliban's grotesqueness places him on the opposite side of the representational spectrum to that of his island, whose beauty is mythologized, each occupy and represent the dialectic informing the colonising discourse that created them. And because Prospero's island is indeed a utopian vision, Fernández Retamar aptly notes that it can and must do without men of flesh and blood, to be populated instead by equally imaginary men or remain uninhabited. In this sense, identity is contained within an ideology that determines the visibility of Caliban and his island. Fernández Retamar draws analogies between the descriptions of the voyage in *The Tempest* and those of Columbus' travel logs in

[57] Roberto Fernández Retamar, 'Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America', *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Barker, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 8.

[58] Roberto Fernández Retamar cites Montaigne as follows: 'There is nothing barbarous and savage in that nation...except that each man calls barbarism whatever is not his own practice'. In 'Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America', *Caliban and Other Essays*, p. 8.

which the locations and identities of islands such as Cuba become elusive and indeed virtual, and located somewhere between the terrestrial paradise and the Orient. When the island is brought within view as an actual rather than virtual location, so then does Caliban's identity. No longer demonised, Caliban is rehabilitated by Fernández Retamar in terms that explain his present construct as a product of colonialism. Hybrid now rather than demonised as Other, Caliban becomes recognisable as representative of the hybridity informing the Caribbean. Interestingly, Fernández Retamar in not engaged in presenting Caliban as a de-colonised figure through a purging of his bastardised features: Caliban in his hybrid form becomes instead a relevant symbol for the colonial and postcolonial experiences of the Caribbean and Cuba. Consequently cultural hybridity and racial difference are privileged as the central forces that have informed, and continue to impact on the production of identity and, as Fernández Retamar explains, *el mestizaje* experienced in Cuba.

> This is something that we, the *mestizo* inhabitants of these same isles where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed out ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make him understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language – today he has no other – to curse him, to wish that the "red plague" would fall on him? I know no other metaphor more expressive of our cultural situation, of our reality.[59]

Caliban's hybrid identity remains a consequence of colonialism but in his present form, he represents an identity that simultaneously displays pride in difference as well as presenting a challenging stance. Fernández Retamar bases his theory along Marxist lines and argues that cultural identity had been perpetuated by ideology and the adoption of a false consciousness. Thus, as a symbol, Caliban comes to represent not only a counter colonial figure that curses with the very language that rendered him Other, but also a revolutionary one given the precedent of the Cuban Wars of Independence and the more recent 1959 Revolution. Caliban's appropriation of language delivers a rebel yell that promises independence and freedom. Caliban is reclaimed for the *mestizo* tradition, in which Fernández Retamar includes himself as one of the *mestizo* inhabitants of the Caribbean, and in doing so he locates himself at the centre of his discourse just as Martí did in his essay 'Mi Raza'. The Fernández

[59] Roberto Fernández Retamar, 'Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America', *Caliban and Other Essays*, p. 14.

Retamar essay here discussed is entitled 'Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America', and his reference to 'Our America' in the title recalls Martí's 'Nuestra América' as does the content: a sub-section of his essay on Caliban is dedicated to Martí's 'Nuestra America'. As discussed above, Martí asserted that his race, (*'**mi** raza'*), was that of all Cubans whilst, as a white Cuban, he represented the invisibility his theory imposed on racial difference. In his discussion of Caliban and *el mestizaje*, Fernández Retamar echoes the earlier affiliations made by Martí, and in associating himself with Martí's views on racial hybridity, Fernández Retamar 'democratizes' race along nineteenth century lines even as he renews the drive in the exercise of a Marxist position of contestation. In aligning notions of racial hybridity with the socialist Revolution of 1959, and the Revolutionary rebel yell, Fernández Retamar gives us an indication of how concepts of hybridity can also be ideologically driven, and this is something he does even as he reverts to explanations based on a dialectical model of significations between colonial authority and subject.

Fernández Retamar, like Martí deals with hybrid identities, but even as they valorise *el mestizaje* as a product of colonisation, both deploy models of racial hybridity within an ideological dynamic that serves a number of purposes: Martí aimed to instil an ethos of unity during the Wars of Independence. Although his theory of Cuba as a nation where race just did not matter sought to reform the degraded Other and create one national and united identity, we know that racial divisions continued. For Martí, the challenge to colonial discourse was based on the creation of an able bodied and well equipped revolutionary militia and not on a challenging counter identity. Fernández Retamar on the other hand, although still basing the question of *el mestizaje* on theories proposed by Martí during the nineteenth century, extends them to address the process under which hybrid identities are constructed as Other within a colonial context. He further politicises *el mestizaje* by attaching Marxist significance to the concept and thus aligning Caliban to the ideals of a victorious proletariat/colonised. It is Retamar who reforms and reclaims the hybrid for the Caribbean and as a figure that challenges the coloniser with his own demeanour and language. *El mestizaje* becomes a contestatory position from where Caliban's language can curse the coloniser. Cultural identity is certainly a product of colonial discourse, but the presence of Caliban in his deformed state does not present a challenge to authority in the same manner as Bhabha's hybrid does. The threat of rape, and the need to protect Miranda from such a threat, certainly presents a duality

that instils fear of Caliban and the need to reform his character. The threat to colonial authority here is based on a physical act, and fear of usurpation. Visually, Caliban is not represented or perceived as a figure that is 'the same but not quite', a presence that for Bhabha is crucial to the disclosure of the deep-seated ambivalence in colonial authority. Instead Caliban is a figure that cannot be degraded enough. The challenge posed through Fernández Retamar's rehabilitation of him comes in the embracing of his form as hybrid. He equates this form with *el mestizaje*, and Caliban's rebel yell as one that challenges authority with its own colonising language. The relationship between the colonial subject and authority so crucial to Bhabha's theory of hybridity and mimicry are, however, not as defined in Fernández Retamar's (or indeed Martí's) theories.

Bhabha's theory is based on a dialectical relationship reliant on the interaction between Colonial authority and the Other and it is in the process of recognition and disavowal (because of the slippage that is constantly produced between one model of identity and the other), that authority is challenged. This does not occur in the Cuban examples sited above. Authority is challenged through the revolutionary call to arms and in the subversion of a colonial language which has been transformed, certainly rendered hybrid, and deployed as a weapon. Whilst anti-colonial in principle, *el mestizaje* forms part of a hegemonic discourse that functions internally, within the island and deployed, even maintained, by elite interest groups to create a sense of racial democracy whilst disavowing the reality of hybrid identities in their society. Both Fernández Retamar and Martí deploy theories of hybrid identities that draw our attention to a matrix of relationships upon which concepts of the hybrid find expression although they do not appear to demonstrate awareness of them in their theories, and they revert to a binary structure. Unlike Bhabha's theory of mimicry, in which authority is challenged though the direct relationships with this Other, *el mestizaje* in Cuba appears as a construct produced for internal and external audiences, serving nationalistic, revolutionary, and counter colonial drives. The points of signification that construct identity appear therefore much wider than Bhabha's, and based on a complexity of relationships that take place on and off the island and between Cubans of differing racial backgrounds and ideologies.

Hybridity and mimicry as discussed by Bhabha have certainly come to represent major postcolonial strategies that equip us with tools with which to address cultural and racial diversity, and the cosmopolitanism inherent in postcolonial

societies. Bhabha's theories on hybridity have indeed gained widespread currency within postcolonial studies, and in examining the relevance of postcolonial studies to Cuba, issues of race and cultural hybridity, and that of *el mestizaje* in Cuba raise questions about the centrality of hybrid identities to representations of Cuban cultural identity. Although similarities can be seen in the projection of *el mestizaje* as a counter-colonial strategy, and in hybridity as a product of colonialism and a postcolonial device, differences certainly exist between both definitions. The centrality of *el mestizaje* as a national signifier leads to questions about the troubling presence the *mestizo* creates within white Creole society which in turn needs to disavow his presence and that of racial inequality. The periodical drives in Cuban history to suppress black culture suggest that racial difference presents itself as a troubling presence (just as Bhabha's hybrid does).[60] Although imbued by Martí and Fernández Retamar with anti-colonial and proletariat ideals (ones that they implicitly equate within a race/mixed race versus Anglo-Hispanic colonial authority dialectic), questions are raised about the effectiveness of *el mestizaje* as a postcolonial strategy when the deployment of *el mestizaje* in Cuba is not necessarily seen to serve the interests of all groups. This has led me to ask questions about the use of theories of *el mestizaje* and hybridity in representations of Cuban cultural identity: can hybrid identities and *el mestizaje* be considered as the same thing? Is *el mestizaje* a discourse located solely in the hands of the Cuban elite? If so, such a concept appears as counter colonial when deployed as part of a nationalistic discourse, but is also one that is ideologically manipulated to maintain internal hegemonies and inequalities. Does the Cuban understanding of hybridity and *el mestizaje* extend or even complicate postcolonial notions of hybridity? Surely, if Bhabha's theories of hybridity are based on a colonised and coloniser binary, Martí's and Fernández Retamar's open up the

[60] See for example the Conspiracy of The Escalera in 1844 in which thousands of slaves and free people of colour were accused of jointly plotting to end slavery and Spanish domination, and the treatment of the Partido Independiente de Color, the suppression of which led to the 1912 Race Wars. The treatment of racial difference can be extended to the terms under which issues race and Afro-Cuban culture were reported within the press in the early 1900s. Although open-letters or interviews of Afro-Cuban leaders appeared occasionally in the press, Afro-Cuban presence was, in general, confined in each paper to the small section called *Crónicas de las sociedades de color*, which reported on social activities. In direct contrast to this, Afro-Cuban presence was highly visible in the news on crime which always mentioned the race if the perpetrator was black or mulatto. Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 106-07.

points of signification under which hybrid identities are constructed, the audiences for which they are projected and the reasons why. These are sometimes for internal consumption, as seen in Martí's call for revolutionary unity and, in both Martí and Fernández Retamar, as counter colonial contestatory positions. On other occasions *el mestizaje* is projected as the epitome of Afro-Cuban culture, a hybrid projection so central to constructions of the national which operates within a local network of significations, and indeed, during the Wars of Independence, the endorsement of *el mestizaje* helped mobilize Afro-Cubans for collective action.

My aim in this dissertation then is to explore the terms under which hybrid cultures and identities are constructed and represented in Cuba. Using my discussion above on hybridity and *el mestizaje* as points of departure, I intend to examine notions of racial and cultural hybridity in Cuban society and how these concepts contribute to build representations of cultural identity. I also hope to extend and interrogate the basis on which Bhabha's binary theories of hybridity are constructed by examining what appear to be the multiple external and internal forces that underlie representations of hybrid identities in Cuba.

Race is certainly central to representations of cultural identity and to the nationalistic discourse of unity promulgated in Cuba during the first half of the twentieth century. In the next three chapters of this dissertation I will be discussing the concept of *el mestizaje* within a national rhetoric that promulgates unity from the perspectives of three different writers. In doing so, I hope to draw attention to the duality between nationally accepted notions of cultural identity and the social and racial inequality informing race relations in Cuba. I will be arguing that these diverse positions are indicators of the discord that existed between models of cultural identity and the ways in which racial issues were dealt with within Cuban society. Subsequent chapters, although also concerned with the centrality of race to the national rhetoric, note a significant shift in emphasis from race to that of a revolutionary ideology as the unifying force in the representation of cultural identity that followed the 1959 Revolution. The incoming Castro Government took the position that the fight for freedom would bring racial and social equality to Cuba and this position leads to questions about the possibility of reform or whether the emphasis placed on equity post-1959 continued to function as a device that subsumes racial issues within the

socialist ethos of the revolution?[61] This is not to say that *el mestizaje* as a signifier of cultural identity disappears from the national, but the emphasis on the ideological following the 1959 Revolution offers me the scope to investigate the extent to which cultural identity became reformulated along ideological lines. My above discussion of Fernández Retamar's writings on Caliban gives us an indication of the influence of Marxist ideology in the development of a *mestizo* proletariat theory that conflates race with class and the cultural with the political. The 1959 Revolution also brought about the opportunity to define Cuban society anew and with it the potential for transformations. The fluidity suggested by change is interesting given that the ideological base created by the Revolutionary Government aimed to contain Cubans within socialistic ideological parameters which have not only led to questions about transformations but about the ideological limits placed upon representations of cultural identity. Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this dissertation each deal with the impact of ideology on cultural identity: I firstly question the need to develop a new aesthetic of representation to register the paradigm shift that followed 1959 and from this position I interrogate the location of ideological unity as a determinant of representations of cultural identity both on and off the island. Unity therefore continues to be an important motif in this dissertation and the scope or limitations imposed on representations of cultural identity.

During the years following the Revolution, Cuba braced itself against the effects of economic embargoes and the threat of military intervention from the United States. These years were informed by massive and recurrent diasporas, US incursions, rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and the consolidation of a Cuban stronghold in Miami. The presence of these events continues to challenge the concept of a unified cultural identity, but the tensions and power structures they create offers me the opportunity to elaborate on the question of hybridity through the reconstruction of Cuban cultural identity across historical events and geographical locations. If, as mentioned earlier, Bhabha deals with the spaces between the colonised and the coloniser and the imitation that takes place at the same time, I hope to examine the dynamic of imitation and repetition as it informs representations of identity through

[61] See Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs's 'Introduction: The rite of social communion', in *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writings on Race, Politics and Culture,* eds., Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, Melbourne (New York: Ocean Press, 1993), pp. 3 – 26. Pérez Sarduy and Stubbs acknowledge the advances made against institutionalised racism made by the Revolutionary Government whilst also noting the contradictory concepts of nationhood and the racial and social divides within Cuban society, p. 7.

time and across different geographic locations. My discussion in Chapter Five deals more specifically with this very issue through examining the structures informing the reinforcement of a Cuban cultural identity in Miami which is constructed and sustained over time, generations, and across ideological and geographical lines. Indeed, questions are raised as to how cultural identity shifts between geographical locations, and whether it can travel intact without undergoing change. Salman Rushdie discusses the issue of migrant identities in his essay 'Imaginary Homelands', and the role of the postcolonial intellectual in transferring cultural practices and translating them onto the adopted culture, an activity that renders cultural identity hybrid as well as creating a bridge between both locations.[62] I hope to consider these issues further and I will be interrogating these subjects within the Cuban context to suggest how relevant they are to the Cuban experience. In doing so I hope to suggest how the Cuban example expands or complicates these concepts and by so doing engage with the relevance of postcolonial studies to Cuba.

Because of the scope of this project, and the challenging versions that co-exist alongside each other, often also in dialogue with each other, I have opted to discuss these issues from diverse positions, different genres, and across different, emblematic historical events in Cuba. My central focus is on representations of cultural identity, but I acknowledge the impact the political, geographic and social have on these representations and will be drawing attention to these aspects as they impact on the cultural within individual chapters. My intention is that this approach will yield a wider concept of the premise on which Cuban cultural identity is represented, (re)formulated and (re)articulated both on and off the island. I take the lead for this approach from Louis A Pérez Jr., who in his writings on Cuban cultural identity admits to the temptation to discuss these issues in monograph form, that is until he realised that such an approach seemed incapable of yielding his desired outcome: to understand the content and complexity of these linkages as a totality, as a system, and to see how connections work together.[63] Central to this discussion is the proposition of cultural identity not as a fixed and immutable construct but rather as one that often forms part of contesting representations, full of contradictions, and almost always in flux. This concept of cultural identity constantly adjusts to and reconciles perceptions

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[62] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, pp. 9-21.
[63] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture* (New York: The Ecco Press, 1999), p. 5.

of reality with changing needs. Pérez Jr. discusses identity as a work in progress, one that is constantly responding to the historical: of identity as being 'historically contingent as both national expression and individual construction, possessing multiple forms, often simultaneously, sometimes successively'.[64] We are dealing therefore, with multiple forms that change, that are open, and not fixed.

1.4

This dissertation consists of eight chapters, including this introduction as Chapter One. In my second chapter I draw on Fernando Ortiz's *Tobacco and Sugar: Cuban Counterpoint* (1940) as a foundational text to examine how Ortiz engages with issues of race in the development of his transcultural theory of Cuban cultural identity, particularly since it relies heavily on Afro-Cuban signifiers. I hope to reflect on the terms under which his sense of racial hybridity enters into the equation of a cultural identity. As a canonical text *Cuban Counterpoint* functions at a hegemonic level and as such, offers the opportunity to examine how the quest for a cultural identity can become so entwined with the political that questions are raised about the possibility of an autonomous cultural identity and the role of the artist/postcolonial intellectual in the constructions of such models. Although locating himself within an independent Cuba, in a counter hegemonic stance to both Spain, and, more importantly for the 1940s, the threat posed by the United States, Ortiz's position raises questions about the role of the intellectual in Cuba as a commentator on both the cultural and the political. For what purpose was Ortiz deploying the transcultural/hybrid Cuban cultural identity, and for whom? It could be said, as Catherine Davis suggests, that Ortiz faces the dilemma of the postcolonial intellectual in deciding whom to address. In this case it could be the (white) academic elites or the (African) Cuban people, but still, that does not resolve on whose behalf Ortiz is working, or his perspective, whether as a personally involved insider or an objective outsider.[65] The question of perspective and of positionality will be further explored in later chapters, since the views projected from these locations can afford us an indication of the impact multiple external and internal forces have on representations of cultural identity.

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[64] Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture*, p. 8.
[65] Catherine Davis, 'Fernando Ortiz's Transculturation: The Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation', p. 161.

At a discursive level Ortiz's *Counterpoint* introduces a number of tropes, and narrative strategies that I later find repeated or rearticulated on a number of occasions, and by different writers. The act of 'discovery', and the deployment of archaeological, and ethnographical tools are recurring motifs in the material I discuss. For example, an aspect of my enquiry into Afro-Cuban culture in Chapter Three is in part informed by a review of Nicolás Guillén's *Sones*, where the 'discovery' of his poetry is described as '*un hallazgo*', and such, something '*genuinamente cubana*'.[66] It seems as if the quest for an autochthonous cultural identity requires the legitimacy of an act of discovery whereby the artefact recovered is old (and therefore genuine), and new in its present day, revised, even hybrid form. I continue to interrogate the discovery motifs in Chapter Six where I examine the exercise of memorial archaeology as a way to reconstruct cultural identity. As a historical function, the discovery of a lost past certainly brings into play the much needed foundation as well as suggesting a move that attempts to dig behind the colonial discursive baggage to recover some autochthonous authenticity.

In terms of genre, *Cuban Counterpoint*, although defined as a book of science by Malinowski, presents itself as a 'genre-busting' text, one that can hardly contain the material held together by its binding. It seems that this was a very deliberate choice by Ortiz, who, as well as subverting scientific and literary genres, was also intent on creating a hybrid genre, the structure of which could both reflect and comment on the unique, transcultural dynamic at the centre of Cuban identity.[67]

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[66] Ángel Augier, 'Los "Sones" de Nicolás Guillén', in Nicolás Guillén, *El libro de los sones* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1999), p. 19.

[67] It certainly was the case that José Martí established a hierarchy of literary genres for his own writings, placing his newspaper articles and essays ahead of his poetry and prose fiction, where artistic elaboration is more evident. Martí, aware of the importance of bringing words together with action, was also cognisant of the immediacy reportage style gave his revolutionary stance. Containing them within an artistic form might have obscured clarity, and certainly, the spread of the newspaper press during the nineteenth century ensured a wider readership. In this sense, Martí deployed genre appropriately. Experimentation with form and content was very evident during the first half of the twentieth century within the avant-garde, and again following 1959, where film and the memoir became important vehicles. Keith Ellis, *Cuba's Nicolás Guillén, Poetry and Ideology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 19. Keith Ellis further refers to the journal *Lunes de Revolución* the chief organ for young writers in the days following the revolution (1959-November 1961), which was the weekly literary supplement of the newspaper *Revolución*, and edited by Guillermo Cabrera Infante. The works published in the supplement during the three years it was in circulation display exciting formal devices and an almost anarchistic mood. Every kind of freedom was manifested as the writers searched for forms and content to suit their different conceptions of writing (p. 62). This was of course later to change given the imperatives to bring form and content together under the same ideological banner. See also Michael Chanan, 'Lessons of Experience', *Memories of Underdevelopment,* Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Director, and *Inconsolable Memories,* Edmundo Desnoes, Author (U.S.A.: Rutgers Films in Print, Rutgers University Press, 1990), Michael Chanan, *The Cuban*

Ortiz's interest in experimentation and his conscious deployment of genre to project meaning led me to consider the links between form and content and the connections that may exist between different hybrid forms. The need (by Ortiz) to develop a hybrid genre that would be sympathetic to his particular concept of a hybrid cultural identity raises questions about the connections that may exist between the relevance of a particular genre as a vehicle of meaning, and the extent to which the choice of genre impacts on the theme and the delivery of the message, lending veracity or authenticity. These questions have influenced my selection of material for this dissertation. I have consequently decided on a variety of texts, genres, and mediums from where I will be hoping to explore the interrelatedness between genre and content. If as in Ortiz's case, the hybridity of his model of cultural identity is reflected in a hybrid genre, the possibility for generic transformation and innovation to suit each representation of cultural identity raises questions as to why the drive to match the product with the packaging. Is there a symbiotic relationship between both? Are these interrelated factors or conceits? Could it be that each move towards the renewal of identity informs subsequent imperatives to develop or deploy a genre with which to reflect such 'newness'? On the other hand it could be the case that experimentation with genre stimulates yet more quests for cultural identity.

This dissertation's historical starting point is informed by debate over cultural identity that was taking place from the 1920s in Cuba.[68] And as Gustavo Pérez Firmat suggests, the first half of the twentieth century was a time of national reflection and a

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Image (London: BFI Publishing Ltd, 1985), Miguel Barnet, *Biografía de un Cimarron*, (1961) (La Habana: Etnologia, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1986).

[68] See for example Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubansimo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920 -1940.* Moore refers to Ortiz and Carpentier as fundamental to the formation of notions of cultural identity, pp. 13-14. Moore cites Ambrosio Fornet's comments on the political and cultural climate that brought about the renewed quest for identity 1920s: '*Descubierta por Colon en el Siglo XV, por los ingleses en Siglo XVIII, por Humboldt y la criolla en el XIX, faltaba que Cuba se descubriera a sí mismo en el Siglo XX y eso fue lo que sucedió*'. (p. 259) The 1920s was a period of particular upheaval in Cuba; the island had experienced a severe depression after WWI and unemployment and poverty were exacerbated by the deflation of world sugar prices and the crash of the US stock market in 1929. Protectionist legislation in the US drastically curbed Cuban exports of sugar, tobacco and coffee, which led to economic and political instability on the island. Poverty and a constant succession of strikes and activism disrupted what remained of Cuba's economy as well as threatening the political stability of the Gerardo Machado's regime(1924- 1933). This in turn led to the brutal suppression of all opposition groups in the attempt, by Machado, to maintain power. By the early 1930's his policies had led to massive polarisations and a civil war, and gave rise to strong nationalistic feelings fuelled by the administration's support of US foreign policy. The conflict intensified the focus on US interventions and this gave rise to the perception that the Cuban 'essence' was increasingly under threat, leading to the progressively more active promotion, by the Cuban elite, of uniquely Cuban cultural forms. Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*, p. 4.

period that was instrumental in the formation of the 'Cuban "ethos" and of Cuban cultural identity.[69] As this dissertation's point of departure, my discussion of Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint* should be read alongside the two chapters that follow it. This cluster of texts/performances deal with material produced during the late 1920s (Alejo Carpentier *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* ([1927]1933), 1930s (Nicolás Guillén (1932), and the 1940s through Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint* (1940). I have however moved away from the above order, opting instead to discuss Ortiz's text first. This is followed by a chapter on Nicolás Guillén and the final of this cluster will be concerned with Alejo Carpentier's *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*. I will in fact be discussing this material in reverse chronology since I found that this structure allowed me to set out a foundational base in Ortiz's transcultural theories of cultural identity from where to then discuss competing perspectives or ones that elaborate on or complicate notions of *el mestizaje* and racial and cultural hybridity. Ortiz's syncretic model of hybridity opens up the debate surrounding myths of racial democracy and this fact allows me to later examine the connections between *mestizaje* alongside realities of miscegenation, racial amalgamation, as in racial whitening against those introduced through transculturation.[70] Because transculturation is a discursive formation tied to nationalist interests and ideologies, placing *Cuban Counterpoint* first permits me to compare other, less official versions of cultural identity against it. One such example follows in Chapter Three where I consider the representation of cultural identity from the perspective of the Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén during a recital Guillén gave before the *Sociedad Femenina Lyceum* in 1932, in Havana. Whilst Ortiz displays an anthropological model brought together in discursive moves his theory does not really give us any idea of the views held by black Cubans or how Afro-Cubans related to the transcultural. Neither does Ortiz deal with the very real (although socially and racially displaced) presence of Afro-Cubans leading me to consider whether Afro-Cubans did or could produce a competing cultural discourse? To this end, my discussion of Guillén's recital interrogates a hybrid cultural identity from the perspective of an Afro-Cuban and in shifting the frame of interrogation from a text to that of a performance my aim is to explore the terms under which black Cuban cultural identity

[69]Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 5.
[70] See Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets: Race and Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* (Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

finds expression. The stage from where Guillén delivered his recital (to a mainly white audience), presents a situation whereby enquiries can be made into cultural identity as a staged performance (a site that I continue to study in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight), and the dynamics informing the presence of a racially hybrid cultural identity before an audience that is not. Whereas Ortiz rendered black culture visible within the nationalistic scheme, I will be investigating the terms under which black visibility is articulated by Guillén. As a *mestizo* Guillén is a rather appropriate figure through which to interrogate the extent to which *el mestizaje* comes to embody the power relations that inform constructions of cultural identity in colonial and post-colonial Cuba. This last issue becomes of particular relevance in Chapters Five and Seven where questions are posited about the endurance of *el mestizaje* as cultural signifiers in a post-1959 Revolution Cuba.

Chapter Four continues to discuss *el mestizaje* through the avant-garde movement of *Afrocubanismo* and the integration of black cultural signifiers in art and literature. I introduce the vogue for black culture within Cuban artistic circles in Chapter Three, and in this chapter I focus on Alejo Carpentier's documentary novel *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* and his spatially organised engagement with Afro-Cuban culture and *el mestizaje*. Because Ortiz embraces a cultural syncretism that suggests a democratic engagement with race, and develops a site where diversity is created and coexists, my chapters on Guillén and Carpentier are concerned with interrogating the location of racial hybridity within the transcultural. By examining Carpenteir's novel in terms of the space he allocates to Afro-Cuban religious practices, and his separation of this site from the 'white', which Carpentier illustrates as a space formed out of vibrant signs of cultural hybridity, I will be investigating how cultural diversity, and racial and cultural hybridity are dealt within such parameters. How is black cultural identity deployed as part of the Cuban notion of a syncretic cultural identity when it is handled as a separate entity? Although a space that is prioritised by Carpentier over the white, I will be questioning the extent to which the mythic Afro-Cuban world Carpentier constructs suggests a marginalised world that, though this relegated position in society is the only space seemingly beyond the reach of the United States. To what extent then is black cultural identity seen by Carpentier as an uncorrupted symbol of cultural identity that can only remain 'pure' if segregated? This chapter therefore engages with the presence of a racialist discourse embedded within a syncretic and hybrid notion of cultural identity. The cultural hybridity Carpentier

illustrates summons up the syncretic absorption of exogenous cultural and racial elements as they continually impact on society. This sense of hybridity certainly recalls Salman Rushdie's ideas on the subject in which he celebrates 'impurity, intermingling, the transformation that come of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, song...a bit of this and a bit of that is how *newness enters the world*'.[71] It nevertheless seems that Carpentier does not celebrate hybridity in the same way as Rushdie although the world he is describing is similarly constructed. Afro-Cuban culture and black religious practices are based on the syncretic and hybrid, but it seems clear that distinctions are being made in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* between types of hybridity: between cultural hybridity and *el mestizaje*. The syncretism of the white world is seen as something separate by Carpentier from that to be found in the black, leading us to questions about whether we are dealing here with two distinct notions of hybridity each drawn along racial lines?

Chapter Five focuses on the 1959 Cuban Revolution. It also functions structurally as a bridging chapter which historically and thematically unites the previous cluster of texts/performance with the three that follow. By focusing in this chapter on the Cuban Revolution I hope to reintroduce themes of *mestizaje* and of hybrid cultural identities as they came to be reconfigured under the socialist ethos that informed the Revolution. Because the events of 1959 indicated a rupture with the past, that is, a neo-colonial one and the political and ideological drives informing them, they also indicated a new beginning and a sense that decolonisation had finally been achieved. As discussed earlier in this introduction, Roberto Fernández Retamar's writings on the figure of Caliban are certainly informed by post-colonial drives that embrace hybridity and contestation. Focusing on this period therefore offers the opportunity to examine the Revolution as potentially a post-colonial event, to compare the themes of the previous three chapters with the events taking place and to observe how new themes or how previous ones change to suit the experience.

My choice of medium for this chapter has been very deliberate in that I will be discussing the Cuban Revolution through film, a mode the incoming Castro government recognised as an important instrument with which to document the immediacy of events, and to rapidly disseminate the Revolutionary ethos. Fidel Castro's acknowledgement of the power of image is evident in his setting up of the

[71] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 394.

Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art (*Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* – ICAIC) in March 1959, three months after the Rebel Army entered Havana. The years following the Revolution also saw a continuation of tensions, and the commencement of embargoes from the United States (instigated in part by Cuba's strategic potential to the Soviet Union), ideological schisms within the island, massive diasporas, and the establishment of a Cuban stronghold in the United States. Whilst these events were taking place, the Revolutionary Government's main concern was to brace itself against such divisive elements, practically hermetically sealing Cuba off from the outside world, thus uniting those that remained within against those without, creating polarisations and splitting Cuban reality and identity between geographical locations and ideologies. This historical actuality together with the terms under which they are signalled, or even pre-empted in Mikhail Kalatozov's film *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* (1964), influence my choice of this film as part of this dissertation. As a joint Cuban/Soviet production, the Soviet presence in the film draws attention to the postcolonial as an ongoing process of engagements as much as this reengagement with neo-colonialism demonstrates the limitations of 'independence'.

Kalatozov's film offers a site from where to interrogate representations of Cuban cultural identity from the outside in. Kalatozov intriguingly engages with what he perceives to be the syncretic and hybrid quality of Cuban cultural identity, one that he aimed to 'capture' through technological and cinematic innovation. The need to develop a suitable cinematic genre that would do justice to the subject certainly recalls Ortiz's handling of his neologism and the hybrid structure of *Cuban Counterpoint.* The outcome, the film *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* (a title that is irredeemably split between translations and locations), therefore reopens questions of cultural hybridity this time posited from a Cuban socialist/soviet position. The presence of these themes offer a sense of continuity between the previous three chapters: the film's dynamics and historical events of the 1950s and 1960s nevertheless provide a site from where I can investigate revisions of received paradigms of cultural identity. One such paradigm explored in this chapter is that informed by the ideological shift introduced after the 1959 Revolution which led to the subsequent demand for conversion, or *el desgarramiento* as a mark of the ideological rupture with the past. The ease suggested at times by an ever responsive process like Ortiz's transculturation is therefore unsettled by such ruptures in society where reformulations are forced (as *un desgarramiento* suggests). But what occurs to those who resist conversion? Does

sticking to the past reaffirm a familiar sense one's own cultural identity or does it lead to the alienation from the renewed sense of cultural identity? And does *el desgarramiento* lead to the alienation of the past and to one's 'original' cultural identity? All these questions impact on the two chapters that follow since Chapter Six enquires into terms under which cultural identity is reconstructed in exile and certainly questions of rupture and the alienation from one's past life inform such notions. Chapter Seven on the other hand deals with an internal form of *desgarramiento* that leads to a subjective look at a contesting albeit degraded form of cultural identity that aims to challenge official representations of cultural identity. The reformulation of cultural identity under these terms creates a rather compelling site which continues to question syncretic models of cultural identity whilst addressing the splits and ideological schisms that followed on from the revolution. I discuss these issues through Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968). *Memorias* handles the theme of post-Revolution alienation and as such allows me to connect the impact of ideological change to that cultural identity. I will then be discussing the difficulties of projecting a different concept of identity through the generic innovations presented in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba*: ones that were developed to specifically register such change. My aim is to continue to interrogate form and content to draw attention to the rifts and splits. Because *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* plot is organised around individual vignettes, it becomes a fruitful site around which to question notions of rupture and continuity. Just as my earlier chapters question the site produced by Ortiz's by setting his syncretic model against Guillén's performance and Carpentier's representations of Afro-Cuban cultural identity, the ideological paradigms informing rupture and cultural identity set up in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* result in points of comparisons for the following three chapters.

Indeed, thematic and generic disunity, geographical and ideological schisms are researched in the next cluster of chapters. In Chapter Six I investigate the cultural and individual alienation underpinning the experience of exile, and the distance between La Habana and little Havana through Ana Menéndez's short story collection *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* (2001). I will be interrogating the short story genre as a form that registers new instabilities in society through the fragmentation of the site of enquiry into a 'splintering frame'.[72] Chapter Seven explores similar generic

[72] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 228.

conventions in the snapshot reportage style informing Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* (1999), where attention is drawn to the economic, geographical and personal isolation felt during the economic crisis of the 1990s, one that led Pedro Juan to live life '*a pedacitos*'.[73] My final chapter, Chapter Eight continues to investigate themes of syncretism and fragmentation though the ceramics of the Cuban artist Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez and the works he exhibited in El Museo de Arte Colonial in March 2002 entitled, *"Mensajes" del artista Roberto Loreto Marín y el Projecto Old City"*. I have again departed from a chronology based on publication dates opting instead to discuss these texts/media thematically and through a chronology informed by the themes they introduce and the time scale of the events they cover.

In Chapter Six I explore the terms under which cultural identity is formed and sustained by Cuban émigrés and exiles in the United States to enquire about the terms under which cultural identity is reformulated outside the island's geographical parameters. Ana Menéndez's short story collection is very much concerned with migrant identities, more specifically those created by the rupture experienced after the 1959 Revolution and the subsequent mass Cuban diasporas such as the Mariel Boat Lift of 1980. The historical time span of Menéndez's collection shifts from pre-1959 to events of the 1960s and 1970s up to the present day. The historical sweep of her stories affords a site whereby the reformulation of cultural identity can be interrogated across time and space. Her work certainly engages with postcolonial theories (see my earlier cited reference to Salman Rushdie's 'Imaginary Homelands'), of migration and hybridity, and I introduce in this chapter the concept of the 'echo' as an alternative way to investigate the movement and translation of cultural identity across space, and across generations. My aim is to examine how the echo produces difference: since Menéndez relies on the stories passed down through generations as a device through which cultural identity is reinforced and Cuba idealised and imagined, the echo produced in the retelling of these stories is invariably informed by change and the inability to remain identical or intact after each telling. Indeed, the nymph Echo could only repeat the last word spoken and give back the sounds she heard and as such,

[73] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,*(1998) (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1999), p. 204.

stories are presented as incomplete or at least different.[74] In my use of the echo as a method to investigate migrant and hybrid identities I aim to draw comparisons between postcolonial theories of hybridity to examine how this Cuban example expands on or complicates notions of hybridity.

In Chapter Seven I continue to explore the question of contesting but parallel representations of cultural identity, of official models of identity and of the less official as illustrated by Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's account of the economic crisis of the 1990s. His narrative takes the form of a memoir, thus creating an immediacy and veracity to his account in which attention is drawn to a less official performance of cultural identity. Here, as in my chapter on Menéndez I will be considering the contrasts created between the imagined, idealised Cuba, and the actuality. And by the same token I will be comparing hegemonic notions of a syncretic Cuban cultural identity alongside the marginal, less official idea of cultural identity that Gutiérrez offers. Challenging questions are raised by this comparison, and indeed, by Gutiérrez since the suggestion may be (as Carpentier proposes through his need to separate Afro-Cuban identity from the white, official cultural identity), that a 'genuine' cultural identity can only be found in the margins where it is out of reach of the hegemonic and ideological need for panoply and control. Liminal and marginal spaces are indeed recognised postcolonial sites which generate hybrid identities and provide positions of contestations,[75] although as a position *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* appears to complicate these concepts. Gutiérrez certainly challenges the official premise under which canonical texts on cultural identity are produced but questions are also raised about this enterprise, since in exposing the official discourse informing Cuban cultural identity, he also embarks on a mission that deconstructs the very premise on which his own cultural identity is based.

Both Menéndez's and Gutiérrez's narratives create sites from where to examine cultural identity as performance and in both these chapters I continue to discuss issues raised in my earlier chapter on Nicolás Guillén, such as the dynamic produced between spectacle and spectatorship as a space where cultural identity can be viewed, consumed, reconfigured and transformed.

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[74] Ovid, 'Book III Echo and Narcissus', *Metamorphoses*, trans., Mary Innes (London: Penguin Classics), 1955, pp. 83-87.

[75] See for example, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 – 1991*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*.

Whilst in my final chapter I aim to tie together the diverse facets of identity dealt with in previous chapters, the fact also remains that the very dynamics that underpin the material discussed throughout are diverse and created in an activity that is simultaneously constructive and deconstructive. The notion of a site or a model under constant reformulations brings me back to the proposition made by Louis A Pérez Jr. of Cuban cultural identity not as a fixed and immutable construct but rather as cultural artefact; one that is contested and contesting and formed from representations often filled with contradictions and incoherence, almost always in flux. This cultural identity constantly adjusts to and reconciles perceptions of reality with changing needs.[76] The notion of cultural identity as artefact and that of archaeological finds resonates in the terms under which Ortiz recovers the origins of Cuban cultural identity and in Carpenteir's treatment of Afro-Cuban cultural identity almost as a museum piece that needs to be preserved as heritage. The publication of Guillén's *Sones* was critically received as '*un hallazgo, algo así como un descubrimiento*',[77] which further reiterate a perception of cultural identity as artefact. So distant is the memory of Cuba in the minds of the émigrés in Menéndez's collection that recollections of their past identity are dug up from their archival memories and recovered as a cultural artefact that needs to be preserved even in its present imperfect state. Indeed, Salman Rushdie draws analogies between the partial nature of memories and the fragments of broken pots of antiquity in the following:

> It was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. There is an obvious parallel here with archaeology. The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects.[78]

Identity as something that can be modelled out of clay also recalls the Deucalion type figure who models people out of clay in Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos.*[79] These concepts brings to mind the work of the Cuban ceramist, Roberto Loreto Marín

[76] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture*, p. 8.
[77] Ángel Augier, 'Los "Sones" de Nicolás Guillén', in Nicolás Guillén, *El libro de los sones*, p. 19.
[78] Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', p. 12.
[79] Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) (La Habana, Cuba: Tercer Festival del Libro Cubano, EPCC, 1963), p. 224.

Rodríguez's, who forms ceramic sculptures of baroque houses so typical of La Habana, and brings together diverse signifiers of Cuban culture in large murals that create tableaux where each individual part is in dialogue with the other. To this end in Chapter Eight I will be engaging with ceramic art, even clay, a medium which has classical significance in the moulding and creating of people and artefacts as the vehicle through which to discuss Cuban cultural identity. As a medium, and as an artistic process I will be suggesting that Marín Rodríguez 's work offers a composite approach that engages with change, diversity and the potential for reformulations by presenting works that appear as sites that are constantly under construction as they respond to change. As sites under construction and constructed from a diversity of objects that range from toilets to bottles to symbols of Cuban santería, water, wine and money I will be re-examining concepts of hybridity. Much like the 'mongrelization'[80] suggested by Rushdie's concept of hybridity, these pieces interrogate a composite notion of cultural identity informed by multiple signs. It will be interesting to see how Marín Rodríguez's use of disparate objects and his interpretation of a composite hybrid cultural identity compare with Carpentier's separation of a hybridised 'white' cultural identity from the Afro-Cuban. Marín Rodríguez's engagement with replicas of recognisable buildings in Havana allows me the opportunity to continue to develop the notion of the echo as it relates to hybridity and to Cuba within a postcolonial context.

Finally, I have selected the genres and media I discuss in this dissertation because they unveil postcolonial themes of displacement, cultural syncretism, cultural maroonage, the politics of place, hegemonic resistance and the articulation of hybrid identities. They also negotiate narratives where double lives are led such as in the postcolonial world which Bhabha defines as one of journeys of migration and the borderline conditions of cultures and disciplines.[81] These themes are points of departure for my discussion where I will examine their relevance to the Cuban example and explore how my analysis of the representation of Cuban cultural identity expands, complicates and interrogates these theories.

[80] Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', p. 394.

[81] Homi K. Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World', *The Location of Culture*, London, New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 214-15.

2. Fernando Ortiz, Neologisms and Transcultural Theories of Cultural Identity.

> Tobacco is the magic gift of the savage world; sugar is the scientific gift of civilization. Tobacco was taken to the rest of the world from America; sugar was brought to America. Tobacco is a native plant, which the Europeans who came with Columbus discovered, in Cuba, to be exact, at the beginning of November of the year 1492. Sugar cane is a foreign plant of remote origin that was brought to Europe from the Orient, thence to the Canary Islands, and it was from there that Columbus brought it to the Antilles in 1493. The discovery of tobacco in Cuba was a surprise, but the introduction of sugar was planned.[1]

> *Descubierta por Colon en el Siglo XV, por los ingleses en Siglo XVIII, por Humboldt y la criolla en el XIX, faltaba que Cuba se descubriera a sí mismo en el Siglo XX y eso fue lo que sucedió.*[2]
>
> Ambrosio Fornet.

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In this chapter I draw on Fernando Ortiz's *Tobacco and Sugar: Cuban Counterpoint* (1940) as a foundational text to examine how his transcultural theory of Cuban identity engages with Afro-Cuban cultural signifiers in his theory of a syncretic and hybrid model of cultural identity. I hope to reflect on the terms under which his sense of racial hybridity enters into the equation of a cultural identity. I hope to draw attention to the duality between nationally accepted notions of cultural identity and the social and racial inequality informing race relations in Cuba. As a theoretical framework the model of cultural identity developed in *Cuban Counterpoint*, one based on the ongoing 'transculturation' of the historical, geographical, racial and the cultural, raises questions about the imperatives that lead to continual reassessments of identity. I will be suggesting that Ortiz develops a site where reformulations are not only possible, but a necessary, if not inevitable dynamic in the construction of Cuban cultural identity. *Cuban Counterpoint* is structured as a discursive strategy that

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[1] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), trans. Harriet de Onís, Introduction by Bronislaw Malinowski, Prologue by Heminio Portell Vilá, New Introduction by Fernando Coronil (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 46.

[2] Ambrosio Fornet cited by Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), p. 259.

procedurally works out ontological issues surrounding cultural identity as well as bringing these together with responses to questions of signification, desire, culture and politics. Because of the importance of economics to his model, and the emphasis given to Cuba's colonial past, together with the threat of re-colonisation, I will be suggesting that Ortiz's model of cultural identity, one that is constantly in flux and reformulating, is intrinsically attached to the ongoing structures that underpin Cuba within a postcolonial context.

As a model that centres itself around racial and cultural hybridity, Ortiz's work is important as an indicator of racial attitudes in Cuban society; it is further interesting to examine how a concept of racial hybridity, a loaded definition that embodies a contestatory identity as well as an unsettling presence because of its otherness (see my discussion of Homi Bhabha in the previous chapter), can come to be projected (even sustained) as a prime signifier of national identity. This issue is all the more pressing given that Cuban society felt uneasy about questions of race; the handling of the Escalera Conspiracy (1844) and the 1912 Race Wars give us an indication of the deep-seated racial tensions in Cuban society, and as discussed in my previous chapter, this level of racial suppression leads to questions about the valorisation of concepts such as *el mestizaje* and the racial hybridity suggested in Ortiz's theory. As a foundational text *Cuban Counterpoint* offers the opportunity to examine how the quest for a cultural identity can become so entwined with the political. This last issue raises questions about the possibility of an autonomous cultural identity and the role of the artist/postcolonial intellectual in the constructions of such models.

The year *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940) was first published Fulgencio Batista won the first 'democratic' election in Cuba since taking power in 1933,[3] although the Batista regime did not bring real stability to the island.

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[3] Batista commenced his political career in 1933 after the decisive siege of the Hotel Nacional in Havana; by this time the military had removed the dictator Gerardo Machado and instigated the bloodless overthrow of his successor Carlos Manuel de Cespedes. A succession of presidents followed, with Batista maintaining his power through puppet presidents, with the support of U.S and Cuban business interests, until he directly came into power as an elected populist in 1940. Despite winning the first elections in 1940, Batista was opposed and challenged principally by El Partidido Revolucionario Cubano-Auténtico, with political terrorism, gangsterism and corruption continuing to be an habitual feature of life in Cuba. Batista eventually lost control during the 1944 elections, but he was returned to power between 1952-9 for what has become known as the Second Batistato. See Edwin Williamson, 'Cuba: Dependency, Nationalism and Revolution', in *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 436-458. Also see Antoni Kapcia, 'The Seige of the

Internationally, the Spanish Civil War was still very present in the minds of the rest of the world, as was the spread of Fascism throughout Western Europe and impending war. In Cuba, Ortiz takes us back to Columbus, and it is interesting to note that the inquiry into cultural renewal should adopt the mantle of discovery, as if, and given the terms under which Cuba entered into a European consciousness, the discovery motif needs to be recalled as a foundational event from where to recover identity. Indeed, as the above quote by Fornet suggests, the first half of the twentieth century (see also Introduction/Chapter One), was a period during which the Cuban elite attempted more actively to promote uniquely Cuban cultural forms and to 'rediscover' Cuban cultural identity. The fact that Fornet uses the discovery trope is indicative of, on the one hand, a counter colonial discourse that re-appropriates the act of 'discovery' for Cuba after centuries of being 'discovered' and represented by others. On the other, and as subsequent chapters will discuss, it is notable that cultural renewal should take place under the mantel of discovery, since it was under these terms that Cuba first entered into a European consciousness, suggesting perhaps that the discovery trope needs to be recalled so that a foundational or autochthonous event can be re-enacted.

Ortiz's extensive ethnographical studies on Cuban cultural identity have led to his being awarded the honorific title of 'third discoverer of Cuba' after Columbus and Humboldt.[4] Juan Marinello acknowledged Ortiz's contribution to Cuban culture in the following terms:

> *su intensa y larga faena, ha destacado el fuerte relieve de una personalidad culminante en nuestro camino cultural. Al despedir al investigador nutrido y poderoso, hemos sentido todos la gravitación de un aporte de universal cubanismo que cubre media centuria. Tan ancha y honda fue la tarea de don Fernando que puede cargar, sin pandearse, el título altísimo de* tercer descubridor de Cuba, *en comprometida secuencia con el genovés temerario y Humboldt, el sabio.*[5]

Hotel Nacional, Cuba, 1933: A Reassessment', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Volume 34, Number 2, May 2002, pp. 283-309.

[4] Amongst some of Ortiz's anthropological and cultural writings on Cuba are *La reconquista de América: refleciones sobre el panhispanismo* (Paris: Libreria P. Ollendorff, 1910), *Poesía y canto de los negros afrocubanos* (Colección Raices, Cuidad Habana, Cuba: Publicigraf, 1994), *Wilfredo Lam y su obra* (Colección Raices, Cuidad Habana, Cuba: Publicigraf, 1993), *Glosario de Afronegrismos*, con un prologo por Juan M. Diego (Habana: Imprenta 'El Siglo XX', Rep. De Brasil 27, 1924), *Un Catauro de Cubanismos – Apuntes Lexicograficos, Extracto de la "Revista Bimestre Cubana"* (Habana: Calle L, Esquina A 27a, 1923).

[5] Juan Marinello, 'Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969)', *Casa de Las Americas*, Number 55, July–August 1969, p. 4.

He was further considered '*el descubridor del orbe nuevo de las ciencias sociales y, sobre todo, de un modo científico de encarar los problemas colectivos*'.[6] Both these views locate Ortiz's work at the centre of anthropological and social studies on Cuban racial and cultural identity, and indeed, *La Casa de Las Americas* published a special edition commemorating the work of Fernando Ortiz and his contribution to Cuban cultural identity.[7] Marinello suggestion of Ortiz's work as *tan ancha y honda*, gives us an indication of the breadth of his work as well as the terms under which he recovered Cuban cultural identity, for indeed, and as Nicolás Guillén notes, this entailed in part, the recovery of archival documents and archaeological finds that were an integral part of Ortiz's theories, as the following demonstrates:

> *Fernando Ortiz enfocó a su vez en la problemática social de su pueblo, donde la esclavitud había tenido una importancia gigantesca y había dejado su marca imborrable. Para ello se hundío en el voluminoso material que le brindaba la trata, vista a partir del mismo siglo XVI. En Brazil, al abolirse aquel bárbaro comercio, muchos documentos fueron románticamente destruidos, lo que privó a los futuros investigadores de un depósito precioso e insustituible. En Cuba, no. Esto fue lo que permitió a Ortiz una confrontación de las fuentes prístinas africanas con lo nuestro insular sin moverse de su Isla, y aun en medio de la colosal baraúnda en que se mezclaron aquí los esclavos procedentes de las naciones más diversas. Hasta entonces se hablaba no sin desparpajo acerca de la naturaleza hispánica del acervo cultural cubano, y hasta se tenía como la única válidad. La Habana era "andaluza" (Cádiz, tal vez, o Sevilla...); Camagüey, "castellano"; Oriente, "catalán". ¿Bastaba eso? Sin duda, no.*[8]

It is interesting to note that Guillén highlights the social content of Ortiz's work and the source material he had at his disposal, archives that opened a window to the historical accounts of slavery in Cuba. Guillén also appears to be suggesting that whereas these were destroyed in Brazil in an attempt to erase black history, this had not been the case in Cuba. This sense of disavowal is therefore not present in the Cuban context, and this, continues Guillén, was fundamental to Ortiz's work. It is nevertheless also the case that African derived culture, together with the popular resistance slavery had come to represent, provided an essential component to the

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[6] José Antonio Portuondo, 'Fernando Ortiz: Humanismo y racionalismo científico', *Casa de Las Americas*, Number 55, July–August 1969, p. 8.

[7] See *Casa de Las Americas*, Number 55, July –August 1969, which included contributions from Nicolás Guillén, Juan Marinello, José Luciano Franco, Miguel Barnet and José Antonio Portuondo.

[8] Nicolás Guillén, 'Ortiz: Misión cumplida', *Casa de Las Americas*, Number 55, July –August 1969, p. 5.

development of a uniquely felt cultural identity, one through which Cubans could proclaim their difference to Spanish culture, whilst also showing resistance to the neo-colonial threat posed by the US. As much, therefore, as black slave culture is recognised as an integral aspect of Cuban cultural identity, this inclusion is also based on symbolic meanings, leading to questions over the terms under which black cultural signifiers enter into concepts of cultural identity. Inclusion in this case is informed by a selective appropriation of a black culture that already embodied the much needed resistance to neo-colonial advances.

Race, economics and neo-colonialism are interconnected issues in Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* and, just as tobacco and sugar are placed in a contrapuntal relationship to each other, so are generic conventions, economic relations and race. Binaries are therefore resisted, and *Cuban Counterpoint* presents discursive strategies of contestation, and a complex model of culturally and racially hybrid identities that are shaped in response to colonial and economic structures. Ortiz's work offers a cultural and theoretical position that resonates with postcolonial theories of identity, and he is now becoming recognised as an important postcolonial theorist,[9] but to fully appreciate the significance of Ortiz's work for postcolonial theory we must consider the political status of post-independence Cuba. We must further locate Ortiz and his theory within the class and racial division that existed in Cuban society and within the mainly white elite and the intellectual and artistic avant-garde, since these concepts of cultural identity were being decided by bourgeois Cuban intellectuals.[10]

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[9] Catherine Davies 'Fernando Ortiz's Transculturation: the Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation' in *Postcolonial Perspectives on the Cultures of Latin America and Lusophone Africa*, ed., Robert Fiddian (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 141.

[10] See for example Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubansimo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920 -1940,* pp. 13-14, and Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 5. An example of the bourgeois avant-garde activities can by seen in the activities of the *Grupo Minorista* (1923-1928), which consisted of writers, musicians, and intellectuals who 'represented the progressive thinkers of the Cuban music conservatories, literary journals, and art academics'. Locating themselves within the artistic minority, or elite, they made an important contribution to the Cuban artistic avant-garde, a movement that nurtured close links with European avant-garde thought. The *Minoristas* were mainly based in Havana, where the political disillusionment and economic uncertainties of the 1920s were most deeply felt and expressed. Amongst the *Minoristas* were the writers José Antonio Fernández de Castro (1897-1959) and Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), the lawyer and poet Agustín Acosta (1886-1979), the artist Eduardo Abela (1889- 1965), and the writer Jorge Mañach (1898-1961), who was a central figure of the right wing ABC Revolutionary Party (1920) and the editor of the avant-garde *Revista de Avance* (1927-1930). The journal *Avance* became an important site for the discussion of art, culture and race. Fernando Ortiz was considered the spiritual father of the *Minoristas.* See Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940,* p.

Like many postcolonial writers of the white elite, Ortiz adopted a metropolitan perspective in his early work, particularly in respect to black Cubans. In his essay 'Los dos racismos', in *La Reconquista de América* (1910), Ortiz outlines a racialist discourse that attacks what he sees as the two forms of racism in Cuban society, one stemming from Hispanic colonial influence, and the other coming from within the black sectors of society. Throughout this essay Ortiz's critique is directed at the Partido Independiente de Color (PCI) and its founding member Evaristo Estenoz. The goals of the PCI were to ensure that Afro-Cubans received full and equitable participation in the expansion of the government and its services, something sought but not achieved since the Wars of Independence.[11] Aline Helg suggests that the PCI's complaints of racial discrimination were legitimate but at the same time the formation and presence of the PCI posed a serious challenge to the traditional control of the black electorate by the Liberal Party. Consequently, every effort was made to eliminate the party, including the arrest and harassment of its leaders and the passing of legislation prohibiting political parties based on race.[12] Ortiz engages with the PCI in the following manner:

> *Después, uno de tantos políticos subidos á la superficie por los hervores revolucionarios, ha levantado bandera racista y ha trabajado por organizar una agrupación independiente de color donde la raza es el único programa; y asi el señor Estenoz recoge las teorías racistas del señor Altamira en provecho exclusive de su raza, creyendo lógicamente que si la raza basta para determinar campañas entre los blancos, debe bastar para lo mismo entre los negros...*
>
> *...así el caudillo afrocubano aspira con sus propagandas á asegurar en esta nuestra tierra el influjo y predominio de los hombres de color, no por*

192, and Francine Masiello, 'Rethinking Neocolonial Esthetics: Literature, Politics, and Intellectual Community in Cuba's *Revista de Avance*', *Latin American Research Review,* Volume 28, No. 2, 1993.

[11] Jualynne E.Dodson, 'Encounters in the African Atlantic World: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cuba', eds., Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes, *Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), p. 93.

[12] Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p.17, Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.211-24, Jualynne E.Dodson, 'Encounters in the African Atlantic World: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cuba', pp. 93-94.

más ilustrados, ni más patriotas, sino por la misma razón, por lo de la raza, ó sea, á titulo de negros.[13]

A discourse such as this betrays both Ortiz's, and Cuban elite attitudes to race, and as discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, the presence of such attitudes in Cuban society raise challenging questions about the endorsement of concepts of *el mestizaje* and theories of racial hybridity. Ortiz concluded his essay by stating that '*sobre todo, somos los cubanos blancos, los que constituímos el nervio de la nacionalidad, más cultos todavía para poder mantener la vida republicana independiente de retrocesos hispanizantes ó africanizantez*'.[14] A clear division is indicated, and gone from this rhetoric is the ethos of unity that was so important to the Wars of Independence and to Martí's theories of racial and national unity. Furthermore, the need to create distance from a colonial past is articulated within a desire to move forward; the presence of African cultures in Cuban society signals a certain racial and cultural backwardness, one that also needs to be left behind. Ortiz's theories were to move away from such polarisations but it is important to note that these attitudes prevailed in post-colonial Cuba and therefore, the adoption of black cultural signifiers must also be seen in the light of these. Nevertheless, Ortiz, (for example in *Los negros brujos* (1906), and Alejo Carpentier's *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, which I discuss in Chapter Four), saw the Afro-Cuban world as more than a cultural origin but as a space seemingly beyond the reach of the United States.[15] Ortiz also realised that what made Cuban identity distinctive was popular black culture, an essential aspect of Cuba's attempts to maintain distinctiveness from their colonisers and neo-colonisers.

Ortiz's role therefore, is ambiguous, perhaps much like that of the postcolonial intellectual who appropriates and rationalises cultures as objects of knowledge whilst also associating himself with the popular resistance to which they were seen to represent.[16] I wonder, however, the extent to which we can consider Ortiz in the role of postcolonial intellectual? Catherine Davies sees Ortiz as corresponding to Fanon's second or 'remembrance' phase in the native's intellectual development from colonial

[13] Fernando Ortiz, 'Los dos racismos', *La reconquista de América: refleciones sobre el panhispanismo*, p. 44.
[14] Fernando Ortiz, 'Los dos racismos', *La reconquista de América: refleciones sobre el panhispanismo*, p. 47.
[15] Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets: Race and Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* (Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 145.
[16] Catherine Davies, 'Fernando Ortiz's Transculturation: the Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation' p. 142.

complicity to postcolonial opposition. I would suggest that both positions are inherently contained in *Cuban Counterpoint*; remembrance is an integral aspect in bringing to the fore historical, archaeological and anthropological evidence of indigenous and African cultural practices and their recognised contribution to Cuba's cultural makeup, but so is disavowal. Ortiz's 'postcolonial' opposition is also contained within a discourse that does not fall within simple binaries of coloniser colonised that inform postcolonial theories such as Homi Bhabha's and Fanon's. Instead we find multiple external forces, that is, the Spanish, the North American and the African, and a number of internal ones informed by racial diversity and the elite representation of such, the presence of which widen the terms under which cultural identity is represented. The following analysis may shed some light on the multiple and contradictory positions articulated by Ortiz and uncover the tensions inherent in the process underpinning cultural and national renewal.

Adopting allegorical actors in the form of sugar and tobacco, Ortiz represents sugar as symbolising European influences, the exogenous and racial differentiation. The significance of sugar is further extended to underpin its impact on Cuba's economy; Ortiz draws attention to how, as a mass produced crop, sugar has had a stifling effect on the island's eco-system. Still, and even as sugar is set up in a binary opposition to tobacco, which comes to represent the indigenous, Ortiz unsettles this structure with the following:

> Sugar and tobacco are vegetable products of the same country and the same climate, but the biological distinctions between them is such that it brings about radical economic differences as regards soil, methods of cultivation, processing and marketing. And the amazing differences between the two products are reflected in the history of the Cuban nation from its very ethnological formation to its social structure, its political fortunes, and to international relations.
>
> The outstanding feature of our economic history is in reality this multi form and persistent contrast between the two products that have been and are the most typical of Cuba, aside from that period of brief duration at the beginning of the sixteenth century when the conquistadors' gold-mining activities and the cultivation of yucca fields and stock-raising to supply cassava bread and dried meat for the conquerors' expeditions took precedence. Thus a study of the history of Cuba, both internal and external, is fundamentally a study of the history of sugar and tobacco as the essential bases of its economy…
>
> The posing and examination of this deep-seated contrast which exists between sugar and tobacco, from their very nature to their social derivations, may throw some new light upon the study of Cuban economy and its historical

peculiarities. In addition it offers certain curious and original instances of *transculturation* of the sort that are of great and current interests in contemporary sociological science.[17]

Ortiz here brings the past to bear on the present, and is keen to outline continuity, to demonstrate how individually and jointly, and in conjunction with economical and cultural factors, and well as the colonial and neo-colonial, sugar and tobacco shift out of a binary to form part of a much wider ongoing process of significations that Ortiz calls transculturation. The allegorical quality Ortiz endows sugar and tobacco with leads to further connections and to a wider, intertextual and intercultural range of continuities. The cultural and racial, as they come to bear on, and contribute to *Cuban Counterpoint* also appear, in the first instance, within set binaries represented by sugar and tobacco, but these too become problematised. Although sugar symbolises colonialism, the implantation of a white import on Cuba's soil, sugar also becomes a symbol of blackness, and the importation of a black slave workforce to work in sugar plantations. Within this configuration sugar comes to symbolise both black and white races, and both black and white were entirely exogenous to Cuba. Tobacco, representative of Cuba's autochthonous population, undergoes transformations in the merging with black slave cultures and the Hispanic to form cultural and racial diversity; the inclusion of all these influences is integral to Ortiz's concept of Cuban identity, and the ongoing contrapuntal dialogue that takes place between them underpins the concept of transculturation. Significantly, this proactive counterpoint suggests more than inclusion but a syncretism whereby the loaded significance of tobacco and sugar continually respond to each other, and to any new additions. With every new addition the shape of Cuban culture is altered, and therefore, in its ever-responsive mode, cultural identity is defined by its transience, always in the process of being. This mutability defies any polarisation of positions, particularly between tobacco and sugar, as between the implantation of foreignness on the land and the indigenous. The progression into this dynamic, however, rose from a deceptively Manichean dialectic which located tobacco as indigenous, savage and magical and imbued with revolutionary spirit, with sugar being symbolic of European enlightenment. Still, these polarisations together with the more fluid and responsive dynamic inform Ortiz's discussion, through which, in the oscillations between and

[17] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), p. 5.

within both elements, the uniqueness that informs cultural identity is teased out. The first section of *Cuban Counterpoint* engages precisely with this deceptive dialectic in which sugar and tobacco are located within also deceptively implied binaries.

> Sugar and tobacco are all contrast. It would seem that they were moved by a rivalry that separates them from their very origins. One is a gramineous plant, the other a solanaceous; one grows from cuttings of stalk rooted down, the other from tiny seeds that germinate. The value of one is in its stalk, not in its leaves, which are thrown away; that of the other in its foliage, not in its stalk, which is discarded. Sugar cane lives for years, the tobacco plant only a few months. The former seeks the light, the latter shade; day and night, sun and moon...One is white, the other dark. Sugar is sweet and odourless; tobacco bitter and aromatic. Always in contrast! Food and poison, waking and drowsing, energy and dream, delight of the flesh and delight of the spirit, sensuality and thought, the satisfaction of an appetite and the contemplation of a moment's illusion, calories of nourishment and puffs of fantasy, undifferentiated and commonplace anonymity from the cradle and aristocratic individuality recognized wherever it goes, medicine and magic, reality and deception, virtue and vice. Sugar is *she*; tobacco is *he*; Sugar cane was the gift of the gods, tobacco of the devils; *she* is the daughter of Apollo; he is the offspring of Persephone.[18]

Ortiz gives the impression that sugar and tobacco are indeed contrasts, but as he works his way down his list these become interconnected. He does not Other one contrast to the other, and so neither sugar or tobacco become more or less prominent; they each share good and bad qualities that complement the other and outright opposition is thus avoided. Instead, from the initial differences displayed, Ortiz weaves this series of interconnections and affinities that resist binaries and, within these associations sugar and tobacco are rendered hybrid. Once transplanted onto Cuban soil, sugar invariably underwent transformation as it transformed Cuba, and from being the polarised symbol of colonialism, sugar becomes neutralised, or rather naturalised on Cuban soil. Tobacco, on the other hand is already indigenous, but the presence of sugar alters them both.

> There is no rebellion or challenge in sugar, nor resentment, nor brooding suspicion, but humble pleasure, quiet, calm, and soothing. Tobacco is boldly imaginative and individualistic to the point of anarchy. Sugar is on the side of

[18] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), p. 6.

> sensible pragmatism and social integration. Tobacco is as daring as blasphemy; sugar as humble as a prayer.[19]

A subversion also appears to have taken place since the characteristics Ortiz endows sugar and tobacco with suggests that tobacco, that is the native Cuban, now has the upper hand. Sugar appears domesticated whilst tobacco is driven by the revolutionary spirit. In terms of gender, tobacco is presented as masculine and sugar as feminine although sugar comes from phallic like stalks of cane, and tobacco is germinated from seeds and grows in much softer leaf form. Then again, tobacco is rolled into phallic shaped cigars whilst the process of 'sugar-refining is one of continual preparation and embellishment to clean the sugar and give it whiteness',[20] thus suggesting female grooming in a beauty parlour. In gendering these plants, Ortiz unsettles assumptions of the feminised colonial subject and the male coloniser. But then, this is also far more radical in its recalling of taboos about the sexualised black male coming together with the white female European. As quoted above, 'Sugar is *she*; tobacco is *he*. Sugar cane was the gift of the gods, tobacco of the devils', she is the daughter of the sun god Apollo, and a father's daughter, whilst he is the offspring of Persephone, who resides in the underworld in absence of sun, and is a mother's son. In being such offspring (of European antecedent), both are also empowered through their parentage, whilst their parents also denote contrasts. A subversive tone is further suggested here as tobacco comes to represent a rebellious and blasphemous figure: since tobacco is the allegorical stand-in for the 'native' Cuban, *el mestizo*, tobacco is imbued with the revolutionary spirit José Martí endorsed during the 1898 War of Independence, and a contestatory anti-colonial one.

Because of the allegorical attachment to both crops, and the constant cultural, racial, colonial and economic postulations that take place through them, fixity is resisted, as are, in principle, racial stereotypes. Rather than being visually located, identity is instead interrogated by Ortiz as something that goes beyond 'identification', and as forming part of a multi-faceted and ongoing process. I refer here in part to Homi Bhabha's discussion on the discursive and disciplinary place from where questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed.[21] The

[19] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 16.
[20] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 16.
[21] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Interrogating Identity', *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 47.

issue of institutional positioning is an ongoing question within this chapter, but in interrogating identity through discursive means, Ortiz shifts the frame of identity from the field of vision to that of the space of writing, and as Bhabha argues, a space is created, a 'third dimension', in which frames of reference are wider, thus depth is created in which Cuban identity can be examined as part of a network of structures, as well as discursively.[22] Although the ontological process underpinning cultural identity is drawn upon by Ortiz, the discursive strategies themselves form an integral part of the development of Ortiz's theory as well as the model of identity he projects. The hybridity Ortiz discusses in *Cuban Counterpoint* is informed as much by the actual racial and cultural mix that exists in Cuban society as it is by the frame (and by this I mean the actual dynamic inherent in the contrapuntal positioning that take place in *Cuban Counterpoint* as the text itself), in which identity is examined. There is also a difference between Ortiz's articulation as contained within the text (the frame of interrogation) and the frame in which Cuban society resides in the everyday.

Within the text the possibilities for interrogation are wide and this enables Ortiz's to examine how tobacco and sugar, primarily Cuba's main agricultural products, become vehicles for an analysis of Cuban society and the impact of the exogenous on the local. The economic and colonial dynamic fronted by sugar enables the investigation into Cuba's colonial past and her neo-colonial present, with these determinants further shaping Ortiz's model of cultural identity. From this point onwards tobacco and sugar become representative of the cultural, social, racial, ideological, political and economic makeup of Cuba, not as separate issues but as interconnected ones. It is within this context of diversity that Ortiz further widens his discursive space to include the ever-responding syncretism of all these elements. Furthermore, Ortiz suggests that the racial, economic, cultural and political are subject to change, thus, we are dealing with a process, and with frames of reference that are potentially infinite. Ortiz's suggestion is that this very dynamic brings about periodical and continual reformulations thus rendering any single concept of Cuban cultural incomplete but always forming part of a process of reformulations. The suggestion is then that the diversity that contributes to and creates identity is in itself far from static but is ever changing and responding to new additions.

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[22] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Interrogating Identity', *The Location of Culture*, p. 49.

Referring to the coexistence of all these elements as 'transculturation', a neologism coined by Ortiz to denote the process by which Cuban cultural identity finds expression, we are confronted with a system that is far from static or monolithic. Implicit in the need to develop new terminology is the suggestion that this articulation of cultural identity is new and never been done before, thus a new beginning is denoted. Instead, the very nature of Cuban culture, suggests Ortiz, is in the 'trans' moment, whereby a number of elements continually meet, with these disparate units informing and constituting an all-inclusive Cuban cultural identity. Transculturation presents a far more complex dynamic which explains the process by which Cuban society (and by extension other postcolonial ones), make sense of the rupture and diversity that continues to impact on identity. As a paradigm, however, transculturation has not gained wide currency. Ortiz developed the term transculturation at a time when the term acculturation was gaining credence in the United States. By the 1930s and 1940s numerous university departments, institutions and professorial chairs were set up to fund, legitimate and diffuse its Anglo-Centric discourse. This was not the case with the Spanish-speaking world. In this respect we can see Ortiz's development of the theory of transculturation as a challenge to the use of acculturation, a term that was devised in North American institutions to explain the absorption of cultural values; those of the west as they impact on and culturally improve those that by implication have none. As Ortiz explains,

> With the reader's permission, [...] I am going to take the liberty of employing for the first time the term *transculturation*, fully aware of the fact that it is a neologism. And I venture to suggest that it might be adopted in sociological terminology, to a great extent at least, as a substitute for the term *acculturation*, whose use is now spreading.
>
> *Acculturation* is used to describe the process of transition from one culture to another, and its manifold social repercussions. But *transculturation* is a more fitting term.[23]

In adopting this position Ortiz challenges the universality of the term acculturation because it does not account for the Cuban experience: further, whilst disqualifying the applicability of acculturation to a Cuban context, he also suggests that transculturation could indeed replace acculturation. The transcultural, therefore, comes to represent not only a means by which to explain cultural identity in Cuba, but also a term that

[23] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 97-8.

aims to challenge North America's academic institutions. As a contestatory strategy, transculturation encapsulates a postcolonial positioning that draws attention to diversity, all of which is interrelated (as opposed to stereotypical 'othering'), and projects an identity that is intrinsically imbued with a contestatory, challenging spirit. Ortiz's cultural model was influenced by and formed in the presence of the threat posed by the United States, but the origins of transculturation are also based on historical experience, as in reassessments that have been shaped by Cuba's vast history, one of multi settlements, as well as of the history of Empire.

> The real history of Cuba is the history of its intermeshed transculturations. First came the transculturations of the paleolithic Indian to the neolithic, and the disappearance of the latter because of his inability to adjust himself to the culture brought in by the Spaniards. Then the transculturation of an unbroken stream of white immigrants. They were Spaniards, but representatives of different cultures and themselves torn loose [...]. At the same time there was going on the transculturation of a steady human stream of African Negroes coming from all the coastal regions of Africa along the Atlantic, from Senegal to Guinea, the Congo and Angola [...]. All of them snatched from their original social groups, their own cultures crushed under the weight of the cultures in existence here, like sugar cane ground in the rollers of the mill. And still other immigrant cultures of the most varying origins arrived [....] always exerting an influence and in turn being influenced in turn: And each of them torn from his native moorings, faced with the problem of disadjustment and readjustment, of deculturation and acculturation-in a word, of transculturation.[24]

Whilst an all-inclusive dynamic that explains how cultures merge and become 'one transcultural entity', the model also resists monolithic status. Indeed, Ortiz's coining of the term was specific to the highly varied phenomena that came about in Cuba as a result of the 'extremely complex transmutations of culture'.[25] This cultural dynamic, he suggests, determines every aspect of Cuban life, but is also one that needs to be promulgated to ensure that the intertextual and multifaceted consequences of Cuba's colonial past, as they continue to impact on cultural identity, are fully understood.

On this occasion, we have 'the real history of Cuba', in which Ortiz explains how cultures supplant others, merging to become one 'transcultural' entity. The suggestion of a violent cultural transaction is evident through the use of metaphors such as 'snatched' and crushed', but this is counteracted by the romantic narrative

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[24] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p.98.
[25] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 98.

drive in the passage. Ortiz appears to adopt a Spencerian Social Darwinism to explain why the Amerindians did not survive colonial contact, an ideology that harks back to his evolutionary position in earlier works, and it is here where the split in his postcolonial positioning comes to the surface. Although *Cuban Counterpoint* is loaded with contestatory and challenging devices that write back and resist further colonialisations, his engagement with race betrays his metropolitan perspective, and the rationalising of black and Amerindian cultures.

The emphasis on migrations and immigrations suggests some romantic motif analogous to that of orphans set adrift and heroically building a home in spite of insurmountable strife. Ortiz's retrospective account of Cuba's 'real' history is reconstructive and paves the way for a renaissance anchored on the start of the transmutations of identity. In the suggestion of a *tabula rasa*, Ortiz draws attention to the repopulation of the island and the need 'to bring in a complete new population, both masters and servants. This is one of the strange social features of Cuba, that since the sixteenth century all its classes, races, and cultures, coming by will or by force have all been exogenous'.[26] His words are clearly foundational in intent, but in noting the 'strangeness' of the extent to which Cuba owes its make up to the exogenous, Ortiz reiterates the uniqueness of the island's cultural identity. The suggestion that cultural identity is defined on exogenous implants frees Ortiz from the island's pre-colonial history, one that had been over romanticised in the past, as much as it binds him to the colonial one.[27] In focusing on external implants Ortiz attempts to avoid a romantic discourse that invents a pre-Columbian history.

With the focus on the exogenous therefore, Ortiz attempts to avoid the pitfalls to be encountered when hankering after a lost past. This is not to say that Ortiz does not engage with indigenous pre-Columbian artefacts through the connecting strands of tobacco, romanticising in turn the religious use of tobacco as much as he does tobacco's cultivation, creating a mythology around the plant and the manner of the transferral of indigenous traditions to, and their continuation by black slaves.

The need for an imported black labour to produce sugar is a constant reminder of the demise of the Amerindian. Black slave cultures and sugar become synonymous

[26] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 100.

[27] Gustavo Pérez Firmat makes the following comments on attempts at cultural reconstruction based on an indigenous substratum: 'Since Cuban culture is composed entirely of exogenous ingredients, in Cuba the indigenous, in the narrow sense of the word, is no more than a poetic commonplace popularised during the Romantic period'. In *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature*, p. 2.

with this fact. Tobacco becomes intrinsically connected to the indigenous through accounts of religious uses of tobacco: the introduction of sugar (the European and the African) hybridises the plant and its usage, and so, from representing indigenous culture, tobacco evolves to the status of national symbol of racial hybridity. Cuban identity and significance continue to shift; transculturations continue to take place as social relations and economic interests on the island change and continue to redefine culture. Although the previous quote on the 'real history of Cuba' notes expansiveness, the amount of space dedicated to tobacco, in its varying transmutations, rather gives the impression that Cuba's present social history is fundamentally tied in with tobacco. Ortiz refers to tobacco as a social institution that informed Amerindian religion, tribal ceremonies, economics and agriculture, and as such, tobacco cemented their society.[28] It is clear from this that tobacco, as a cultural signifier provides an important cultural vehicle that promotes social cohesion as well as continuity between the past and the future. The link between both is provided by black culture which Ortiz recognises as fundamental to the process of transculturation as well as to cultural continuity. This is consolidated through what Ortiz describes as the 'transculturation of tobacco'[29] which accounts for both the rapid manner in which slaves adopted tobacco from the Amerindians, and the 'rapidity with which all Africa received tobacco of the Indians of America'.[30] Ortiz accounts for the manner in which tobacco fanned out in the continent, suggesting that Amerindian characteristic manners of using tobacco can be found in Africa, evidence of this being found in practices and in finds of primitive and indigenous types of pipes similar to those used by Amerindians. He also refers to commercial associations made in seventeenth century Europe between black culture and tobacco. Seen as something 'native', Ortiz cites the following example to support his case; 'And in England the sign of the tobacconist was the statue of a little Negro, with a big cigar in his mouth or a roll of tobacco under his arm'.[31] Ortiz refers to a considerable number of examples, and the aim is to narrow the bridge that existed between Amerindian and African culture and to account for the ease with which transferral between both took place in Cuba.

[28] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 185.
[29] Seventy-one pages are dedicated to the transcultural trajectory of tobacco, retracing its religious significance and the plant's later transmutations into snuff, cigars, cigarettes etc., but all this is taken one step further in the book's 'final' section entitled, 'How Havana Tobacco Embarked Upon Its Conquest Of The World.' This suggests a form of re-appropriation or writing back.
[30] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 193.
[31] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 193.

Transmission was also facilitated by the historical and economic conditions that brought them together. As an important component to his model, the recognition of African cultural practices, this pivotal role given to slaves by Ortiz is nonetheless radical, because of the 'barbarism' and 'savagery' so often ascribed by others to their religious practices, as indeed to blackness. We certainly see the essentialising of Amerindian and African identities, particularly in the example of the tobacconist's statue of little Negro, cited above. Ortiz goes to great lengths to sanitise loaded perceptions of blackness to remove connotations of barbarism. This takes place through the focus on religion and ritual as they underpin social structures, and with the eventual adoption of smoking practices by the 'white conquerors', by which time tobacco is sanitised and no longer dubbed as a 'thing of savages'.[32] Invariably, the closeness Ortiz finds between black slave cultures and many of the folk elements of Amerindian culture, and the implied proximity between both cultural practices, betrays a bilateral racial thinking, one that rests mainly on the racial and the economic conditions that delegated race and colour to the margins. The religious use of tobacco remained marginal in a racial sense, since the Hispanic and European use of tobacco was different. The inclusion, therefore, of blackness, whilst integral and necessary, is tempered, and, as I discuss later, the importance ascribed to black Cubans in transculturation is not reflected in the racial tensions found in Cuban society. The unity suggested in Ortiz's all-inclusive model nevertheless offers a platform from which to challenge outside incursions in the formulation of a socially and racially cohesive society that recognises diversity.

The valorisation of black signifiers is an important move that brings to the fore issues of racial and cultural hybridity. Still, if we consider hybrid identities such as those that Bhabha discusses, as ones that are culturally and racially diverse, that adopt strategies such as those of mimicry which create an unsettling presence ('almost the same but not quite'), and a doubling that discloses the ambivalence of colonial discourse, disrupting its authority,[33] the possibilities of Ortiz's theory engage with more than one imperial power and a wider cultural and racial scope. Because he is writing for a number of audiences (internal and external ones), the projection of a hybrid identity is primarily for the benefit of the national, and to present externally a strong, united Cuban identity to ward off U.S. incursions. Ortiz's syncretic hybrid

[32] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 198.
[33] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', *The Location of Culture*, pp. 88-9.

cultural identity is not however represented as a disruptive colonial Other, but as a post-colonial challenging other. Difference is essentially central to this construct in the attempt to maintain their distinctiveness, yet difference in an increasingly racially segregated Cuban society would create an unsettling presence. Whilst Ortiz's model valorises blackness, it also raises questions about the terms under which this can be projected in society, outside the interrogating frame Ortiz creates in *Cuban Counterpoint.*

In Ortiz's reference to the actual formation of Cuba's 'real' history he notes that cultural formation is subordinate to outside forces, and is continually responding to these forces, be they economic, historical, racial or imperial ones. The historical table Ortiz presents also points towards a sense of inevitability in the process; still, it is the continual responses to outside elements that bring about the pattern of transculturation in which Cuban cultural identity is dually forged and rendered mutable. Fernando Coronil refers to these identities as 'ever changing' like 'transient creatures with shifting identities'.[34] If, on the one hand then we have certain determinism with regard to the impact of outside forces, interestingly enough, the very basis of a shifting identity eludes over-determinism. Identity is potentially rendered elusive, and we have here a model in which identity is ever changing, allowing for recurrent reformulation. Provisionality according to Ortiz forms an integral component in the 'evolution' of Cuba, growing out of the transient nature of the conquistador's intentions. This provisionality is also a consequence of a turbulent past that has been informed by both stabilising and disruptive historical forces and an uncertain future.[35] The Batista years were certainly marked by political turmoil; whilst Batista employed a populist rhetoric that lumped Cubans together as a homogenous mass, Ortiz depicts Cubans as being multifaceted beings, suggesting a counter hegemonic strategy. His transcultural dynamic, whilst inclusive in the attempt to present a unified Cuban cultural identity, also points towards diversity and transience. The contrapuntal position of tobacco and sugar account for such a dynamic, but the

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[34] Fernando Coronil, 'Challenging Colonial Histories: Cuban Counterpoint/Ortiz's Counterfetishism', *Critical Theory, Critical Politics & Latin American Narrative,* eds., Steven Bell, Albert H. Le May & Leonard Orr (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1993), p. 75. Coronil asserts that Ortiz had lived though some of the most turbulent years of Cuban political history where political alliances and personal identity shifted violently, and during a time where there existed a provisional nature to political arrangements and institutions. This uncertain climate could have also influenced the shifting nature of the counterpoint.

[35] Fernando Coronil, 'Challenging Colonial Histories: *Cuban Counterpoint*/Ortiz's Counterfetishism', p. 79.

tensions they create raise a number of questions about the theoretical ease with which the historical, racial, and cultural are incorporated and mythologised.

Ortiz sets out to resist deterministic models within a transcultural dynamic, one that is both reflective and responsive to the changes in society; nevertheless power relations within and between different cultures and economies were a vital element in the 'survival' of any particular strand. Hegemonic forces are therefore at play in the potential privileging of one over another. Agency remains an issue here, that of black Cubans in the society Ortiz was writing about, particularly when Ortiz as a Cuban, is potentially speaking about his own identity as well as in a wider national capacity. He is also speaking for the other, black presence in Cuban society from a white elitist position; thus notions of transcultural ease and racial democracy are not necessarily engaged with. The discursive and disciplinary place from where questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed is a real issue in *Cuban Counterpoint*; Ortiz certainly shares with the postcolonial intellectual the metropolitan positioning that facilitates a voice, but this site also renders his position ambivalent and split. As Catherine Davies argues; 'It could be said that Ortiz faces the dilemma of the postcolonial intellectual in deciding who to address – the (white) academic elites or the (African) Cuban people – on whose behalf, and from which perspective (as a personally involved insider or an objective outsider)'.[36] These splits prevail and are noticeable in the engagement with race. The syncretism inherent in Ortiz's model acknowledges, even celebrates racial diversity; as a theoretical position the counterpoint between sugar and tobacco underlines a complex and subtle model of cultural identity which appeals to postcolonial theory. The hybridity suggested in the discourse of *mestizaje* further resonates with notions of postcolonial identities but Ortiz and *Cuban Counterpoint* also need to be placed in the context of Cuban society, where since the 1890s the notion of *mestizaje* had gained increasing currency within the national after the popularisation of the ideals behind José Martí's *nuestra América mestiza*, which promulgated racial democracy. Indeed, Martí, as Ortiz in *Cuban Counterpoint*, is involved with legitimising a national identity and demonstrating Cuban distinctiveness from that of the colonisers. To this end, Martí wrote in 'Nuestra América':

[36] Catherine Davies, 'Fernando Ortiz's Transculturation: the Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation', p. 161.

Por eso el libro importado ha sido vencido en América por el hombre natural. Los hombres naturales han vencido a los letrados artificiales. El mestizo autóctono ha vencido al criollo exótico. No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza.[37]

An 'us and them' dialectic is suggested by Martí since the fight for Cuban independence was certainly located within the colonial versus the anti-colonial. The anchorage of *mestizaje* as the 'natural', autochthonous signifier of Cuban identity aims to create distinction between those to whom the land truly belongs and the coloniser's claims. *Cuban Counterpoint* makes similar points in adopting an anti-imperial stance against the United States, and highlighting the uniqueness to be found in Cuban cultural identity and the process informing the development of this cultural identity. Both Martí and Ortiz make important statements about the racial diversity informing their society but because these messages are contained within a nationalistic rhetoric as well as a cultural one, the multiculturalism celebrated is tied to a monolithic statement that cannot draw attention to divisive social and racial realities. To do so would threaten the national.

2.2

Tensions between multiculturalism, hybrid identities and social realities remain unresolved but they rather surprisingly get aired in the dialogue Ortiz sets up between *Doña Quaresma* and *Don Carnal*, the 'stand in' human players for tobacco and sugar. Besides engaging in a debate on racial politics, this dialogue focuses on the appropriation and subversion of genre and, just as a neologism became necessary, Ortiz appears to suggest that genre, as a vehicle, or container for the transcultural, also requires some renewal. Ortiz's playful engagement here with sugar and tobacco is introduced as an allegorical and carnivalesque dialogue between the central characters in a Spanish medieval poem. *Don Carnal* and *Doña Quaresma* are the protagonists of a poem by the poet and archpriest of Hita, Juan Ruíz, who personified carnival and Lent through these two characters. The aim was to make 'them speak in unforgettable verses, cleverly putting into their affirmations and rebuttals [...] the satirical contest between them [and] their contrasting ethics and the ills and benefits that each has

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[37] José Martí, 'Nuestra América', *Nuestra América*, 'Introducción de Pedro Henriquez Ureña (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1939), p. 14.

conferred upon mankind'.[38] Ortiz 'borrows' their satirical battle and the rivalry between them to play out the drama of tobacco and sugar, but in choosing to adopt a medieval literary precedent he also unsettles the scientific, ethnographic conventions that inform *Cuban Counterpoint.*

> Perhaps that famous controversy imagined by that great poet of the Middle Ages might serve as a literary precedent to permit me now to personify dark tobacco and "high yellow" sugar, and let them, in the guise of a fable, uphold their vying merits. But lacking, as I do, authority either as poet or as priest to conjure up creatures of fantasy and lend them human passions and superhuman significance, all I can do is to set down, in drab prose the amazing contrasts I have observed in the two agricultural products on which the economic history of Cuba rests.[39]

Adopting a trickster tone, Ortiz appropriates the poem and debate between the competing protagonists as platforms on which to declare his interests and intent. Still, these are not straightforward characters and neither are Ortiz's intentions. If sugar is open to transformation once implanted on Cuban soil, surely so too is a Spanish literary genre, as is the Spanish language itself; just as sugar undergoes the process of transculturation, transforming it as much as it transformed Cuba, genre is also subjected to transculturation in the playful rhetoric which states the unconventionality of what is to follow; all this despite the fact that *Cuban Counterpoint* is introduced as 'a book of science' by Bronislaw Malinowski. Instead of a conventional scientific tome we are introduced to an allegorical drama that plays out the characteristics of Cuban culture. Although disclaimers are made to explain his 'lack' of talent and authority as a poet (perhaps because he poses as a scientist, but neither is he empirical in his science), Ortiz continues in exemplary prose, which he insists on referring to as 'meagre prose'. Gustavo Pérez Firmat suggests that Ortiz does not attempt to 'create an imitation worthy of the model' he deploys;[40] but then, to imitate would undermine Ortiz's subversive intent. In this sense then, Ortiz's prose is far from meagre but rather different and deconstructive of the generical convention it stems from. The diversity of material and style displayed in the counterpoint nods towards the unconventional; the book's allegorical emphasis, the subversive use of language,

[38] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 3.
[39] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 3.
[40] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature*, p. 48.

history and science suggest rather than 'mere' mimicry or imitation, a move away from the scientific genre's (or any genre's) norm.

I would therefore suggest that the claims and counterclaims made by the author serve as a device to unsettle established norms, not only regarding genre, but those about race and cultural ideologies. Ortiz creates a fluid platform (a contradiction in terms) for the diversity, and the comings and goings of transatlantic voyages; in a similar way the contrasts between sugar and tobacco, and the multidimensional composition of society can be discussed and displayed.

Ortiz's counterpoint commenced with the writing of the arch priest Juan Ruíz, but by the time he starts tying up the debate between *Don Carnal* and *Doña Quaresma*, they too have become transformed by the controversy between *Don Tabaco* and *Doña Azúcar*, in what he refers to as a 'dialogued composition which carries the dramatic dialectic of life into the realm of art'.[41] Because tobacco and sugar are constructed as highly complex metaphorical 'actors' that represent both human and material things, they shift between definitions. They are nevertheless defined by their social intercourse under the conditions Ortiz orchestrates (almost like a Prospero), and are responsive and reflective of the economic, institutional, 'legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, [...] aspects of [...] life'.[42] Ortiz includes a wide range of institutions and areas of life, some more objective and easier to quantify, whilst others, such as the sexual and the psychological, more subjective and less quantifiable. Still, the absences of measures or empiricisms, rather than presenting problems, become the defining emphasis. In resisting empiricism, Ortiz paves the way to consolidate cultural mythologies about indigenous cultures and aesthetically neutralised notions of black slave culture with historical discourse to develop a cultural dynamic that just cannot be measured. Ortiz further suggests that meaning is found in the everyday: in the antiphonal prayers of the liturgies of both black and white Cubans, in erotic dances such as the rumba, and in the 'versified counterpoint of the unlettered *guajiros* and the Afro-Cuban *curros*'.[43]

Ortiz goes so far as to suggest that 'some supernatural teacher had purposely selected Cuba as a geographic laboratory in which to give the clearest demonstration of the supreme importance of the basic economy of a nation in its continuous process

[41] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 4.
[42] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 98.
[43] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 4.

of development'.[44] Through this stress on an ongoing process and an experiment that is continually being assessed, we are again faced with the provisional nature underpinning transculturation, in which society is continually responding to external forces and morphing. Because this 'scientific' experiment coexists alongside myth, literature and the supernatural we come to wonder how, in spite of this lack of empiricism, *Cuban Counterpoint* came to be presented at the Eighth American Scientific congress held in Washington in 1940 as a book of science.[45] It would be interesting to know of its reception at the congress; Bronislaw Malinowski's introduction to *Cuban Counterpoint* praises Ortiz for his 'fascinating play of words', whilst also defining it as a 'sober scientific labour and searching social analysis'.[46] Malinowski inadvertently draws attention to the converging generic demands the book places on the reader (or the scientist), although he disregards the generic instability in an attempt, perhaps, to bring *Cuban Counterpoint* in line with convention. One thing that *Cuban Counterpoint* is not is conventional: given the extensive intertextual references, quotes from secondary sources, often pages long, from texts such as the *Historia del Almirante Don Cristóbal Colón* by Columbus's son Don Hernando, and from José Martí's poetry, pigeonholing is resisted. These features, together with the allegorical quarrel between Lent and carnival make reading *Cuban Counterpoint* more of a literary experience. Indeed, Gustavo Pérez Firmat has suggested that to continue to look at Ortiz as a scientist is detrimental to his work because essentially, many of his conclusions are based on incomplete and misleading data.[47] However, I would suggest that to omit the scientific elements informing the book to focus only on the literary, which is by no means a straightforward activity in *Cuban Counterpoint*, reduces the significance of these conventions as they come together in one tome. The material presented rather appears to be held together in Ortiz's oscillations between tobacco and sugar (as indeed by the cigar smoke wafting through it), leading to the theory that the 'literary' structure informing the counterpoint is also part of Ortiz's experiment.

The level of intertextuality in *Cuban Counterpoint* is quite impressive, both in the selection of documents and their 'meshing' together. Some of the sources Ortiz

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[44] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 5.
[45] Ricardo Castells, 'Ficción y nacionalismo económico en el contrapunteo Cubano de Fernando Ortiz', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Literary Studies,* 1992, Volume 4:1, Number 2, p. 55.
[46] Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Introduction' to *Cuban Counterpoint* (1995), lxi.
[47] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature*, p. 17.

cites from are translations: transliterations that are in themselves loaded by their own imperatives. When he refers to Amerindian artefacts it is through anthropological texts; reports of Amerindian culture are through the 'first hand' accounts of priests and conquistadors, who were also engaged in essentialising these cultures, and informed by an uneven process of cultural and linguistic translation. As Stephen M. Hart suggests:

> This process can be compared to that of the last will and testament of a dying man whose language is imperfectly understood by the scribe: the testament is meant to summarise the whole of the individual's previous life, and given the circumstances, it is inevitably characterised by gaps. Add to this the role of the scribe who transliterates the testimony and who–unconsciously or not- moulds the narrative to fit his own view of the world, and we can see how difficult it becomes to separate out the various strands within this process of transculturation.[48]

Interestingly, transculturation, a paradigm that describes the unique and ongoing process by which Cuban identity is formed, is applied by Hart to describe cultural and linguistic translations: it seems as if the term transculturation has been subjected to the very process it defines. Hart, in his deployment of transculturation does not refer to the final translation as something provisional or continually changing, but rather as a practice that widens the translation's discursive frame, allowing for the translator's cultural background, the incomplete process of linguistic understanding, as for the transferral of an oral tradition onto written form. Nevertheless, if we apply Hart's usage to the process of translation, transliteration and intertextuality found in *Cuban Counterpoint*, the contents, structure and evidence that Ortiz draws upon are already loaded. The range of documents, themselves, translations and transliterations is extensive, ranging from Las Casas' *Apologética Historia*; *Medicina de los siboneyes* (1888) by the Cuban Dr. Ernesto López; Filippo Salvadore Gily's *Saggio di Storia Americana* (1780); *Die menschlichen Genussmittel* (1911) by Hartwich; Father Gumilla's *Historia natural, civil y geográfica de las naciones situadas en las riberas del río Orinoco* (1791), to M.R. Harrington's *Cuba antes de Colón* (date of Spanish translation not cited by Ortiz). Although just a small selection of the sources Ortiz draws from, these titles alone are indicative of a process of translations, and based on earlier accounts of the histories they engage with. My aim here is not to undermine

[48] Stephen M. Hart, *A Companion to Spanish American Literature* (London: Tamesis, 1999), p. 6.

the authenticity of the material, although Hart's analysis clearly sets out how histories are passed down to us, but to demonstrate how the material Ortiz incorporates is already potentially intertextual. Their incorporation in *Cuban Counterpoint*, alongside Ortiz's analysis of them, transliterates the material further, and as an integral aspect of *Cuban Counterpoint* Ortiz integrates them into his own process of transculturation as it pertains to Cuba.

Although the contrapuntal positioning and emphasis on tobacco and sugar are a major driving force in the narrative, more than one counterpoint takes place here. The contrapuntal positioning of material, scientific data (albeit incomplete), with literary genres, with transcriptions and translations from chronicles of conquest to archaeological documents, and Ortiz's own view of Cuba, transforms *Cuban Counterpoint* into a multi-layered book which offers the workings out of the process by which Cuban culture continually finds expression. It is one that also transforms the book's structure and content, rendering it both representative and a product of the very dynamic it is displaying.

The parting from generic conventions together with the syncretism informing racial diversity certainly create tensions, so much so that Ortiz does not attempt to hide them but instead draws our attention to them in his reference to the sparring relationship between Doña Quaresma and Don Carnal:

> Just a bit of friendly bickering, which should end, like the fairy tales, in marrying and living happy ever after. The marriage of tobacco and sugar, and the birth of alcohol, conceived of the Unholy ghost, the devil, who is the father of tobacco, in the sweet womb of wanton sugar. The Cuban Trinity: tobacco, sugar, and alcohol.[49]

An uneasy trinity is implied here, and not necessarily one that is accommodating of racial inclusion as a smooth transition, but nevertheless one that draws attention to the controversial racial intermarriage suggested in transculturation as much as it refers to the intertextual and inter-generic practices employed in *Cuban Counterpoint*. Still, the allegorical delivery of the debate leads to a displacement between the concept of cultural transculturation and the observance of race relations as they operated in Cuba at the time, although a tentative balance seems evident. Whilst apparently aware of the inequalities and power relations involved in the transmission of culture, Ortiz's

[49] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 93.

'critique' never rises beyond this uneasiness, settling on the display of this relationship. The fact that the controversy opens the book is an indication that what is to follow is some wanton narrative that has come from such a union. In this sense, Ortiz signals towards a hybrid genre as much as he does a culture, but one that is as yet unresolved. The open-endedness of racial issues is somewhat addressed in Ortiz's resistance to adhering to the norm. Rather than opting for a canonical marriage, Ortiz chooses an unholy union that creates the Cuban *mestizo*; in subverting the ending and creating a trinity, he resists the determinism of the closure that the literary tradition he takes precedence from demands. There are no happy endings in this 'romance'; instead a 'relationship' exists that is replete with ongoing negotiations. Still, Ortiz suggests that perhaps one day in the future, a Cuban poet may write of the next 'generation': one infused with its parents' best qualities, 'fire, force, spirit, intoxication, force, and action'.[50] This poem, according to Ortiz, is awaiting an author, and is as yet unwritten, but perhaps we have been reading such a text in his counterpoint.

An element that binds this book is tobacco. Certainly the historical accounts of traditional Amerindian practices, and their central role in social cohesion, indicate tobacco's importance as a binding force. In the tracing of tobacco, its cultivation, smoking, inhaling, and in the rolling of tobacco leaves, continuity is achieved between the 'new' and 'historical'.[51] Tobacco appears to 'waft forward' through history, and the book's sections, uniting all the transcultural elements, almost as if the puffs of smoke of a good Havana cigar trace and unite a trajectory that is fractured by definition through cultural and colonial ruptures. As the smoke holds these fissures together, a unifying narrative is created that examines how tobacco, through 'trans' historical movements, defines an integral essence of Cuban cultural identity.

Tobacco, mainly grown by Hispanic Cubans in small-hold concerns (as opposed to the commercial mechanisation of sugar production), becomes the repository of Cuba's revolutionary spirit, one that it takes from slave rebellions and the black will to fight for freedom. The trans-shift from tobacco as indigenous and black, to the Hispanic/*mestizo* hybridity assumes a certain racial and social levelling, one that did not exist despite the vast participation of blacks during the 1898 War of

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[50] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 93.

[51] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London, 1990), p. 19.

Independence. Through the allegorical significance given to tobacco by Ortiz, and the emphasis he places on its cultivation, he draws attention to the individualistic and decentralising characteristics of tobacco; cultivated in *vegas*, which were often located in the 'margins' of rivers, tobacco resisted centralisation and monopolisation, unlike sugar that is processed in places called *centrales*, with their cultivation taking place in *colonias.* The term *colonia*, colony, signifies the colonial drive that binds the production of sugar, centralising it, restricting autonomy and individuality. The cultivation of sugar under a feudal land system ensures that vast quantities of land are held in the hands of a few, whilst tobacco small holders, dispersed across the island, resist centralisation and represent autonomy.[52] These tendencies led to the development of a 'proletariat class consciousness' (race and class have been merged here), and for this reason Cuban tobacco workers are closely associated to Cuban revolutionary movements. So much so, contends Ortiz, that in 1895, the order for the revolution of national independence was hidden inside a cigar and smuggled into Havana. This individualism stems from handpicking, selection, and in the individual rolling of each cigar, tobacco is perceived as an artisan tradition rather than an industry. Emphasis is placed on the educational in the analogy Ortiz makes between the rolling of cigars and a scholarly activity because workers are read to from a pulpit as they roll their cigars; the pulpit bringing the connections full circle in the return to the tobacco's religious significance.

Because cigar workers are read to by specifically employed readers both to educate and entertain them as they roll cigars, Ortiz suggests that the leaves of tobacco are synonymous with the leaves of a book since the workers were dually engaged in the rolling of tobacco leaves and listening to the words that rose from the *ojas de los libros*, from the pages/leaves of books. A specific analogy therefore is created between the art of reading and listening, the art of writing a book, and that of producing cigars. Furthermore, Ortiz is keen to note that there is an absence of precise measures to quantifying tobacco leaves. The leaves resist the metrication and scientific accuracy sugar is subjected to, and therefore, 'in these transactions of leaf tobacco there is no market price fixed by a foreign stock exchange, nor uniformity of varieties, or of chemical composition or of volume or weight'.[53] I would suggest then

[52] The irony here is that 'the Cuban tobacco-grower was, in the majority, white and free', and therefore, in the hands of a white hegemony. Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 82.
[53] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, p. 37.

that the leaves of the book *Cuban Counterpoint* resist uniformity just as the tobacco leaves do. A resistance to compliance with one genre or another, or to be quantified empirically, informs the very fabric of this book, so much so that it becomes increasingly difficult to fix the material or the book. In response to this difficulty Gustavo Pérez Firmat suggests that 'the Cuban [cigar] is a symbolist poem that goes up in smoke',[54] and this at times appears to be very true. Allegorical meanings and cigar smoke certainly function as binding in a flimsy attempt to hold all these immeasurable elements together, but the very essence of these elements only serves to highlight the impossibility of containment. We have here a book that cannot contain itself, and although Pérez Firmat refers to a poem, and *Cuban Counterpoint* certainly displays the poetic, where does this book, generically speaking, fit, and must it be placed?

On the subject of containment, we should also consider the way in which all these elements are physically brought together at an editorial level. A look at *Cuban Counterpoint's* contents page is an indication of its contents; the bits it can hardly contain are attached in appendices, where additional material gets added in the continuation of the trans-moments of society. The 1995 edition I am using in this chapter is by no means the definitive one, because other editions exist, including the original 1940 edition, a 1983 Universidad de las Villas edition, and a 1963 edition published by the Consejo Nacional de Cultura de La Habana. For that particular edition Ortiz added an extra twelve chapters, and reorganised the material in the second part of the book. It is also prefaced by a short introduction that acknowledges that these additions have 'grown' out of further material, thus creating an organic process of (re)formulations of 'newness' entering and continuing to enter the world.[55] The edition's opening page indicates as much:

> *El extremo cuidado del Maestro Ortiz para que con este libro se evidencia en los numerosos datos, notas, aclaraciones, con que lo ha mejorado. Con los años sus estudios se han ido desarrollando naturalmente, hasta convertirse en*

[54] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature*, p. 57.
[55] A similar creative process later resonates in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture.* Whilst Bhabha deals with the dynamic in which 'newness' and creativity can enter into the postcolonial and postmodern given the restrictions on originality and authority, for Ortiz this 'newness' is constantly under renewal.

una obra indispensable para el conocimiento profundo, verdadero de nuestra isla.[56]

This short notice reveals the process of revisions, and of continual reassessments given the changing composition of Cuban society. I wonder if the improvement indicated above refers to the book or Cuban culture, or both. Inherent here is the continuation in the process of Ortiz's cultural model, in which 'new' material and elements are added on. A certain and almost eternal incompleteness is suggested by this process, since any edition of *Cuban Counterpoint* will only be reflective of the actual composition of the island at the moment of going to press. Later editions would require additions to accommodate exogenous forces and responses to them. Neither are there indications that Ortiz considered the 1963 edition to be a definitive one, thus acknowledging that the process of documenting the transcultural composition of Cuban society is as provisional as the society itself.[57] Nonetheless, an inherent irony exists here because the 1995 edition does not include the added material of the 1963 edition, and whilst Ortiz is no longer alive to continue his work, the criteria for the revised/reduced/final edition of *Cuban Counterpoint* is no longer his own. A poetically justified reason for the omissions could be the 1959 diasporas that have demographically and racially altered the composition of Cuban society.

We cannot and should not attempt to consolidate the indeterminate or provisional structure that informs the counterpoint's structure since this form underpins, and is indicative of the transcultural dynamic of Ortiz's model. The generic ambivalence, suggests, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, has undermined the importance of *Cuban Counterpoint*. Pérez Firmat implies that Ortiz is a crucial literary figure and it is within the literary that the significance of Ortiz's work is fully realised. Nevertheless, if the very essence of *Cuban Counterpoint* is one that resists the generic pigeonholing, why should we now attempt to make this very move when the allegorical composition resists finite meanings?

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[56] Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo Cubano de Tabaco y Azucar*, Direción de Publicaciones (La Habana: Universidad Central de Las Villas, 1963).

[57] The provisional aspect of Ortiz's writing is not exclusive to *Cuban Counterpoint,* but indicative of his other writings. His *Catauro de Cubanismos*, a dictionary of Afro-Cuban terms is introduced as 'Apuntes', notes, and his *Nuevo diccionario de Cubanismos* is referred to as an appendix and '*un ensayo'*. These incomplete forms are also noted by Gustavo Pérez Firmat He extends the metaphor of the 'ensayo' which although refers to an essay, a literal translation of this term also denotes a rehearsal, and this adds to the consistent use of metaphors that suggest sites under construction. See also Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Literature and Liminality: Festive Readings of the Hispanic Tradition* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1986).

Cuban Counterpoint does not present itself as a novel, but as a composite text where 'fragments' of eulogies, epic poetry by Juan de Castellanos (in the 1963 edition),[58] proverbs, anthropological studies of indigenous American and black-African cultures, economic material, and extensive references to accounts by fifteenth and sixteenth century chroniclers of conquest come together through extensive intertextual moves between history and genre. As much as it displays the workings out of a cultural and nationalistic imperative, whilst also engaging in the act of writing. Indeed, Antonio Benítez-Rojo cites Fernand Braudel's views on the differences between interdisciplinary and interscience modalities which, as we shall see, share a great affinity with the blatant if not irreverent intertextual, interdisciplinary mode Ortiz uses; as Braudel states, 'interdisciplinarity is the legal marriage of two neighbouring sciences, I am for general promiscuity'.[59] Ortiz equally opts for promiscuity in the 'unholy' marriage between tobacco and sugar, *Don Carnal* and *Doña Quaresma*, and in the extensive intertextuality in *Cuban Counterpoint.* Benítez-Rojo further recognises that this analytical coming together is typical of our time; mixing 'premodern', 'modern' and 'postmodern' modalities of knowledge which imbue the account with a 'dialogic' and acentric account which is typical of the postmodern texts of today.[60] These views go some way to account for the generic and historical meshing that inform *Cuban Counterpoint* but then the text itself is self explanatory in its intent. Ortiz was not writing during our time but his, and to refer to it now as a postmodern text raises the same questions when defining *Cuban Counterpoint* as a postcolonial text that predates the rise of postcolonial theory. This does not make *Cuban Counterpoint* any less relevant (to either postmodernism or postcolonialism). Instead the text, the manner in which material in brought together, the generic hybridity, together with consideration of Ortiz's loci of enunciation raise valid questions about how to define these texts within a theoretical discipline they predate.

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[58] Juan Castellanos was a conquistador who converted to the priesthood. He also became a poet and documented, in epic form, the slave rebellion on Hispañola, and therefore, although the book is ambivalent about racial matters, it also generates a sentiment of revolt. The omission of Castellanos' epic poem from the 1995 edition raises questions about the selection process in this edition as much as it does about the emphasis given to some issues over others.

[59] Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective,* Second Edition, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 150.

[60] Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, p. 150-151.

Transculturation as a process in which postcolonial identities find expression creates a fluid platform that engages with external forces in its fullest definition, and the impact they have on that society. Instead of dealing with the colonial as one event and the postcolonial, or post independence as another, with a definite divider between both, Ortiz sees external forces (and the changes they instigate) as part of an ongoing and recurrent process, engagements and disengagements from where reassessments are necessary. In this sense, Ortiz's theory comes very close to postcolonial theoretical positions that propose we engage with the postcolonial (particularly in regard to Latin America) as a process of disengagements from the entire colonial syndrome; as a process, rather than a statement, a space is created in which to discuss the wider contexts of colonial and postcolonial experiences.[61] Ortiz precisely does this in dealing with the embeddness of colonial and neo-imperial structures in Cuban society and the attempt of make sense of this amidst the need to present an independent identity. The centrality of race to *Cuban Counterpoint*, and the disavowal of race within Cuban society create tensions that are hard to resolve, particularly when we come to associate the postcolonial text as counter hegemonic and speaking from the margins. Then again, which margin are we dealing with here? Ortiz's locus of annunciation is marginal to North American institutions but not within Cuba where his white bourgeois status defines him. Robert Young, in discussing the nationalistic discourse in postcolonial societies, notes that the status of nationalism operates in two antithetical directions.[62] Ortiz writes from an anti-colonial nationalistic position through which he aims to challenge, even remove the imperialist nationalism. For this he receives a positive endorsement but his position is equally hegemonic within the island and not necessarily based on social or racial equity since he is speaking for sectors of society that do not have a voice.

Although the intellectual's position is fraught with tensions because he is normally located within an elite (or outside his country), raising questions about subaltern agency, the postcolonial intellectual's task has been deconstructed and analysed so that writing has become a very self-conscious enterprise for the intellectual.[63] Ortiz however is not afforded the knowledge of this theoretical

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[61] Peter Hulme, 'Including America' *ARIEL*, Volume 25, Number I, January 1995, p. 120.

[62] Robert J.C.Young, 'The Overwritten Unwritten: Nationalism and its Doubles in Post-Colonial Theory', *(Un)Writing Empire*, ed. Theo D'Haen (Amsterdam, Atlanta: P. Rodopi, 1998), p. 17.

[63] See for example Homi K. Bhabha, 'Interrogating Identity' in *The Location of Culture* and Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'Worldliness-Without-World, Homelessness-as-Home: Towards a Definition of the

postcolonial positioning and as such, his writings are less self-conscious. I would suggest then that we consider Ortiz as a postcolonial intellectual in the making who recognises and articulates the site where issues of identity can be interrogated but is less aware of the complicity inherent in his position. Rather than undermine his work we are presented with a model that discloses the ambivalent and uneven handling of race: as much as Ortiz aims to include all racial and cultural elements, he betrays his own, and his society's concerns about race, and in this way he responds to and reflects the Cuba of his time.

The possibility for postcolonial transformation is an important aspect of *Cuban Counterpoint* because of the potential for change; the concept of recurrent and continual assessments of identity also renders any one notion of identity temporal. All sorts of questions are raised by this suggestion, particularly given the nationalistic drive which demanded, above all, a united cultural and political front. How then is actual racial difference and transformation dealt with in Cuban society? Even as 'all' aspects of society are included at a theoretical level in the discursive frame of *Cuban Counterpoint*, what happens to identity if we shift the frame to that of visual recognition where racial difference cannot remain contained within discourse?

Cuban Counterpoint sets the parameters under which Cuba's racial and cultural diversity was contained and engaged with, leading to the perception of a racially democratic country. The very attempt to present an all-inclusive model is very telling of the awareness of differences, but also the need to incorporate and normalise that difference under nationalistic panoply. I will be examining these issues further in my next chapter by shifting the interrogative frame to that of a performance given by the mulatto poet Nicolás Guillén, to engage with the terms under which black Cuban identities existed in a society, and within a national project that rendered them simultaneously visible and invisible.

Specular Border Intellectual', *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Blackwell, 1992).

3. Black Cultural Identity and The Limits of Racial (In)Visibility.

> And even when it is there without being there, you feel that the spectre is looking, although through a helmet.[1]

3.1

In this chapter I consider the representation of cultural identity from the perspective of the Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén during a recital Guillén gave before the *Sociedad Femenina Lyceum* in 1932, in Havana. Whilst Ortiz displays an anthropological model brought together in discursive moves, his theory does not really give us any idea of the views held by black Cubans, how Afro-Cubans related to the transcultural, or how his model of cultural identity functioned in practice. Neither does Ortiz deal with the very real, although socially and racially displaced, presence of Afro-Cubans, leading me to consider whether Afro-Cubans did or could produce a competing cultural discourse from the margins. To this end, my discussion of Guillén's recital interrogates a hybrid cultural identity from the perspective of an Afro-Cuban. In shifting the frame of interrogation from a text to that of a performance, my aim is to explore the terms under which black Cuban cultural identity finds expression and if this sense of cultural identity operates within the transcultural. As a *mestizo* Guillén is a rather appropriate figure to investigate the extent to which the concept of racial hybridity and syncretic notions of cultural identity come to embody the power relations that inform constructions of cultural identity in colonial and post-colonial Cuba.

Nicolás Guillén's contribution to construction of cultural identity can be traced through his efforts to integrate black poetic aesthetic, and black cultural signifiers in the nationalistic cultural expression. As a socially committed poet, his work brought attention to the racial inequality that was prevalent in Cuba. Still, Guillén's work was also predominantly concerned with racial, cultural, and political unity, a unity, as discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, necessary as a counter colonial position. During the first half of the twentieth century in Cuba, the projection of a united cultural identity was directed against the US neo-imperial advances. This impulse was strongly influenced by José Martí's philosophy that to be Cuban was to be more than

[1] Jacques Derrida, 'Spectres of Marx, *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*, ed. Julian Wolfrey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 144.

black or white and beyond a racially divisive model, thus instilling a sense of cohesion, but as discussed in previous chapters, the 'beyond race' paradigm was open to diverse interpretations. Whilst Martí's values certainly gave rise to the impression of racial equality, they also rendered racial realities invisible and subsumed them within a nationalistic, hegemonic expression.

The need for an 'authentic' cultural identity (one that would not echo European expression and culturally re-colonise the island) in the absence of an autochthonous culture were, as discussed in Chapter Two, central issues. Fernando Ortiz nevertheless compensated for this lack by drawing on black racial and cultural elements and situating them (albeit symbolically, theoretically and aesthetically), as central signifiers of Cuban cultural identity. To this end, Afro-Cubans became signified (in Ortiz's model) as the 'new' autochthonous which then merged with other outside influences to include the Hispanic. The incorporation of a black aesthetic in this nationalistic and anti–imperialistic imperative also entailed the inscription into the national expression of the then European vogue for primitivism and the influential emergence of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States of America. The 'Pan African Congress' organised in Paris in 1919 by W.E.B. DuBois prefigured the emergence of the concept of the 'new negro' in the US through the writings of Alain Locke and others, in Cuba Fernando Ortiz's *Glosario de afronegroismos* (1923), led to promoting and encouraging black artists to use their African heritage. Although all these were moves that led to a wider recognition of black culture, it was the input and influence of a European avant-garde's vogue in the opening decades of the twentieth century for primitivism and all things black, that launched the interest in black creativity (which does not necessarily signify art created by black artists) onto the world stage. More significantly, the European deployment of black signifiers converted them into an aesthetic, thus creating a far more palatable image for consumption in countries of origin such as Cuba and Haiti, and in black communities where black/folk expression had previously been marginalized and underrated for its atavistic elements. Consequently, Guillén's deployment of a black aesthetic needs to be seen alongside the European trend and within the at times paralysing double bind inherent in attempts to forge a 'new' or independent voice in a post-colonial society, with the inevitability (experienced by Latin America writers) of re-inscribing the very

structures they wish to distance themselves from.[2] Although they give rise to problems of authenticity and originality, these tensions can also create 'contested narrative field' which suggests that culture is neither passively nor statically absorbed but actively recreated, reshaped and resignified in a creative response to other aesthetic systems.[3]

With Guillén we are dealing with a socially committed poetry that engaged with the conditions under which black Cubans lived, bringing a marginal, lesser-seen sector of Cuban society to the fore so that the educational, social and cultural issues that black Cubans were subjected to could be recognised and addressed, whilst also celebrating the important African cultural heritage. Guillén expressed these themes through a poetic voice and form that recalled African oral traditions through responsorial techniques of expression that embodied a speaker audience relationship, serving as the oral transmission of community values, religion, and the recitation of history. In merging *bozal*[4] speech and a musical form, the *Son*[5] a poetic genre described as '*un sonar de voces e instrumentos*', [6] Guillén develops the platform for the folkloric and social context of his *sons*. In the use of *son* rhythms with a level of *bozal* speech characterized by apocope (the omission of a word's final sounds), aphaeresis (the omission of the word's initial sounds), metathesis (or transposition),

[2] Roberto Gonzaléz Echevarría explains this dynamic as inherent in Latin American writings as something generically reproduced in every attempt at innovation. 'But as [...] modern Latin American writers denounced Western traditions, their search for a Latin American consciousness and mode of expression became paradoxically more European. And the idea that this or that system of thought, this or that artistic trend, had to be adapted to the Latin American situation more often that not implied oversimplifying that system by inserting it into a familiar code of unanalyzed topics; or, significantly, making Latin America surreptitiously the natural or privileged object of that system or trend –whether it was Existentialism, because Latin America's 'new' history makes it rootless by essence, or surrealism because Latin America is different and arcane'. In *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (1977) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 19-20.

[3] I refer here to Jocelyn Linnekin's theory of a 'contested narrative field' cited in Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), p. 87.

[4] In regard to the deployment of the *bozal* in the son-poems, Ángel Augier, a contemporary, friend, and editor of Guillén's work is careful to de-racialise the use of *bozal* by stating that this form of speech, although associated with Afrocubans, was the norm amongst the lower classes -black or white- in Cuba. It should also be noted that correlations between class and race exist in Cuba and black Cubans would have been over represented in the lower/working classes. The definitions for the Latin American use of *Bozal* in the *Collins Spanish Dictionary* refer to both a *Negro* pure, and speaking a broken Spanish.

[5] See Robin D. Moore's *Nationalizing Blackness*, pp. 87-114 on the emergence of the regional folk genre of the *son* in the metropolis and how it has become representative of the national culture. He also notes that the *son* was the first black street genre to gain national acceptance, and to feature both vocal and musical improvisation together with the use of Afrocuban drums performed with bare hands.

[6] Ángel Augier, 'Los "Sones" de Nicolás Guillén', *El libro de los sones* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, Cuba, 1999), p. 7.

and assimilation of consonants, supplemented by *jitanjáfora*, presumably nonsensical words, and syllabuses employed as phonic signifiers of 'blackness', the polyphony of voices that recall the African experience and the Cuban is developed.[7] As a musical form the *son*, acts as a bridging devise between African and Hispanic musical and poetic forms, but Guillén deliberately chose a genre that had been marginalised to draw attention to the racial discrimination that followed the abolition of slavery; he exposed racial inequalities by adopting a genre of music that had also experienced suppression.[8] At the same time, the *son* operates within Fernando Ortiz's syncretic cultural model, and like tobacco, it functions at a unifying level whilst also denoting a hybrid and transcultural poetic essence.[9] In effect, the *son*-poems stemmed from a black aesthetic and a hybrid poetic language which incorporated both the African and Spanish, and which resonated with the musical rhythms of the *son* and the African drums. Whilst it is the case that Guillén's *sones* are representative of this Cuban syncretism through their generic, linguistic and aesthetic elements, I wonder about the extent to which we can consider this syncretism as conjugal bliss, or whether we should approach this genre and racial model as something that is rather less stable. As the previous chapter on Fernando Ortiz demonstrates, the nationalistic endorsement of racially inclusive models did not necessarily lead to racial equality but rather to a myth of racial democracy. To what extent then, is the *son* a transcultural, hybrid device that gives the impression of racial visibility and agency, and to which does it mask a racial reality that does not enter into a nationalistic discourse of cultural identity? Guillén, as a mulatto poet, is both determined by, and functions within a syncretic nationalistic impulse, and in this sense, he is performing within a racial model that undermines, even understates, his presence, limiting any chance of an identity other than that which fixes him. These are tensions that suggest an unresolved relationship and ones that indicate contested ground.

Guillén's *son* 'Si tú supiera', from his collection *Motivos de son* (1930), also known as 'Sóngoro cosongo' engages with these tensions, dealing with questions of

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[7] Keith Ellis, *Cuba's Nicolás Guillén, Poetry and Ideology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 66.
[8] Keith Ellis, *Cuba's Nicolás Guillén, Poetry and Ideology*, p. 65.
[9] See also Gustavo Pérez Firmat's article 'Nicolás Guillén Between the *Son* and the Sonnet', in *Callaloo*, Volume 10, Number 2, pp. 318-328, which offers a discussion of Guillén's use the sonnet and the madrigal which, although European literary forms, are transformed or 'transculturated' by Guillén who 'adds colour' to them rendering them hybrid. They also become a site where these cultural, linguistic and generic forms interrogate each other.

racial and cultural integration. At the same time, the language Guillén deploys and his topic appear to be challenging the very sense of integration.

> ¡Ay, negra
> si tú supiera!
> Anoche te bi pasá
> y no quise que me biera.
> A é tú le hará como a mí,
> que cuando no tube plata
> te corrite de bachata
> sin accoddate de mí.
>
> Sóngoro cosongo,
> songo be;
> sóngoro cosongo
> de mamey;
> sóngoro la negra
> balia bien;
> sóngoro de uno,
> sóngoro de tre.
> Aé,
> bengan a be;
> aé,
> bamo pa be;
> bengan, sóngoro cosongo,
> sóngoro cosongo de mamey![10]
>
> [Hey, babe,
> if you only knew!
> Last night I saw you pass by,
> And I didn't let you see me.
> You'll do to him what you did to me,
> when I ran out of money
> you took off with another honey
> and forgot all about me.
>
> Sóngoro cosongo,
> songo, see;
> Sóngoro cosongo
> like mamey;
> Sóngoro, the black babe
> dances well.
> Sóngoro one,
> sóngoro three.
> Ae,
> all come'n see;

[10] Nicolás Guillén, 'Si tú supiera', from 'Motivos de son', *El libro de los sones* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1999), p. 49.

ae,
all come'n see;
Come, sóngoro cosongo,
Sóngoro cosongo like mamey.][11]

The translatability (linguistic) of this poem is an issue, for how does one translate the *bozal* speech without converting it in to Americanised black slang with a blues rhythm? (Langston Hughes also translated Nicolás Guillén's poetry and this issue becomes further evident in the *son* 'Negro Bembon' discussed below).[12] The deployment of phrases such as 'Sóngoro cosongo' further challenges translation since we are faced with either a neologism which has no translation, or by terminology that is enclosed by its own cultural parameters. Consequently, how do we know what the *jitanjáfora* of the final stanza means, or is this just a sonorous refrain devoid of meaning? There is also the question of how this *son*-poem translates the Cuban black experience onto the transcultural, 'more than black or white' Cuban society. The poem presents the lament of a black speaker who has been jilted by his lover and is lurking in the shadows as she passes with her new lover. He is telling his ex-lover that the previous night he saw her pass with another man but he did not want to be seen, and so refrained from calling out her name; instead, he stood back in the shadows. His dialogue however, is in the subjunctive tense, '*si tú supiera*' ('if you only knew'), and he may well not be speaking directly to anybody other than to himself. Consequently, he is not being heard, and neither is he being seen. As Roberto González Echevarría points out, his lover had also forgotten him, so he is invisible to the night.[13] Thus there is an issue here about being seen and about being heard. The 'Africanisation' of language together with the *bozal* speech are difficult to decipher, suggesting a coded world determined by a language that is rather (en)closed by the social and racial parameters of the speakers, but always echoing and recalling the wider context of their heritage and another linguistic system, one that we are not privy to. Whilst the *sones* generic conventions suggest a syncretism, the dynamic displayed in the *son*

[11] Translation of poem from 'Guillén as Baroque: Meaning in *Motivos de son*', by Roberto González Echevarria, p. 312, *Callaloo* No 31, Volume 10, No.2, Spring 1987.
[12] I have included here the full English translations of 'Sóngoro cosongo' and 'Negro Bembon' as a way to note the cultural influences and differences between black aesthetics as well as those between the Harlem Renaissance and the Afro- Cuban movements. Common ground certainly existed between both groups, but diverse cultural, geopolitical, historical and linguistic imperatives inform black expression in each country. The translation of *bozal* as Americanised black slang goes some way to denote this point.
[13] Roberto González Echevarría, 'Guillén as Baroque: Meaning in *Motivos de son*', p. 312.

'Sóngoro cosongo' draws our attention to layers of meanings and references that function outside the transcultural. Rather than a bridging device, the *son* also appears to be privileging and withholding knowledge.

The question of accessibility is raised when each stanza is written in a different (coded?) language. Whilst the poems are products of their historical moment which can give rise to the possibility of misreading linguistics or semiotics, the question of language and meaning of the refrain in the second stanza is much discussed, with Ángel Augier, the Cuban critic and editor of Guillén's work referring to the 'Sóngoro cosongo' as a 'sonorous refrain', and Mirta Aguirre further considering the refrain to be 'purely sonorous facts'.[14] This could well be, but an ambiguous site is mapped where meaning escapes us even as a loaded space which echoes drums and stereotypical imagery of African perceptions is recalled. Although loaded, meaning slips away without giving too much away and the actual nature of the 'sonorous refrain' is never really disclosed.

It is certainly true that African languages in Cuba have a religious function, and are used in Cuban syncretic religious rituals. These play an important role in reinforcing a cohesive Afro-Cuban identity and have provided the resilience and hope to survive the brutality of slavery, and the fight for freedom. As such, a political content cannot be discounted from such a refrain since the languages it may recall signify histories of displacement, slavery, survival and resistance. Still, African religious codes were not readily disclosed but withheld. This ensured the survival of such traditions as well as signalling a form of resistance to their position as slaves and to conversion. For this reason we find African deities finding expression through a dual process of identification in which Roman Catholic saints provide an acceptable front for the deities secreted behind them. This dissimulated and diffused their significance, even their visibility but ensured the survival of African religious codes albeit in their present duality.[15] Consequently, questions are raised as to levels of meaning the *sones* may carry and their accessibility. If Guillén's *son* is informed by a device intended to dissimulate, then only a specific readership would be equipped to fully extract meaning, particularly if we consider the sonorous refrain, which suggests

[14] Cited by, Roberto Gonzálaz Echevarría, 'Guillén as Baroque: Meaning in *Motivos de son*', p. 313. Both Ángel Augier and Mirta Aguirre were contemporaries of Guillén, and they, together with José Antonio Portondo founded the cultural journal *Gaceta del Caribe* in 1944.

[15] See Miguel Barnet *Cultos Afrocubanos: La Regla de Ocha, La Regla de Palo Monte* (El Vedado, Cuidad de La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1995), for an excellent and extensive study of Afrocuban religions.

a visible concealment rather than a smooth syncretism, and a poem that is encrypted. I would suggest that the *sones* are playing about with two schemes, two systems. The transcultural certainly informs the syncretism of the genre in which the African and the Hispanic come together to form the Cuban, but then, perhaps this model assumes too much about the terms under which a united Cuban cultural identity can be asserted. 'Sóngoro cosongo' operates alongside the transcultural as it displays the Afro-Cuban aesthetic whilst also engaging with notions that are concerned with accessibility and non-accessibility, as with racial visibility and invisibility in a country where race was certainly an issue, and a disconcertingly visible one at that, in spite of a nationalistic rhetoric which buried it within a syncretic rhetoric.

During the Wars of Independence, Afro-Cubans had been permitted to take an active role principally because the white Creole needed the numbers to be able to mount a war against Spain, whilst for the slaves, the Wars of Independence were intrinsically linked to their emancipation within a Cuban republic. Still, the white Creoles were ever fearful of the visibility of the black army and of the black rising up against them. As stated in my previous chapters, estimates suggested that between fifty to seventy five percent of all troops during the wars were black.[16] Deep-seated tensions existed between the white Creole leadership and a largely black army, led by strong black leaders such as Antonio Maceo. Fears that the black component of the army would rise up against the Creoles contributed to the inconclusive end of the First War of Independence in 1878 with the signing of the Treaty of Zanjón, giving rise to the general feeling that the Creoles had ended the war because they feared a black presence more than they did Spanish rule. The perceived threat of a visible blackness found further expression in the 1912 'Race War' in which nearly 5,000 Afrocubans were massacred.[17] Therefore, Afro-Cuban cultural repression in the early Republic presented itself in the physical removal of black visibility either through a nationalistic rhetoric that legitimised massacres such as the 1912 Race War, or the suppression of Afro-Cuban cultural expression by the police. African derived religions were feared because they organised black unity, but were also banned because they signified a supposed pathological inferiority of blacks. José Martí's foundational discourse was therefore open to interpretation and manipulation by

[16] Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*, p. 22.
[17] See Introduction/Chapter One, p. 22 for fuller details of the 1912 Race War.

different groups. Those wishing to contain racial issues within a marginal position would argue that to speak of racial differences would be irrelevant, any black Cuban attempt at political mobilization, or demands for racial equality could be seen as 'racist' and un-national. Correlation between race and class also existed (and still exists), with many black working class Cubans living marginal existences in *solares,* slums, in the back streets of Havana where social and sanitary conditions, and matters concerning health and education were never addressed at a national level because they remained hidden away. To discuss black issues as something separate from the national was contentious, but the reality was that it was mainly Afro-Cubans who lived in the worst conditions. Consequently their options were either to remain silent, or to join the poor white in a class based solidarity action. This mode of protest was also the only form of action available to the rising black middle class.[18]

How then does Guillén, as a mulatto but visibly black poet operate within this dynamic of (in)visibility? How can he project his work when contained within a discourse that appropriates black cultural expression without racial equality, whilst also challenging and bringing to the fore the very essence of blackness that the national rhetoric wished to render invisible?

3.2

When Guillén's *Motivos de son* – his first selection of *son*-poems- were published in 1930, they were a literary success. They were published in the Cuban newspaper *Diario de la Marina's* supplementary column 'Ideales de una Raza', under a remit that specifically dealt with the social and cultural problems of the black population.[19] Guillén contributed regularly to this paper; I would further suggest that the context of this medium/forum was fully empathetic with the content of the *son*-poems. The *Motivos de son* also received critical attention as a literary 'find', '*en que constituían un hallazgo, algo así como un descubrimiento de una formula de expresión poética*

[18] Rosalie Schwartz, 'Cuba's Roaring Twenties: Race Consciousness and the Column 'Ideales de una Rasa', in *Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution*, eds. Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), p. 105.

[19] Ángel Augier, in his prologue to Nicolás Guillén's *El libro de los sones* describes the supplement 'Ideales de una raza' as being geared towards generating social awareness about the cultural, racial and social problems of the black population. Keith Ellis states that *Diario de la Marina* was the establishment's slavery supporting newspaper although Gustavo E. Urruita, through his persistent efforts, managed to get the *Diario de La Marina*, beginning in March 1928, to create the page entitled 'Ideales de una Raza,' dedicated to the cultural interests of the black community. It was through Urruita's efforts that Guillén published the *Motivos de son.* Keith Ellis, *Cuba's Nicolás Guillén, Poetry and Ideology*, p. 63.

genuinamente cubana, tanto en la forma como en el contenido'.[20] They became a cultural discovery, and indeed cultural property, appropriated and assimilated into a canonical structure. The attachment of the discovery motif also raises a number of issues. Discovery and archaeology are tropes that are central to Fernando Ortiz's transculturation since they facilitate the creation of autochthonous people where there was none. The fact is that Ortiz did not 'discover' Cuban identity, instead articulating a racial and historical cultural dynamic, but it is nevertheless interesting that Guillén's poetry should be considered as a discovery when it was a publication. Perhaps the discovery trope relates to more than just the publication, but also reveals a black poetic voice that would not generally achieve mainstream recognition. The deployment of the discovery trope as a means to legitimise the entry of 'newness' into the national consciousness is also noteworthy, with this particular return to a myth of origins indicating an eternal recurrence of sorts, but also suggests that the only viable option available to write oneself into being is through the discursive act of discovery. This is a move that attempts to dig behind a colonial, hegemonic discursive baggage to recover some authenticity (the digging suggesting the uncovering of an archaeological find, *un hallazgo*), as much as it is informed by invention and intertextual references. That canonical inclusion is also driven by 'acts of discovery' is telling of the hegemonic attachment to the colonial 'invention' of Cuba.

But whilst the *sones* became a national treasure and widely read, they also remain(ed) both misplaced and encrypted. We are dealing with distinct notions; on the one hand, the remit of the 'Ideales de una raza' and the stability of the *son*-poems, and on the other, the critical acclaim of the *son*-poems as *'un hallazgo'*. In the supplement 'Ideales de una raza', black issues are brought to the fore not necessarily as cultural celebration but as a forum for the discussion of social and other problems encountered by blacks. Rather than a prominent engagement with race, these issues appear to have been dealt with in *Diario de la Marina*, in a supplementary, if not marginal context. A supplement therefore, by its very nature, does not appear in the front pages but is either appended at the end, or hidden away between the pages or other columns. Still, Guillén's *sones*, although supplementary (between the pages/hardly visible) also become some sort of mythical national find (because they are hidden away), a find which then becomes cultural property and appropriated as artefact. Whilst these two

[20] Ángel Augier, 'Los "Sones" de Nicolás Guillén', in Nicolás Guillén, *El libro de los sones* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1999), p. 19.

drives are inextricably intertwined, we can see the articulation and perception of a black aesthetic within the national and political scheme, and the search for black identity as two separate things.[21] If we consider the emergence of an Afro-Cuban aesthetic and sensibility as precisely '*un hallazgo*' an archaeological find, and something that is catalogued, as artefact or part of a syncretic intertextuality (as in Ortiz's model), any elements of black cultural identity become converted into national cultural property, thus forming part of the nationalistic discourse. In the projection of cultural unity and racial equality, the separate quest for black identity is never fully addressed, raising questions over whether Cuban and cultural black identity are the same thing, and rendering a semblance of black identity visible only as a stereotypical artefact but invisible as people in their own right.

This does not prevent the poetry from operating at a distinct 'other' level, one that functions outside the national scheme and the perpetuation of black stereotypes since the *sones* display a proliferation of voices and discourses that are sometimes present through their inevitable antecedence, and others which are encrypted in the poems themselves. My contention is that Guillén's poetry plays on and manipulates the very stereotypical structures that constrain and define black cultural identity within a united *mestizo* one. In doing so, he produces a competing discourse that challenges syncretic models of cultural identity and indeed, *el mestizaje* as a construct of cultural and national unity. I will argue in the next section that Guillén's poetry is not a stable exercise of cultural expression, but a site which draws attention to the ambivalent situation of a black writer, who, once contained within the hegemonic discourse, becomes split between the imperative of a poetic voice within the Cuban nationalistic drive, and that of a black/Afro-Cuban search for cultural identity. My discussion will concentrate on an event that Guillén attended in which he performed the ambivalence of his blackness in Cuba, one which impacted as much on the themes and protagonist of his poems as it did on his own identity.

[21] The invisibility of race can be extended to the terms under which issues race and Afro-Cuban culture were reported within the press in the early 1900. Although open-letters or interviews of Afro-Cuban leaders appeared occasionally in the press, black presence was, in general, confined in each paper to the small section called *Crónicas de las sociedades de color* , which reported on social activities. In direct contrast to this, Afro-Cuban presence was highly visible in the news on crime which always mentioned the race if the perpetrator was black or mulatto. See Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 106-7.

3.3

> The spectre, as the name indicates, is the frequency of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The spectre is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects – on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see.
>
> Jacques Derrida [22]

On 20th September 1932 Nicolás Guillén was invited into the presence of the *Sociedad Femenina Lyceum*, in Havana, where he recited a selection of his poetry, which included *son*-poems from his *Motivos de son* (1930), *Sóngoro Cosongo* (1931), and a selection of other poems that would be published in 1934 as part of his *West Indies Ltd* collection. Whilst this may appear as a regular poetry reading (and perhaps its audience expected it to be), it also involved a preamble, in four parts, in which Guillén located himself and his poetry. His audience consisted of mainly white bourgeois women and quite possibly their husbands or some male guests. The *Sociedad Femenina* was founded in 1929, and was based on feminine principles rather than feminist ones because they believed that equality had been achieved in Cuba, and in this sense, the Lyceum embraced and extended the Cuban national remit of unity to that of gender equality. These women were also very involved in the type of social and charity work that their bourgeois positioning afforded them; although in a privileged position in racial and class based terms, their situation proves somewhat ambivalent when, in a 1935 pamphlet they were keen to demonstrate that their activities were not intended as a direct challenge to men's position in Cuban society, or to exclude men from the Lyceum's activities.

The pamphlet published to commemorate their *Primer Fiesta Intellectual de la Mujer*, in 1935, and read out during their conference celebrated in Havana:

> *Aunque se trata de una sociedad de mujeres, creada y sostenida por mujeres, no se prohibe la entrada a los hombres, antes bien, pueden asistir como invitados a todos los actos del club y tomar parte como colaboradores en sus múltiples actividades. [...] Las mujeres que dirigen el Lyceum desde sus comienzos se encuentran muy lejos de preconizar el femenismo de lucha y hostilidad hacia el hombre, que, si bien fué necesario en los tiempos de una*

[22] Jacques Derrida, 'Spectres of Marx', *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*, p. 144.

Pankhurst, pertenece ya a la historia, después de haber cumplido su misión profunda. Por el contrario, ha entrado ya el feminismo en una etapa constructiva y se ha incorporado en sus alas más avanzadas a los movimientos sociales del presente.[23]

From this it seems evident that gender equality, like the racial unity paradigm, was informed by the national drive for the incorporation of all sectors. The need to reiterate the position of women in Cuban society betrays ambivalence regarding presumed gender equality, and rather points towards a gap between the ethos and the practice. The above statement suggests a tentative need for male support and approval in the Lyceum's activities. To ban men outright as male societies often ban women could have jeopardised their society. In a setting therefore that is already loaded with presumed but questionable gender equality, Guillén presented his work. The coming together of these dynamics presents an interesting forum for what was to follow.

Guillén commenced by meditating on what he described as '*la sustancia de que está hecho un secretario privado*'. Why you may ask, and what relationship would a private secretary have to the occasion? But still, he discussed the merits of a private secretary, and not merely any secretary, a profession that generically has been considered as a women's post and possibly generated some empathy from his audience. Yet, this is no ordinary secretary as Guillén's full description suggests:

Muchas veces he meditado largamente sobre la sustancia de que está hecho un secretario privado. Sospecho que no sea de una pasta rígida, sino de esa miel pegajosa, que obsede la imaginación tropical de las moscas y que se les hacen hilos torturadores entre las patas.[24]

So here we have the presence of a private secretary who by his very composition is far from solid, made of something like honey that drips; it is a substance that is almost translucent, but is also slippery and sticky, almost like a Venus fly trap, which presents itself as a beautifully harmless presence but mercilessly entraps at the same time. It is also a presence that tortures the imagination, perhaps because it eludes

[23] *Lyceum: Memoria de los trabajos presentado a la "Primera Festival Intellectual de la Mujer"* 1935, (Imprenta "El Siglo XX", Teniente Rey 27, Habana), p. 7. Document downloaded from: http://digital.library.miami.edu/images/chc/chc0124/jpgs_h/01240000140003001_h.jpg

[24] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', *Cuba: En el ala de nuestro tiempo* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1995), p. 14.

fixity. One is therefore never really sure whether he is actually harmless or lethal. By his very nature he is not often seen, he is not the public face but the private one. I would suggest that the fluidity of the honey as it drips recalls Dalí's soft watches in *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), where spatial and temporal boundaries become fluid and merge, just as the private secretary merges into the background. He resides in shadows and corridors, ever present to his boss, but also in his shadow. He is secretive and elusive in essence, moves noiselessly, surreptitiously and is ever ready to bid his master's needs. As such, whilst barely tangible (even visible) and always slippery (even sticky), he is the one who mediates between the public demands for appointments and interviews with his boss, and he is also the one that frustrates them since *'[]son ellos también quienes pican el hilo de un compromiso en forma tan sutil y con una navaja tan discreta, que cuando queremos tirar de él, sólo nos queda un trozo entre las manos'.* [25] Guillén provides a commentary complete with imagery of an invisible hand that leaves no trace of the part he played in this.

I suppose at this point we are asking ourselves, as the audience possibly was, why Guillén is discussing this enigmatic, machiavellian presence of the private secretary in this particular occasion and to this audience of mainly white bourgeois women. But this 'personage' will just not go away; in fact, he emphasises the closeness between the private secretary and his boss to the extent that *'[d]esde un personaje hasta su secretario, siempre media un corredor estrecho, nocturon a pleno día'.* [26] Their closeness is such that they are two parts of the same person. The private secretary instinctively knows when to concede appointments and when not to, *'[y] es que el camino de un secretario conduce a todas partes, menos al despacho de su jefe. Amable, ductile, cortés, ese hombre multiplicado por sí mismo nos va tirando suavemente de la manga hasta ponernos en la calle'.*[27] This is carried out in such a pleasant manner that the dejected caller complies without a fuss.

The private secretary can also certainly wield power, such as the power behind the throne, with Guillén drawing an analogy between this and Antonio Pérez, secretary to Felipe II. According to Guillén, Antonio Pérez was much cleverer, and much more powerful than his master, the King of Spain, the architect of Spain's

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[25] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p.14.
[26] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p.14.
[27] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', pp. 14-15.

colonial expansion. So much so, that: '*generalmente, el secretario tiene más talento que el señor a quien sirve. Unas veces, lo completa. Otras, lo integra*'.[28] Who then is in control here, the secretary or the boss, when, after all, the secretary is much cleverer, handsomer, and has the power? Are these two halves of the same person, one being contained within the other, with one (or the other) being more visible at any convenient moment in time? And certainly, when it comes to being in control, who would want to be in charge, when instead they could really be in charge without actually being seen to be so. All that is needed to demonstrate this is to '*sonreír con esa pálida sonrisa que sólo tienen los que ríen a carcajadas por dentro*'.[29] Thus, the secretary, through sly civility and plenty of real politicking, is a figure to be admired. As Guillén explains,

> *No pienso en él sin asimilarlo a un puñal florentino de puño labrado y hoja fina, de esos que no dejan más que un boton de sangre cuando hieren. Para mí, el secretario de Felipe II es una obra de arte.*[30]

And with this move, and in one silent swoop, as if by magic, certainly through sleight of hand, Guillén has performed a vanishing act.

From that moment the person addressing the audience ceased to acknowledge himself as Nicolás Guillén, but continued his speech in the third person, and not as Guillén, but as Guillén's private secretary. Indeed, 'Guillén's private secretary' asks the audience to be sure that they have given 'his' preamble its due attention, since it was absolutely necessary to account for his presence (or absence) in their gathering. Since this discourse was initially given as a talk and poetry recital, the issue of visibility is significant here. The audience were fully aware that 'Guillén the poet' was in their presence (see figure 1), but he did not acknowledge himself as such. Instead 'he' continued to refer to Guillén in the third person for the duration of the speech, which involved a discourse on race, an interview with the 'poet' by the 'poet's private secretary', a recital of Guillén's poetry, followed by a critical analysis of each of the poems recited by the 'private secretary' himself, whoever 'he' might

[28] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p.15.
[29] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p.15.
[30] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p.15.

Figure 1. Nicolás Guillén. Photograph from Martha Cobb, *Harlem, Haiti, and Havana: A Comparative Critical Study of Langston Hughes, Jacques Roumain, Nicolás Guillén*, Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, Inc, 1979.

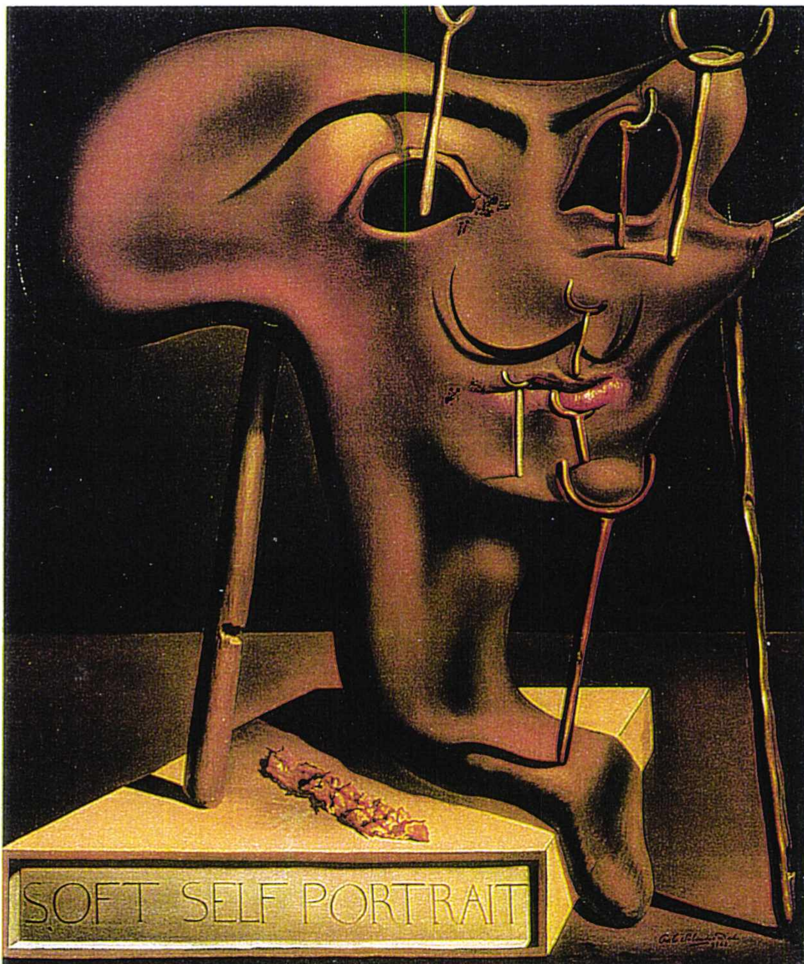

Figure 2. Salvador Dalí, *Soft-Self Portrait with Fried Bacon* (1941), from Gilles Néret, *Dalí*, Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994.

have been at this stage. The question of identity is further compounded by the fact that his private secretary now in their presence does not give himself a name beyond this professional title, as perhaps a teacher would do leading to a somewhat didactic element in his presentation.

To be sure, this had the effect of rendering him both visible in his actual physical self, but also invisible; a spectre of himself, the visibility of the invisible private secretary, with all his talents. Just as Felipe II's secretary was a work of (Guillén's) art, the private secretary became the performance of self-constructed identity. I would suggest that 'Guillén's private secretary' presents himself as a masterpiece somewhat like Dalí's *Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon* (1941), (see figure 2), which Dalí described as an 'anti-psychological self-portrait'[31]. Dalí stated that 'instead of painting the soul, -the inside- [he] wanted to paint solely the outside: the envelope, the glove of [him]self'.[32] And although Guillén discloses the very elusive presence of the private secretary and his attributes, the private secretary is still the "go between", the one who prevents the outside world from getting too close to the poet himself. Instead of the 'poet', who is now decentred, we are confronted by the centred, but barely visible presence of 'the private secretary'. The very definition points towards a presence that is secretive and elusive; it is also something sharper but never quite real because his visibility depends on his being a work of art. Perhaps we can extend this to Guillén himself: whilst being visible in some shape or form as a black man, this appearance also elicits stereotypical constructions of blackness that render his actual identity invisible, but this conceptual act on the visibility and fluidity of identity are dependant on the performance, and the audience's receptiveness to his 'act'.

Whilst presenting us with a diffused version of 'Guillén the poet', this device also offers the possibility to discuss issues of race in the third person removed. In making 'himself' 'absent' from the room of mainly white women, he also renders his blackness invisible and non-threatening; this is now replaced by the slippery image of the 'private secretary'. And on an island where identity is beyond race, if we remove blackness and whiteness, is the Cuban then rendered invisible? Dalí's self-portrait is a shield that protects the inner psychological self, but it also acts like a glove, an in-between, that reduces the outer visibility of the self whilst presenting an (other)

[31] Salvador Dalí cited in Gilles Néret, *Dalí* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994), p. 59.
[32] Salvador Dalí cited in Gilles Néret, *Dalí,* p. 59.

image. In this case, Guillén the mulatto, but essentially the visibly black poet, becomes 'invisible' in some way to his audience. He is no longer the Caliban who threatens to rape them, but neither does he feminise himself. With these Calibanesque elements neutralised, he asserts himself as the Caliban that has been reclaimed for the Caribbean;[33] he subverts the prescribed role, deploys language to launch attacks, and manipulates his heritage to his benefit. As such, although 'he', this 'private secretary' presents a benign front, an amiable one that is non-threatening, this dual position that oscillates between visibility and invisibility enable the delivery of a racially informed discourse which would have otherwise been difficult. Although this group of women do not share equal rights in terms of the patriarchy, we are presented with an unusual dynamic. The ladies of the *Lyceum* were very concerned with furthering women intellectually and culturally; Guillén's talk or lecture, whilst forming part of their cultural mission, also falls within their educational remit. Can we see these ladies then, on the one hand, as Mirandas from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* when performing their social work, whilst also noting that on this occasion the roles are reversed as Caliban instructs these ladies on race relations and poetry. But this is more subversive still, because the bringing together of Caliban and Miranda under one roof was Prospero's biggest fear, one that is fulfilled on this occasion with Caliban in a position of influence. And who is the 'private secretary' in relation to this? Could he –but then, are we assuming too much about his gender, and even too much about his race, for how do we know if s/he's black or white when realistically speaking, s/he could be neither or both, and for all these reasons could this personage be our Ariel? The one who pulls the strings and snips them? Although it was always Prospero who was seen to be in power, Ariel performed all the magic and had the real power which Prospero wanted to harness. Has Prospero been usurped here with Ariel and Caliban forming an unholy alliance?

The race discourse comes to the fore in section three of the lecture/poetry recital; it is difficult to generically fix this when analysing it in its printed form, because the performance would have given it a certain essence; the event/recital defies any single genre whilst conforming to a number of them, although the presentation was clearly never about anything else but race. In it 'Guillén's secretary' reflects on the 'two mentalities' present in Cuba, arguing against the segregation of

[33] See Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Caliban and other Essays* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) and this dissertation's Introduction/Chapter One.

race and the polarisation of a white and a black mentality. Guillén urges them all to resist segregation, primarily because of real fears of the ghettoisation of black Cubans together with the need to present a unified front to resist the *yanqui* threat.[34] Nevertheless, we are very much aware of 'his' two mentalities, voices, as 'his' dual presence; one that suggests that to be black and Cuban are two different concepts, and whilst the beyond race rhetoric is seductive, a disjunction exists between the theory and practice. Guillén's performance discloses a deep-seated split in the terms under which difference, racial or gender, surface within syncretic models of cultural identity such as Ortiz's transculturation. Although Ortiz recognises difference and indeed, transculturation depends on the continual integration of the exogenous into the local, the absorption of diversity, rather than celebrating individual components, appears instead to render individuality and difference invisible within a model of cultural identity that demands prescription. Since concepts of cultural identity such as *el mestizaje* and transculturation are closely linked to a nationalistic drive, operating outside such rhetoric, as the 1912 Race War demonstrated, could be dangerous and considered as racist. Guillén's poetry demonstrates an awareness of the double bind inherent in concepts such as *el mestizaje*. The codified and double voiced elements in the *sones* perform a duality that is intent on reaching both a black and white audience, whilst also meeting the nationalistic demands. As the 'private secretary' continues, '*[s]obre todo nuestros quebrados sociales están reducidos a un comun denominador, que es el espíritu. Cuba no tiene un espíritu negro ni un espirítu blanco*'.[35] Although these are comments that support José Martí's doctrine, can we take this at face value when in the next sentence he intercedes rather guardedly: '*Para mí – porque no sé lo que piense Guillén – el concepto de raza es ambicioso y circular*'.[36] On the one hand, the very circularity of race resists a static racial composition, and supports the transcultural theory developed by Fernando Ortiz, in that Cuban culture is constantly in flux (unfinished and continually reformulating) as more elements are added to it.

[34] Racial segregation was increasingly evident in Cuba during the 1920s and 1930s; the question of black ghettoization and that of Cuba as a nation state were parallel concerns. Cuban intellectuals and writers, including Nicolás Guillén, were concerned that a sole perception of Cuba as an Afrocuban culture would suggest an imitation of New York's Harlem, leading to the cultural ghettoization of Cuba. Implicitly suggested however in this resistance was the fear that Cuba could potentially also become a ghetto of the United States.

[35] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p. 16-17.

[36] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p. 17.

By the same token, however, the 'private secretary' also creates distance between this, and an ambitiousness, which also suggests something unreachable or unrealistic, and a circularity that creates myths of racial democracy whilst avoiding tangible engagement with racial issues.

'He' further stresses the fact that Cubans should not delude themselves over this race question, for after all, in Cuba race is not a 'pure' science, and neither races (black or white) have managed to keep themselves unadulterated; '*¿Se ha mantenido puro, limpio, sin mezcla? No*'.[37] Whilst it is the case that the race paradigm evoked a beyond colour ethos, white was always more highly valorised that black, just as his audience, because of its bourgeois composition, was probably more white than black. Given this dynamic 'he'/ 'Guillén'/ 'the private secretary' blackens the question of race, and his audience, in an outward projection of his colour: '*[a]qui todos somos algo multalo en lo íntimo, y no esta distante el día en que también lo seamos a flor de piel*'.[38] With this move 'he' blackens his audience and outs any genes they may have had hidden away in their closets, thus reversing the colour emphasis. An impression is given that 'Guillén' is operating within the beyond race paradigm, but always engaging with its ambivalence as a working model and subverting it through the duality of his presence. The audience, as the present day reader of the event, soon realises that Guillén's speech emanates from a split divided self that is acutely aware of the discourse that informs it, as of the ambivalent position of black (self) representation. Guillén is constantly deploying tricks to reflect this back at this audience/readership. This would have impacted on the perception if not reception on Guillén's poetry as it holds up a mirror to Cuban society, including Afrocubans and his audience.

Just as the above performance in all its theatricality is intended to question perceived notions of black identity, and even challenge the premise on which white identity is maintained, the sense of performance becomes much more heightened when he/they move on to recite a selection of *sones* which in themselves are mini-dramas if not reflections in a particular stereotypical sense of the social interactions

[37] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p. 17.
[38] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p. 17.

and conflicts that exist amongst '*la masa*'.[39] These masses are predominantly black as are the protagonists of his *son*-poems, which Roberto González Echevarría describes as meta-theatrical because these protagonists have already been codified by a Cuban theatrical and literary tradition. Therefore, when they speak, there is a double distancing. The jilted lover in 'Si tú supiera', the mulatta, the pimp, are stereotypes, and this heightens their artificiality because of their dependence on the given codes on which black Cuban culture has been objectified, one that exists through the projection of a dominant white majority.[40] To what extent then does Guillén, through the figure of the private secretary, resist the projection of his audience? 'He' is also dealing with the manner in which these prejudices become internalised by the black Cubans as by the speakers in the *son*-poems who continue to perpetuate them, and feel ashamed and inferior because of their 'actual' visibility: one that physically determines them as other. Because 'he' is himself a work of art whose artificiality has been totally heightened from the onset (but whose visibility is always Guillén's), when the 'private secretary' recites 'Guillén's' *son*-poem 'Negro Bembon', in the *Lyceum*, the double distancing continues and compounds the poem's meta-theatricality.

> ¿Po qué te pone tan brabo
> cuando te disden Negro bembón,
> si tiene la boca santa,
> negro bembón?
>
> Bembón asi como ere
> tiene de to;
> Caridá te mantiene,
> te lo da to.
>
> Te queja todabía,
> negro bembón;
> sin pega y con harina,
> negro bembón;
>
> majagua de dri blanco,
> negro bembón;
> sapato de do tono,
> negro bembón...
>
> Bembón así como ere

[39] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p. 18.
[40] Roberto González Echevarria (1987), 'Guillén as Baroque: Meaning in *Motivos de son*', p. 311.

tiene de to;
Caridá te mantiene,
te lo da to.

(Translated title: 'Thick-Lipped Cullud Boy')

How come you jumps salty
When they calls you thick-lipped boy,
If yo' mouf's so sweet,
thick-lipped cullud boy?

Thick-lipped as you is
you got everything.
Charity's payin' yo' keep.
She's givin' you all you need.

Still you go around beefin'
thick-lipped cullud boy.
No work an' plenty of money,
thick-lipped cullud boy.
White suit jes' spotless,
thick-lipped cullud boy.
Shoes two shades o'honey,
thick-lipped cullud boy.

Thick-lipped as you is
you got everything.
Charity's payin' yo' keep,
She's givin'you all you want.

(Translated by Langston Hughes)

This mini drama is about a black man who is ashamed of his thick lips because his physiognomy contains him in a degraded aesthetic; one that makes him too visible within a society that is centred on Caucasian valorisations. The speaker on the other hand, who is also black, is questioning this rationalisation since the thick-lipped boy is alienated from wider society because of his under-valorised looks. More significantly though, he is alienating himself from his own cultural and racial background by being ashamed of his looks. Consequently, this is a story of cultural alienation and of the strained social relations between blacks. The suggestion here is that the boy is a pimp. He is certainly not working but living off a woman who keeps him in sharp clothes (again the two tone shoes and sharp suit stereotypically bracket him but make him visible as the black pimp), but the dramatisation of this story also holds a dual purpose. Whilst it holds up a mirror to reveal an image to the

audience/readership to expose the depictions as the projection of their own prejudices, the mini drama also reveals an image to the Afro-Cubans themselves (which must be painful since it is also critical), of their own internalisation of these prejudices, ones that have led to a feeling of inferiority and shame towards their own black cultural identity.

But then, this particular poem as read out for the Lyceum is also a meta-meta theatrical performance (!) as was the critical analysis that followed it, and the mock interview between 'Guillén's private secretary' and 'Guillén', in which the private secretary declared; '*Pero esto no es más que que el bloque lírico*'.[41] What does this mean? Is 'he' underrating the poet's own poetry, or is it the case that the audience has been seduced into their performative trap, like flies to honey? All that remains is to draw a curtain on the act and let the audience obsess, like the flies, about the meaning of it all; a meaning which both 'poet' and 'secretary' refuse to give an ultimate definition to because even the critical analysis never really unpacks meaning but becomes rather circular. As such, at this stage, 'they' say no more, as if that were really possible, suggesting that just enough has been revealed through reciting the poems, and all that remains is to contemplate (not without irony) the success of the *Motivos de son* in a mock interview:

> GUILLÉN:- *He triunfado por fin. Tengo un modo propio de expression,distinto de todas las voces que oigo.*
> YO:- *Pues haces mal en pensar así. No tienes más que una piedra ruda, cuya escoria te impide ver le carne íntima del bloque.*
> GUILLÉN:- *Publicaré un libro...*
> YO:- *¡No debes publicarlo!*
> *Y no lo publicó. Publicó un folleto, con la cual nuestra disputa quedó tablas. Aquellos poemas eran ciertamente una interesante novedad, pero que había que moler con vigor para extraerle el zumo íntimo.*[42]

I wonder the extent to which this was a novelty of interest or an interesting novelty? Whilst this appears as comic theatre, no clarification is offered; no punch line will reveal meaning except that the very meta-performance of the event enacts, as we would now say, a Derridian feat in that Guillén is performing the very dynamic informing race and identity rather than spelling it out. In this vein, he parodies the

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[41] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', p. 19.
[42] Nicolás Guillén, 'Conferencia pronunciada en la sociedad femenina Lyceum, de La Habana, el 20 febrero de 1932', pp. 19-20.

reception of the *son*-poems, mimicking the commentary that possibly some of their audience would have made, rendering the poem both accessible –in its recitation- but also refusing to comply in deciphering them. In terms of visibility, even a book would have been too much, and as such, the *Motivos de Son* was published in the Sunday supplement 'Ideales para una raza' of *Diario de la Marina.* The exchange takes place under the veil of sly civility, an engagement that complies with the terms of engagement introduced in the preamble to the presentation of the 'private secretary', where no guarantees of clarity were made, in fact the opposite, and where any attempts to access the personage/the poet, would always be mediated or frustrated by 'him', by subterfuge, and with that 'sickly smile that only those who roar with laughter to themselves show'.

It has been difficult to discover what the reception to this event was, but Guillén did not reappear in the Lyceum until thirteen years later, and then it was to give a farewell speech on the eve to a trip to Venezuela and other Latin American countries. During that second presentation he again offered to introduce himself to his audience, this time only referring to the vital statistics on his passport; those of his height, his weight, his age and profession. But let us return to the original event. Can we assume that it was only Guillén, or the private secretary that underwent a metamorphosis? The identities of the ladies, and any gentlemen that were gathered before him at the *Lyceum*, were in part shaped by their awareness of a 'black other' against whom to define themselves. Would not their own identity unravel given the absence? Would Guillén's performance then make them uncomfortable? And if that is the case, how then could Guillén, as a mulatto but visibly black poet, operate within this dynamic of (in)visibility? We certainly hear him, but his visibility is mediated either through the private secretary or black stereotypes. As much as Guillén is located within and appropriated by canonical imperatives, this does not mean that he did not operate within his own system in an ever-contested field. On this occasion he stood before the Lyceum as a spectre that observed, stared at and watched his spectators without being seen beneath his visored armour of the private secretary. [43] In doing this he uncannily represented the spectre of a racial equality and unity that was

[43] Jacques Derrida's 'Spectres of Marx': 'And even when it is there without being there, you feel that the spectre is looking, although through a helmet; it is watching, observing, staring at the spectators and the blind seers, but you do not see it seeing, it remains invulnerable beneath its visored armor'. (Wolfrey p. 144).

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ever present in the national rhetoric informing Cuban cultural identity without really being there.

This chapter set out to consider whether Afro-Cubans did or could produce a competing discourse of cultural identity within a discourse that promulgated unity. It is evident that the transculturation of race and that of cultural influences present a paradigm for the coexistence of diversity. So do concepts of racial hybridity such as *el mestizaje* but Guillén performance unveils a deep-seated ambivalence at the centre of racial unity and hybridity. In an interaction that recalls Bhabha's theory of mimicry, and discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, Guillén stands before his audience as the reformed *mestizo*. And indeed, his identity as an Afro-Cuban is constructed out of Martí's (and Ortiz's) reforming drive of Cuban society which, if we look back to my first chapter, was informed not only by a revolutionary drive, but also, and particularly by Martí, by the need for social reform and the elimination of socio-economic injustice in Cuba. Martí outlined these intentions in a letter to General Maceo: *Para mí es un criminal el que promueva en Cuba odios, o se aproveche de los que existen. Y otro criminal el que pretenda sofocar las aspiraciones legítimas a la vida de una raza buena y prudente que ha sido ya bastante desgraciada.*[44] The need to rehabilitate '*una raza ...bastante desgraciada*' is clearly stated here by Martí, and the race he is referring to is one other than his own. Social concerns are evident but Martí's words are also driven by a certain paternalism that draws attention to the different status informing one race and another. To this end, any reforming mission would be contained within a dynamic similar to that administered to Caliban by Prospero (and Miranda). Whilst Martí and Ortiz aim to educate and integrate, this can only take place under terms similar to those that Homi Bahabha describes in his essay on colonial mimicry.

As my Introduction/Chapter One shows, in reforming the colonial subject colonial discourse needs to simultaneously produce a likeness and disavow it, since the (self) image produced presents a disturbing presence of identity that, upon first sight, recalls authority only to displace it by revealing the difference inherent in the hybrid. Analogies can be drawn between colonial disavowal and the structures informing *el mestizaje*. Perhaps we could consider here Martí's 'Nuestra América' and his notion of *mestizaje* as the amalgam of the *blanco*, *mulatto* and *negro* to create

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[44] José Martí, 'Al General Antonio Maceo' (1882), *Obras Completas I* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p.172.

los mestizos autóctonos. [45] The racial equity suggested in his essay 'Mi Raza' also creates a generic notion of Cuban cultural identity and the simultaneous suppression of racial difference in the suggestion that to be Cuban '*más que blanco, más que mulatto, más que negro*'.[46] Martí further suggested that as a Cuban, his race is that of all Cubans thus setting his reforming standard on his race and creed. And in asserting '***mi*** *raza'*, as his own, he stood, as a white Cuban, exemplary of the very theory he was projecting. The 'universal' mode Martí embodies demonstrates an apparent white façade in which race is rendered a non issue (invisible). If we consider the (non)racial appearance of Martí's reforming mission, then the Cuban cultural identity that Martí constructs as *mestizo* is a white one that needs to disavow the difference, that is the racial difference created through reform. The sly civility of Guillén's performance simultaneously displays conformity and resistance, in an act of mimicry that reveals the terms under which *el mestizaje* reforms him. In doing so, he renders models of cultural identity such a transculturation and *el mestizaje* uncertain and partial. Subsequently, even as his identity is fixed, the (colonial) subject is presented as the outcome of an incomplete or virtual process, one that reveals a flaw in the very source of (colonial) authority.[47] Guillén's performance delivers this very result and discloses the deep- seated split in the hegemonic discourse that constructs him within syncretic or hybrid concepts of cultural identity based on unity. Whilst this chapter demonstrates the limits of unity within the nationalistic, it has also raised a number of questions about the location of such discourses and the terms under which cultural identity comes to be represented. We are dealing here with a Cuban elite and a hegemonic force, and as much as both Martí and Ortiz depend on Afro-Cubans, this is a presence they implicitly disavow because their presence challenges their (white) authority. How then do we interrogate the Cuban examples discussed thus far within a postcolonial context when the lines between the colonised and the coloniser are not as clearly defined as in Bhabha's model, and the power structures within the island mimic (or indeed are) based on a master slave dialectic? At the same time, concepts such as *el mestizaje* and transculturation were developed as counter-colonial strategies of contestation and, in Roberto Fernández Retamar's rehabilitation of the *meztizo* as a proletarian/postcolonial figure. These configurations complicate Bhabha's figure of

[45] José Martí, 'Nuestra América', *Nuestra América*, 'Introducción de Pedro Henriquez Ureña, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1939), p. 14.
[46] José Martí, 'Mi Raza', *Obras Completas 2* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), p. 299.
[47] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', *The Location of Culture*, p. 86, and 'Sly Civility', p. 97.

the hybrid and the colonial binaries informing the constructs of identity, for indeed, who is Other in the Cuban colonial or post-colonial context?

Whilst these issues will continue to be interrogated in the following and subsequent chapters, Guillén's performance certainly draws attention to the ambivalence in elite authority through the projection of the (partially) reformed identity of *el mestizo*. Guillén projection of his Afro-Cuban cultural identity takes place through a series of negotiations although it is evident that part of his cultural identity cannot be deciphered. This unknowable element creates a rather challenging counter-discourse because it remains inaccessible and out of bounds. This undisclosed side of Afro-Cuban cultural identity is un-reformable and yet another indication of the deep-seated ambivalence in concepts of racial hybridity and unity. In my next chapter I will be discussing concepts of space and accessibility through Alejo Carpentier's documentary novel *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* ([1927]1933), in which Carpentier splits Cuban cultural identity across demarcated lines to create two distinct worlds, the black and the white. Whilst Guillén's performance demonstrates that Afro-Cubans retained, through dissimulation, key aspects of their religious practice and their cultural identity, Carpentier deals with Afro-Cuban religious and cultural expression as an archaic and magical sphere of its own and one separate from a white, cosmopolitan Cuban cultural identity. By examining Carpenteir's novel in terms of space I will be investigating how cultural diversity and racial and cultural hybridity are dealt within such parameters. How is black cultural identity deployed as part of the Cuban notion of a united cultural identity when it is handled as a separate entity?

4. Alejo Carpentier: The Treatment of Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity and Cultural Hybridity in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*

> Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another, like a character of mine once said, *like flavours when you cook.*[1]

4.1

This chapter will be concerned with Afro-Cuban culture and the increasing (although problematic) valorisation of *afrocubanismo* within the concept of Cuban cultural identity. These are issues I have discussed in the previous two chapters, and the aim in this present one is to consider the questions of race, cultural hybridity and *mestizaje* from yet another, albeit parallel perspective and to question whether cultural hybridity and *el mestizaje* function at the same level within Cuban society. We have seen *el mestizaje* deployed as a national symbol of unity within a society that aims towards being all inclusive, but very real tensions exist between an ideologically constructed notion of a racially hybrid cultural identity and racial difference. This chapter sets out to discuss Carpentier's handling of race through his valorisation of Afro-Cuban cultural and religious practices in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*. My chapter on Fernando Ortiz outlined the foundational and enduring influence of myths of racial democracy. Once integrated as part of a nationalistic discourse, Ortiz's theory of the transculturation of Cuban cultural identity gave the impression of unity, although Guillén's split performance was symptomatic of the rift between transculturation and demographic and socio-historical realities. Nevertheless, Ortiz's theoretical focus on the potential afforded by the transcultural was truly innovative, particularly during a period when theories such as 'acculturation', the assimilation of one culture by another, were perceived as cutting-edge ethnographic tools. Rather than adopting a colonising mode of investigation, Ortiz engaged in the study of the centripetal and centrifugal forces that underpin the basis on which Cuban cultural identity comes into being. Within this far more complex symbiotic and dialectical relationship, one which accounts for the invariable and inevitable hybridisation of Cuban cultural and racial identity, a space is

[1] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London and New York, Granta, 1991), p. 394.

created in which Ortiz can make a number of statements about Cuban identity. One such statement is based on the uniqueness with which Ortiz endows the transcultural. So distinct was Cuban identity that it required the development of a suitable theory and a neologism to go with it. As unique, therefore, transculturation provided Cuban society with a contestatory and challenging stance: within this articulation, Cubans could stand up to the threat posed by the whole-sale importation of North American popular culture by stating their absolute difference to it.

The issues surrounding demarcated spaces and manoeuvres taken within them certainly came to bear on Nicolás Guillén's performance before the Lyceum. If Ortiz offered a theoretical perspective, Guillén played out the dual existence of a black man in Cuban society. Compartmentalising his identity and his work are options that bring to the attention the problematic of racial visibility; interestingly these very compartments indicated the holding back of a secret 'Other' self that remained unknown and unknowable to his mainly white audience. These were nevertheless sites that co-existed and responded to the other. The use of space as structures within which to explore the cultural and the racial by Ortiz and Guillén led me to consider Alejo Carpentier's deployment of separate sites in his documentary style narrative *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* (1933). First written from beginning to end in seven days in 1927 and in jail (although rewritten and published in Madrid in 1933), where Carpentier was serving a brief term for subversion under the Machado administration, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* typifies a *Bildungsroman*, as the narrative follows the life, from birth and through a number of initiations, of a young black man Menegildo Cué. Influenced by the growing trend in Cuba for black cultural signifiers and the Afro-Cuban movement, Carpentier prioritises Afro-Cuban culture over white Cuban culture, thus creating clearly demarcated spaces between the black world and the white. Menegildo begins his life in the countryside where distinctions between the rural and the urban, as between the types of people that live within these worlds are stressed. Carpentier's aim throughout is to keep these worlds separate but always to prioritise black over white. Nevertheless, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* delivers an incredibly animated, metaphorically driven narrative in which the anthropological, mythic, religious and political fundamentals of Cuban society during the 1920s and 1930s are vented. Although this would indicate an engagement with the complexity of Cuba's Euro-African antecedents, the narrative's structure primarily tends to polarise positions and locations, leading to questions about the deployment of space, about whom and what

subject occupies each allotted space, and Carpentier's distinct need to structure his book around opposing spatiality.

Carpentier's use of space as a narrative structure has been noted by Graciela Maturo who argues that such a configuration allows Carpentier to contrast two mentalities, the 'archaic' and the 'civilised', with the former being privileged over the latter given that Carpentier considered the 'civilised' to be inherently degraded.[2]

> *De una manera notable se establece, desde la primera página, ese contraste entre el mundo primitivo, arcádico, que mantiene y perserva los ritmos naturales ... y el mundo de la producción, que extenúa a los hombres y viola lo natural.*[3]

Polarisations are therefore set from the start. I would nevertheless suggest that rather than provide rigid parameters, the presence of such a structure creates tensions between apparent separate worlds, the people that occupy them, and the events that take place there. And in attempting to section off locations and events we are given the impression that Carpentier wants to preserve, in some unspoilt state, the Afro-Cuban elements he prioritises. This leads me to question his motives, and to wonder how diversity and hybridity are dealt within such parameters. How is black identity deployed within this narrative, and how is it responsive to the multi-cultural and neo-colonial imports that were an integral aspect of Cuban society during this period.

Landscape as a marker of difference between the mechanical and the natural become an ideal setting for Carpentier, since the archaic can be situated within the temporality of nature's seasonal patterns, in the ebb and flow of time, the mysteries of creation, and away from the rationalisation of time and of the management of a land that was becoming increasingly mechanised. Chapter One, entitled 'Paisaje (a)', deals with such concepts by drawing distinctions between the 'natural' landscape and that being colonised by the sugar processing plant. Interestingly, and considering that this is a narrative that aims to exalt the archaic, the first description we get is that of '*el bloque del Central San Lucio*', located '*en el centro de un ancho valle orlado por una cresta de colinas azules*'.[4]

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[2] Graciela Maturo, 'Religiosidad y Liberación en *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* y *El Reino de Esté Mundo*' (*Historia y Mito en la Obra de Alejo Carpentier*, ed., Nora Mazziotti, Buenos Aires: Fernando García Cambeíro, 1972), p. 60.

[3] Graciela Maturo, 'Religiosidad y Liberación en *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* y *El Reino de Esté Mundo*', p. 60.

[4] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989), p. 15.

Anguloso, sencillo de líneas como figura de teorema, el bloque del Central San Lucio se lazaba en el centro de un ancho valle orlado por una cresta de colinas azules. El viejo Usebio Cué había visto crecer el hongo de acero, palastro y concreto sobre las ruinas de trapiches antigudos, asistiendo año tras año, con una suerte de espanto admirativo, a las conquistas de espacio realizadas por la fábrica.[5]

These observations are made by Usebio Cué, Menegildo's father who owned a sugar cane small-holding in the valley. He had inherited this property from his father, who, after having served for years as a loyal slave to his master was rewarded with his freedom and a piece of land. In this swift move Carpentier attempts to resolve the problematic relationship between black slaves and the Creole planter class, and the ambivalence they felt towards slave emancipation. As noted in my Introduction/Chapter One, the separatist manifesto during the Wars of Independence was Creole led and strongly based on demands for lower taxation, free trade and representative government. Although they called for the 'universal manhood suffrage', they also defended the slavery on which their economies depended. Even when planters did emancipate their slaves, these were later impressed into military roles upon the onset of war to fight in the insurgent army for their former owners.[6] Carpentier fails to engage with these issues here by appearing to exalt Afro-Cubans as emblematic of the 'genuine' Cuba and placing them opposite the whiteness represented by North American interests in the sugar *Central*, and not that of white Cubans. In this manner social and racial inequalities remain obscured by the greater evil that is North American imperialism and their conquest of Cuban space.

In contrast to the metallic and harsh surfaces of the *Central* we have Usebio's spiritual assessment of the growing of sugar cane and his relationship to the land.

Para él la caña no encerraba el menor misterio. Apenas asomaba entre los quajarones de tierra negra, se seguía su desarollo sin sorpresas. El saludo de la primera hoja; el saludo de la segunda hoja. Los canutos que se hinchan y alargan, dejando a veces un pequeño surco vertical para los "ojos". El visible agradecimiento ante la lluvia anunciada por el vuelo bajo de las auras. El cogollo, que se alejará algún día, en al pomo de una albarda.[7]

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[5] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 15.
[6] See Introduction-Chapter One of this dissertation, p. 14, and Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 121.
[7] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 15.

Within this tropical pastoral Usebio witnesses a nativity as he observes the sprouting of the first leaves of the sugar cane as they push through. Usebio's intimate knowledge of the plant's growth cycle, the weather and his ownership of this black soil entrench him well within his allotted space. A second nativity is also announced in Menegildo's birth which occurs in the third chapter. Just as Usebio is connected to this land, we later find Menegildo described as a natural product of this same black earth. The myth of origins suggested in the life cycle of the sugar plant is further emphasised in the narrative's point of departure, which takes place on the eve of the sugar harvest, *la zafra*, preparations for which commence during the last days of autumn and those leading up to Christmas Eve. Thus the nativity of Christ is announced as is Menegildo's birth, which occurred rather unceremoniously during this time. Born under the chapter heading 'Natividad' it seems quite clear that Menegildo was born on Christmas Day. Instead of being born in a manger, his mother Salomé, surprised by the speed by which he arrived, gave birth to him alone except for the clucking chickens that gathered around to watch, and by the time her neighbour Luisa arrived, '*Salomé restregaba con el borde de sus faldas un horrendo trozo de carne amoratada. Un nuevo cristiano enriquecía la ya generosa estirpe de los Cué*'.[8] Carpentier is pointing us towards the fact that Menegildo is a special child born under an auspicious Christian date, and the start of the Christian calendar. But Menegildo also enters the world towards the end of the sugar cane cycle signified by the *zafra*. Keen to depict the 'natural', basic and as yet 'unspoiled' rural existence of the Cué family, Carpentier reverts to images that recall almost animalistic features, and within this context of the archaic it seems natural for Salomé to be scrubbing clean this newborn, described as un '*horrendo trozo*' with the hem of her skirts. These images clash with the significance of the birth of Christ, the start of the Christian calendar and the beautifully symbolic illustration of the sugar cane's life cycle. The descriptions of Menegildo's birth set him apart from these events as much as his birth is irredeemably linked to them. From these examples we can see that clearly demarcated lines cannot be drawn between locations and ideas, although Carpentier sets out to mark them so.

For these reasons *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* offers us an ideal site from where to interrogate concepts of hybridity within Cuban cultural identity. The adherence by

[8] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 26.

Carpentier to separate spheres, each informed by syncretic and hybrid elements, and yet separate from each other challenges the notions of a united, syncretic culture based on African-Hispanic heritage. This further allows us to discuss the hybridity as a cultural (ideological and nationalistic) discourse developed from within Cuba. Racial hybridity or *mestizaje* is equally exposed as an ideological construct albeit one that is clearly defined by Carpentier as a separate component of Cuban society. Any discussion therefore of *Afrocubanismo* in the context of a national Cuban culture must be informed by this ambivalence towards the very aspects of black culture within hybrid constructs of cultural identity. As Robin D. Moore suggests:

> An appreciation for the inconsistencies between 1920s *afrocubanismo* as an ideology embracing black expression discursively and the extent to which traditional Afrocuban arts were actually accepted is vital in evaluating the significance of the period. Even more important, the mass acceptance of certain forms of black music and dance by Cuban society did not necessarily imply greater social equality for or empowerment of Afrocubans themselves.[9]

The Afro-Cuban movement and the use of a black aesthetic by Cuban artists provided the means with which to '*comprender mejor ciertos factores poéticos, musicales, étnicos y sociales, que habrían contribuido a dar una fisonomía propia a lo criollo*'.[10] These are comments made retrospectively by Carpentier of the Afro-Cuban artistic movement, but it is clear that he saw in *Afrocubanismo* a culture of resistance and a very attractive vehicle, because of its mythic and magical undertones, through which to develop artistically.[11] Roberto González Echevarría rather succinctly describes the role of the avant-garde artist in Cuba and the tensions between political commitment and art.

> If writing is a game, then it remains outside of history; if it is serious and transcendental, then it has to have a place in the general flow of events (mainly political events). If the initial impulse towards African art was frivolous, the fact that Afro-Cubans were an important part of Cuban political life made the writers' involvement serious.[12]

[9] Robin D. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanism and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), p. 5.
[10] Alejo Carpentier cited in Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Un Camino de Medio Siglo:Carpentier y La Narrativa de Lo Real Maravilloso* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1994), p. 26.
[11] Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Un Camino de Medio Siglo:Carpentier y La Narrativa de Lo Real Maravilloso*, p. 28.
[12] Roberto González Echevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 68.

In *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* we encounter a narrative informed by both impulses. Carpentier deploys the Afro-Cuban as a mode of political resistance, yet he chooses to locate Afro-Cubans outside history's remit as a means to preserve what he sees as a unique and untainted aspect of Cuban cultural identity. As we shall see from the following analysis, the black world Carpentier creates is so removed from history and yet so determined by it that contradictions abound as they remain unresolved.

As we go through Menegildo's life and his several initiations the reader (and the author) delves deeper into areas of exclusion, initiation ceremonies, prison and black secret ñáñigo sects, but race is always the first point of identification for Carpentier. Although the novel opens with the character of Usebio Cué, the narrative is extended to include his family and they are all very clearly determined through their race. We are immediately directed to the activities of his wife Salomé, to her black hands, and the contrast they create in the soapy water.

> *Los guajiros se acercaban entonces a una claraboya tallada a machetazos en el seto de cardón, y saludaban a la comadre Salomé, que manipulaba trapos mojados junto al platanal. Ella inmovilizaba sus manos negras en el agua lechosa.*[13]

Her speech equally contains her within a racial and social bracket

> *¡Demonio! ¡Lo que es laval guayaberas embarráss de tierra colorá!*

And further down the same page

> *¡Barbarita sinbelgüenza; suet'ta a tu em'manito!*[14]

Both these examples locate her within the racial as her black hands become her primary signifier, her speech the second. Carpentier is making the claim that this form of speech is '*hablar en cubano*'.[15] Dialogues such as the above imitating the speech patterns of rural blacks (when Menegildo arrives in Havana this pattern is replaced by black urban slang), are used by Carpentier as a tool that serves to create distinction. My discussion of Nicolás Guillén drew attention to his use of *bozal* speech in his *Sones*; by combining *son* rhythms with a level of *bozal* speech Guillén created a

[13] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 22.
[14] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 24.
[15] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 76.

proliferation of voices and discourses that, whilst drawing attention to their inevitable antecedence, also managed to resist stereotypical fixing. Guillén's poetry challenges black stereotypes through the manipulation of the very structures he is constrained by, and in using formulaic description of black images he holds up a mirror up to society to expose racial stereotypes as the projection of society's prejudices. This is not the case in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* and as one critic states, '*la fidelidad al naturalismo lleva a Carpentier a la extrema deformación fonética en el hablar de los personajes*'.[16] As a form of identification, language clearly acts as a sign of difference that is juxtaposed against Carpentier's articulate and authorial discursive language. Further distinctions are therefore created between the role of the author as observer, ethnographer and documenter of this black world.

Menegildo's life cycle is closely linked to the novel's narrative structure. As such, his initiations into the world of black religious rites place him outside historical time. The course of his life is determined by the supernatural beliefs and the forces of nature that define the black world. He is not educated through conventional schooling or in scientific or mathematical subjects but is far more learned in the ways of black manners. His first initiation takes place in the relative safety of the family *bohío*: '*en sus primeros años de vida, Menegildo aprendería, como todos los niños, que las belleza de una vivienda se ocultan en la parte inferior de los muebles*'.[17] In a world then described by Carpentier as

> *Una selva de pilares, que sostienen plataformas, mesetas y cornisas pobladas de discos, filos y trozos de bestias muertas ...Menegildo sentía, palpaba, golpeaba, a lanzar su primera ojeada sobre el universo.*[18]

In a scene that evokes Orpheus's journey through the underworld and one that Menegildo discovers through intuition and his senses, our protagonist undergoes his first trial. As he feels his way through this jungle, he is pushed over by a piglet and, helplessly pinned to the floor, the dogs surround him, lick him all over and a chicken, upset by the commotion scratches Menegildo on his tummy just as ants inflame his

[16] Pedro Lastra, 'Aproximaciones Afrocubanas', *Recopilación de textos sobre Alejo Carpentier*, Compilación y Prólogo de Salvador Arias (La Habana: Casa de Las Américas, 1975), p. 290.
[17] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 27.
[18] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 28.

delicate skin as they crawl up his legs. It is at this precise moment and from this vantage point that Menegildo makes '*un maravilloso descubrimiento*'.[19]

> *Desde una mesa baja lo epiaban unas estatuillas cubiertas de oro y colorines. Había un anciano, apuntalado por unas muletas, seguido de dos canes con la luenga roja. Una mujer coronada, vestida de raso blanco, con un niño mofletudo entre sus brazos. Un muñeco negro que bandía un hacha de hierro. Collares de cunetas verdes. Un panecillo atado con una cinta. Un plato lleno de piedrecitas redondas. Mágico teatro, alumbrado levemente por unas candilejas diminutas colocadas dentro de tacitas blancas...*[20]

Menegildo topples the altar and Sálome lights the candle to ward off any bad luck that may befall her child. Still, one of the most striking features of this scene is the merging of Menegildo's position as spectator of this discovery, staged as a theatrical scenario, with that of the author and the reader who also experience this event as theatre. The altar is presented as a magical stage that separates it from the commercial actuality described in the hybrid world of signs we later encouter. Yet the santeria altar is a powerful sign of Cuban syncretism. We feel almost like voyeurs as we espy the altar with Menegildo, a situation that is created in the removal of the Cuban syncretism from open view and its secretion in marginal, dark places. The chapter 'Iniciación (c)' focuses on Menegildo's initiation into the sacred and secret ñáñigo cult. Menegildo experiences his initiation during the ceremony within shifting perspectives from audience-like distance to performative immersion.[21] In the three chapters that deal with the ñáñigo rites we find that borders between spectator and spectacle constantly shift. Menegildo is often on the outside watching the masked dance of *el Diablito*, observing sacrificial ceremonies (and this is how the reader observes), until in the final of the three chapters when '*Menegildo transpuso la frontera del círculo mágico, se zambulló en el fuego sagrado, asió la olla y corrió hacia la entrada del batey dando gritos*'.[22] This immersion completes his initiation, and Vicky Unruh rightly observes that during these scenes Menegildo experiences a distancing from his culture's performances, one analogous to that of the ethnographer as he stands outside the frame so that the reader can see what he sees.[23] Carpentier

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[19] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 28.
[20] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 28.
[21] Vicky Unruh, 'The Performing Spectator in Alejo Carpentier's Fictional World', *Hispanic Review*, Volume 66, 1988, pp. 68-69.
[22] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 171.
[23] Vicky Unruh, 'The Performing Spectator in Alejo Carpentier's Fictional World', p. 68.

idealises Afro-Cuban culture as a participatory performance and as this world is opened up so to are the spatial parameters he wishes to maintain closed.

As much as Carpentier attempts to contain Afro-Cuban culture, he is also intent in keeping other black elements out of the sphere he has created. This is evidenced in Carpentier's opposition to the importation of Haitian and Jamaican indentured workers. Described by Carpentier as '*la nueva plaga*', and in referring to '*escuadrones de haitianos harapientos*' and to Jamaicans '*con mandíbulas cuadradas y over-alls descoloridos, sudando agrio,*'[24] clear distinctions are made between black Cubans and all other black Caribbeans. The manner in which Cuban identity is constructed by Carpentier is problematic because he makes clear the differences between Cubans, which are colonials, and the *guajiros*, white Cuban peasants. He also creates distinctions between blacks Cubans of African origin, *de nación*, either naturalised or born in Cuba from first generation slaves, and the black Jamaican or Haitians who were brought to Cuba throughout the twentieth century as indentured workers to serve the expanding sugar industry. Tensions are clearly evident between each grouping, and we are given an indication of the basis on which class and race are constructed in Cuba. Indeed, Aline Helg discusses Cuba's social construct of race as remarkable in that for almost 100 years Cubans have perpetuated the mid-nineteenth century notion of a *raza de color* or a *clase de color* without differentiating mulattos from blacks and have often referred to both *pardos* (mulattos) and *morenos* (blacks) as *negros* (blacks). This classification differs from the three-tier or multi racial system in place in other countries of Latin America and tends to show a two tier racial system similar to that of the US. The difference between the US and Cuba was that Cubans based racial groupings on visible African ancestry and not the one drop of blood rule, suggesting that Cuba's racial system was not a product of US influence.[25] The North, nevertheless, is targeted as a racially divisive force.

The critiques against US economic incursions are a constant throughout the narrative, but it does seem as if race functions as a displacement strategy so that the existing racial tensions do not have to be addressed. The following, an authorial interlude that sets out to explain Menegildo's naivety about the world outside the parameters of his immediate routine, is one such occasion when racial inequalities in

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[24] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 18.

[25] Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 4.

Cuba are displaced onto a North American scenario. Worldly experience is felt to be lacking in Menegildo, but Carpentier nevertheless endows him with an ingénue, nature boy wisdom that allows him, with the aid of the author, to comment on the terms under which North Americans enter his world.

> *Pero más que todos los demás, los yanquis, mascadores de andullo, causaban su estupefacción. Le resultaban menos humanos que una tapia, con el hablao ese que ni Dió entendía. Además, era sabido que despreciaban a los negros ... ¿Y qué tenían los negros? ¿No eran hombres como los demás? ¿Acaso valía menos un negro que un americano? Por lo menos, los negros no chivaban a nadie ni andaban robando tierras a los guajiros obligándoles a vendérselas por tres pesetas. ¿Los americanos? ¡Saramanbiche! Ante ellos llegaba a tener un verdadero orgullo de su vida primitiva, llena de pequeñas complicaciones y de argucias mágicas que los hombres del Norte no conocerían nunca.*[26]

Distinctions are made here between the world as perceived by Menegildo and the Yankee values, but comparisons are constantly made between Afro-Cubans like Menegildo and the Hispanic *guajiro* peasant planters; although an affinity exists between both since they are hard working and indeed, Cuban. Interestingly the North Americans are blamed for introducing racial segregation and discrimination. In pointing this out Carpentier seems to be creating distance between the way Cubans deal with race, which from Menegildo's point of view is based on equity, as opposed to the North's racial values. Significantly Menegildo's 'primitive' life is clearly set out here as one to which the North American will never have access.

Carpentier is nevertheless keen to draw distinctions between black Cubans and the Haitians and Jamaicans, which, while avoiding the homogenisation of blackness as one monolithic cultural entity, Carpentier uses difference to create a basis of racial discrimination. As such, Carpentier draws attention to a tier system that places Afro-Cubans above Jamaicans and Haitians.

> *Menegildo atravesó varias callejuelas animadas ...Se sentía extraño entre tantos negros de otras consumbres y otros idiomas. ¡Los jamaiquinos eran unos "presumíos" y unos animales! ¡Los haitianos eran unos animales y unos salvajes! ¡Los hijos de Tranquilino Moya estaban sin trabajo desde que los braceros de Haití aceptaban jornales increíblemente bajos! Por esa misma razón, más de un niño moría tísico, a dos pasos del ingenio gigantesco. ¿De qué había servido la Guerra de Independencia, que tanto mentaban los oradores politicos, si continuamente era uno desalojado por estos hijos de la gran perra...? Una sonrisa de simpatía se dibujaba espontáneamente en el*

[26] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 66.

rostro de Menegildo cuando divisaba algún guajiro cubano, vestido de drill blanco, surcando la multidud en su caballito huesudo y nervioso. ¡Ése, por lo menos, habla como los cristianos! [27]

In comparison to the animalistic description ascribed to the Haitians and Jamaicans, ones that render them grotesque, the guajiro dressed in white and his skinny *caballito* appear dwarfed by their threatening presence. The black intruders are, however, openly blamed for the displacement of black Cubans as for the unfulfilled promises of the Wars of Independence. Although at times located within his authorial intrusions, Carpentier often launches his critique from within the black sphere and in dialogue spoken by Afro-Cubans, who engage in a politically informed racialist discourse directed at other blacks.

It is notable that Carpentier locates a critique of black immigrations in the court of black Cubans because the Afro-Cuban workforce was the first to be demographically displaced by this influx. At the same time, the commentary here is not only centred on economics, but on race and underpinned by racial exclusion based on the perceived degraded black cultural influence attributed to non-Cuban blacks. It seems that Carpentier is creating a Cuban zone of inclusion based on race and values, and excluding factors that he feels degenerate Cuban society. At the time the novel was written tensions in Cuba were running high because of the continual waves of indentured black workers from Haiti and Jamaica, seen by all Cubans as detrimental to the island's economic stability and to its cultural and racial composition. In terms of race, white Cubans felt that Jamaicans and Haitians would not only degrade the existing Afro-Cuban gene pool, but would further blacken the island's racial mix. Black Cubans on the other hand resented being economically displaced by a cheaper, imported workforce.[28] Whilst surely perceived as a threat to Cuban labour within the sugar industry many concerns voiced anxiety over a black invasion: '*todos sabemos que la tierra se nos va y que otra raza inferior nos invade y nos amenaza*'.[29] Pointing as these comments do towards notions of racial selectivity, ambivalence is created in

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[27] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 69.

[28] Francine Masiello, 'Rethinking Neocolonial Esthetics: Literature, Politics, and Intellectual Community in Cuba's *Revista de Avance*', *Latin American Research Review,* Volume 28, Number 2, 1993, p. 22. The booming sugar marked in the first half of the Twentieth Century led to an influx of black labourers. Between 1912 and 1924 120,000 Haitians and 110,00 Jamaicans were brought to Cuba to work on plantations, with a steady stream continuing and aided by the Atlantic Sugar Company's need for labour.

[29] 'Directrices: Tierra y población en las Antillas', *Avance* 1, pt.ii, no.16 (1927) pp. 87-88.

the treatment of race and blackness, and on how distinctions are made between Afro-Cuban culture and black culture from other Caribbean countries. Comparisons were being made between *la América buena y la América mala* which drew a line down the Antilles, separating islands such as Haiti and Jamaica (*la mala*) from Cuba and the Latin American mainland (*la Buena*).[30] Carpentier's engagement with black culture therefore presents itself as an ambivalent site located within demarcated spaces.

The aggression and violence felt towards the Haitians and other non-Cuban blacks and the language used is at times shocking, and perhaps all the more so because Menegildo functions as Carpentier's primary mouthpiece when he expresses the concerns of wider society. This position binds Menegildo to a racial discourse promulgated by Cuban nationalism that sets him above the Other, non-Cuban blacks, whilst selecting him as a Cuban primitive Other; a position that keeps him away from modern, rational society and in a marginal position. The following only serves to reiterate the racist attitude that becomes commonplace throughout this novel. In this particular instance we find Menegildo deriding Haitian blacks as inferior. Upon making his way back home after wandering to the Central he passes by

> *varias cabañas triangulares. Cerca de estas viviendas primitivas, una hoguera agonizante lanzaba guiños por sus rescoldos.*
> *-¡ Lo haitiano! - pensaba Menegildo - . Deben estar todos bebío...*
> *Y escupió, para demonstrarse el desprecio que le producían esos negros inferiores.*[31]

These are racist attitudes. Although they could be attributed to Menegildo's uneducated and naïve interpretations, not enough distance exists between Menegildo as ingénue and his coming to knowledge, and Carpentier's authorial intrusions. Political opinion permeates Menegildo's world; however the views expressed are not necessarily those of a young black boy with little or no formal education but those of somebody engaged in current political opinion. One also wonders about the extent to which Carpentier uses Menegildo as a mouthpiece to voice the racist discourse that permeated Cuban society, and whether in locating it within this Afro-Cuban world, he legitimises racial discrimination. In this sense Carpentier presents us with blacks discriminating against other blacks of different origin whilst Cubans of all creed or race seem to stick together. Although African derived culture was essential to the

[30] Francine Masiello, 'Rethinking Neocolonial Esthetics: Literature, Politics, and Intellectual Community in Cuba's *Revista de Avance*', p. 23.
[31] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 76.

construction of a cultural identity, African cultural expressions in their traditional form in Cuba, continued to be condemned as backward, barbaric, lewd and primitive. Carpentier is clearly attempting to separate the Afro-Cuban culture from Other black cultural forms. He achieves in exalting the Afro-Cuban over that of the Haitians and Jamaicans who are represented as backward, barbaric and lewd but these terms of representation also impact on Menegildo's world .

On his way back from the New Year celebrations Menegildo meets a girl whom he initially mistakes for a Haitian. He then becomes interested in her when she speaks to him in '*en cubano*'.

> *Debía ser de la tierra, porque casi ninguna haitiana lograba hacerse entender con "el patuá ese de allá" Menegildo observó que unos ojazos dulces y afectuosos relucían en su rostro obscuro. Sus cabellos, apretados como un casco, se veían divididos en sies zonas desiguales por tres rayas blancas. Estaba cubierta por un vestido claro, llena de manchas y remiendos, pero bien estirado sobre el pecho y las caderas. Sus pies descalzos jugaban con el espartillo húmedo de rocío. Tenía una flor roja detrás de la oreja ("Tá Buena", pensaba Menegildo, desnudándola mentalmente).*[32]

Menegildo has no experience with women and as much as he desired the girl, he was frightened by her. He was frightened of not looking the part, that is, manly enough, so he decided to chew tobacco to impress her. He also needs to double check that she is indeed Cuban.

> *Menegildo hizo una pregunta que le quemaba los labios:*
> - *¿Uté e de por aqui?*
> - *Yo soy de allá, de Guantánamo.*[33]

And the same racial issues are raised when Menegildo espies her a second time;

> *Él nunca habría sido capaz de enamorarse de una haitiana. ¡Desde luego! Pero creía adivinar que una mujer "de allá de Guantánamo", no se encontraba a gusto entre tantos negros peleones y borrachos, que sólo pensaban en gallos y botellas.*[34]

Sigh of relief. But we still have the problem that this girl lives in the camp site of Haitian workers and is involved with one of them. So Menegildo goes in search of a love potion and black religious practices are closely intertwined with this love story

[32] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 76.
[33] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 77.
[34] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 81.

and the racial and political discourse. Although attempting to keep black religious practices as a separate entity, Carpentier's political discourse prevents such a separation. Carpentier aims at maintaining these spheres separate as a means to preserve what he considers a 'pure' Afro-Cuban cultural expression, but this is something he cannot achieve. Certainly the scrutiny he places on Menegildo's life and his world give us a sense of interiority and it clearly seems as if we are entering an underworld. The prioritisation of the magical, as of ñáñigo rituals, which take place in darkened rooms, caves and often in secret, assist in creating this underworld atmosphere: one that allows for the segregation of the black sphere and the scrutiny to which it is subjected.

We get a much clearer indication of ñáñigo rites and of an underworld once Menegildo is sent to prison in Havana for having stabbed Longina's common law husband. Best described as an instinctual act of self preservation (since Napolión had already attempted against his life), or a crime of passion, Menegildo's stabbing of Napolión changes his life. *La larga aventura que estaba viviendo en aquel momento era algo tan al margen de la apacible y primitiva existencia que llevaba desde la niñez*...[35]. As such, all that has taken place prior to his move to the city is contained within what Carpentier describes as a peaceful and primitive life. Upon his arrival in Havana, Menegildo is amazed by the differences between the city and the countryside, a distinction that Carpentier is intent in making. Even as the city comes across as a vibrant cosmopolitan space, hybrid through years of multi-cultural influence, it is ironically the place where Menegildo's identity is reduced to virtually nothing but statistics. Illustrated as a picture postcard, Carpentier's Havana comes to life as Menegildo walks through the streets on his way to the prison. The beauty and vibrancy of the city is, however, also informed by a seedier and corrupt side. Indeed, it is an aspect that threatens to corrupt and irreversibly damage Menegildo.

In contrast to the colours and variety offered by the city, Menegildo is reduced to '*un negro preso*'[36] Once inside the prison he is subjected to an anthropometric examination that, on the one hand, details the characteristics underpinning his demeanour down to every minute scar or blemish, and on the other, reduces the complexities of his identity through scientific enquiry. Rather strangely though, for at this point I thought that Menegildo would pine away for the countryside, Menegildo

[35] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 130.
[36] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 133.

takes a liking to prison, to the examinations and the subsequent attention derived from such scrutiny. The corrupting forces of the prison and its inmates produce a curiosity in Menegildo to the extent that he wants to participate in the seedy side of life the other inmates lead and to know more of their misdemeanours, which hang like trophies around their necks. From an ingénue nature-boy Menegildo is transformed. When Antonio his cousin visits him in prison

> *quedó maravillado de la transformación que se había operado en en carácter del primo. Unas pocas semanas de obligada promicuidad con hombres de otras constumbres y otros hábitos, habían raspado la costra de barro original que acorazaba al campesino contra una serie de tentaciones y desplantes. Después de haber maldecido mil veces el instante en que apuñalo el haitano de rayos, sentía la necesidad, ahora, de balsonar de su valentía.*[37]

From the boy who dressed in rags and whose Sunday best consisted of '*un gabán de forros descocidos, dado por un pareinte "pa que se lo pusiera por el tiempo frío*"'[38] Menegildo had, with money won gambling, transformed himself into a metropolitan version of blackness. Resembling the stereotypical black man described by Nicolás Guillén as pimps and down and outs in his *Sones*, Menegildo, now sporting '*una resplandeciente camisa de cuadros azules y anaranjados*'[39] becomes a figure to be marvelled at. Instead of being presented as a critique, Menegildo's transformation, one that hammers yet another nail in the coffin Carpentier has been preparing for him since the narrative's opening pages, is positively endorsed by Antonio, who now views Menegildo with respect as he sees before him '*un hombre digno de estimación*'[40] He had also gained such a reputation in prison that the next step in Menegildo's initiation in life consisted of joining a ñáñigo brotherhood; one that would protect him in the outside world. Loyalty to this brotherhood ultimately led to his untimely death.

The city represents the moment of corruption and Roberto González Echevarría suggests parallels between Menegildo's personal trajectory, his move to the city, and the socio-political theories formulated by Fernando Ortiz in *Los negros brujos*. Because of the drop in sugar prices and the shipment of labour, displaced blacks set off for the city where they led a dangerous existence on the outskirts of

[37] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 145.
[38] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 66.
[39] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 145.
[40] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 145.

white society, forming rival criminal societies and underworld clubs. Concerns about the growth of this underworld are what led Ortiz to formulate his positivist theories. Carpentier nevertheless fails to see the world Menegildo enters as entirely negative since, as González Echevarría suggests, 'although it is the corrupt place where Menegildo's life ends, it is also the privileged place where magic and belief rule man's existence'.[41] By this he means the ñáñigo rites as a major locus of Afro-Cuban signification. Although Carpentier valorises above all else the cultural and racial significance of Menegildo and Salomé and 'their type' and considers them as the final repositories of 'untainted' Cuban cultural identity, it is not clear where he draws the line between the black culture of the countryside and the harsher, extremely macho ñáñigo practices encountered in the city and the degraded representations of Afro-Cuban cultural identity. Although the religious is prioritised by Carpentier, he recalls a whole series of representations that locate black cultural identity as something that not only needs to be kept separate as a 'mythical sphere' but also marginal to the rest of society.

4.2

Emphasis is placed upon drawing distinctions between the mechanised and scientific *Central*, and Usebio's plot, but the reality is that his small-holding is almost completely surrounded by the Central's encroaching forces that threaten to destroy him and nature's natural balance. Space, therefore, is a central consideration in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*; the preservation of it and of the values Carpentier wishes to uphold, but I would suggest that this concern over space is mostly a struggle over the control of space, be it within a Cuban landscape or a narrative space, with the latter notably evident in Carpentier's systematic repetition of some chapter headings. Chapter One 'Paisaje (a)' is followed by 'Paisaje (b), as if in extending the chapter by spreading his writing onto another narrative space, he can control it better.[42] It is nevertheless the case that Carpentier sets out to demarcate two distinct, albeit parallel, spaces; the primitive spiritual and magical world in which Menegildo resides, and the modern technological driven world of the sugar processing plant.

[41] Roberto González Evhevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, p. 75.

[42] And ironically, although privileging the archaic, Carpentier systemises the natural spiritual world with this same chapter technique, one that contains as it brackets the stages of Menegildo's formation under phases (a), (b) and (c).

The fact is however, that these worlds constantly collide, as evidenced by the encroaching territorial threat signified by the expansion of the sugar plant. Located at the centre of a landscape Carpentier describes in pre-industrial pastoral terms, we fast become aware that the Plant's mechanical reach is vast, and that that surrounding lands and small holdings such as that belonging to Usebio will inevitably be swallowed up its economic and colonising drive. The novel clearly engages with such a threat and offers a critique, as expressed in the following passage.

> *Hacia tiempo ya que una obscura tragedia se cernía sobre los campos que rodeaban el Central San Lucio. A medida que subía el azúcar, a medida que sus cifras iban creciendo en las pizarras de Wall Street, las tierras adquiridas por el ingenio formaban una mancha major en el mapa de la provincia. Una serie de pequeños cultivadores se habían dejado convencer por las ofertas tentadoras de la compañía Americana, cediendo heredades cuyos títulos de propiedad se remontaban a más de un siglo... Usebio terminó por verse rodeado de plantíos hostiles, cuyas cañas, trabajadad por administración, gozaban siempre del derecho de prioridad en tiempos de molienda. No le habían faltado proposiciones de compra. Pero cada vez que "le venían con el cuento". Usebio respondía, sin saber exactamente por qué, por la testarudez del hombre apegado al suelo que le pertenece.*[43]

Carpentier levies a clear and open critique against the spread of North American interests in Cuba, seen as a fast spreading black stain, giving the impression that if we were to look at a map of Cuba, the land's physical aspects would be notably altered by this mark. This is a space that is fast becoming hostile and which is economically isolating Usebio's small- holding, which now seems like a final bastion against the North. The position in which Carpentier places Usebio's land is significant since such small-holdings were what held back, in some small, symbolic way, the whole-sale ownership of Cuban lands by North American companies. And here we have one of the first examples in which Carpentier places Usebio and his family as markers of resistance against the North. Heroic, indeed is this position since Usebio holds his ground like David confronted by Goliath, but noted as well is Carpentier's apparent economy in describing the reasoning behind Usebio's decision and actions. Usebio's holding-out appears to be not only valiant but also patriotic. He is nevertheless denied such rationale, since analytical or political engagement is absent in his decision. Instead Carpentier bases this resistance on stubbornness, on some intuitive link to the

[43] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 32.

ground beneath his feet, which leads us to feel that although Usebio's actions are morally the right ones, he is unable to articulate, or understand them. Characterisations such as this one of Usebio serve as markers of distinction between worlds, but they nevertheless locate the Afro-Cuban within a discourse that excludes them from political activism and self-determination. Although Usebio's lack of malice can be considered a noble feature, characteristics such as these abound in the narrative and they serve to exclude rather than demarcate, giving the impression of Usebio, his family and friends as under-educated and his world as under-developed.

Still Usebio's decision was disastrous. The owners of the *Central* eventually refused to buy his sugar cane, and without the means to transport his crop to other mills since the railways were for the exclusive use of the sugar company, Usebio is forced out of business. This finally led to him selling his lands to the mill owners for a fraction of their value.

> *¡Y eso que el azúcar, después de alcanzar cotizaciones sin precedentes, estaba todavía a más de tres centavos libra*[44] *y aún no habían muerto del todo las miríficas "vacas gordas", incluidas para siempre en el panteón de la mitología antillana!*
> *Así fue como la finca de los Cué se redujo, del día a la mañana, a un simple batey con un portero.*[45]

The spreading grasp of the *Central*, as it gains more ground within the industry also has transformative potential since the sugar mill has the power to alter both the landscape and the sugar. It is therefore difficult to envisage that Usebio's impression of the land and of the growing cycle of sugar can remain untainted by the mechanisation of sugar production. Similarities can be found here between Fernando Ortiz's allegorical use of sugar, and the centrality of sugar to Carpentier's narrative. Still, whereas in Fernando Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint* sugar comes to represent a colonising force that has simultaneously led to the whitening and blackening of Cuban society, and of consequential hybrid forms, sugar for Carpentier is primarily a natural crop that is losing its basic qualities through refinement under US auspices. The following excerpt is rather telling in this respect as Carpentier outlines the refining

[44] This quote is cited directly from the book, although it does seem to me that the above would make more sense as 'todavía a más de tres centavos a la libra...'
[45] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p.33.

process that discolours the small red crystals that still carry the scent and remnants of Cuban soil on them.

> *La locomotora arrastra millares de sacos llenos de cristalitos rojos que todavía saben a tierra, pezuñas y malas palabras. La refinería extranjera los devolverá pálidos, sin vida, después de un viaje sobre mares descoloridos.*[46]

In closely associating the sugar crystals with Cuban soil, the connections between an agricultural and economic venture come to signify something more that just an acquisition. The metaphoric emphasis placed on the refining process leads us to feel it is Cuba itself that is being carried away one grain at a time and that Cuban culture is gradually becoming eroded with every sack load that leaves the island for refinement. These are nevertheless red crystals and so Carpentier is drawing our attention to a *mestizo* cultural identity, and it is this aspect that is perceived to be at risk. Although acculturation comes to mind here, the fact that the sugar is returned not whitened but pale and faded, devoid of distinguishing features, suggests a process of de-culturation instead. This is an interesting fact if we consider the cultural hybridity suggested throughout *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*: interweaved, indeed, embedded in this highly metaphorically led narrative are a plethora of multicultural signs and of a dynamic that incorporates them together.

The impending spread of the *Central* gives us an indication of the way in which extraneous elements and influences enter the frame. The harvesting of the cane brings about an intense period that introduces multicultural elements to Usebio's 'tropical pastoral'. In a move that evokes, although it pre-empts Fernando Ortiz's theory of the transculturation of Cuban culture, Carpentier describes the impact of the harvest in vivid passages analogous to Ortiz's theory.[47] Whereas Ortiz illustrates the real history of Cuba as expansive and based on intermeshed transculturations, starting with the transculturation of the paleolithic Indian, then the neolithic, up until the present time and always including all component facets, Carpentier focuses on the sugar cane season, *en el tiempo de zafra* during which time

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[46] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 16.

[47] See Chapter Two of this dissertation, and Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940) (trans. Harriet de Onís, Introduction by Bronislaw Malinowski, Prologue by Heminio Portell Vilá, New Introduction by Fernando Coronil, Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 98.

Los trenes venían cargados de cajas, piezas consteladas de tuercas, tambores de hierro. Cilindros rodantes, pintados de negro, se alineaban en las carrileras muertas. Los colonos iban y venían. En las tierras, en el caserío, solo se pensaba en reparar carretas, afilar mochas, limpiar calderas y llenar de grasa las cazoletas de frotación. La piedra gemía bajo el filo del machete. Las bestias husmeaban con inquietud. Por las noches, a la luz de los quinqués, se veían danzar sombras de todos los bohíos...Entonces comenzaba la invasión. Tropeles de obreros. Capataces americanos mascando tabaco. El químico francés que maldecía cotidianamente al cocinero de la fonda. El pesador italiano, que comía guindillas con pan y aciete. El inevitable viajante judío, enviado por una casa yanqui. Y luego, la nueva plaga consentida por un decreto de Tiburón dos años antes: escuadrones de haitianos harapientos, que surgían del horizonte lejano trayendo condotiero negro con sombreo de guano y machete al cinto...Después llegaban los de Jamaica, con mandíbulas cuadradas y over-alls descoloridos, sudando agrio en sus camisas de respiraderos. Con ellos venían madames ampulosas, llevando anchos sombreros de plumas tan arcaicos y complicados como los que todavía lucen en sus fotografías las princesas alemanas. El alcohol a fuertes dosis y el espíritu del la Salvation Army entraban en escena inmediatamente, en lógico encadenamiento de causas y efectos. Pronto aparecen los emigrantes Gallegos. Arrastran alpargatas, y sus caras, cubiertas de granos, eliminan los vinillos ácidos de la montaña. Hacinados como arenques en el barco francés que los trajo de La Coruña, se apretujan de nuevo en los barracones que les son señalados. Algunos polacos tenaces se improvisan tenduchos sobre el vientre, ofreciendo mancuernas de hueso, cuellos de seda tornasolada, ligas púrpura y preservativos alemanes disimulados en cajas de cerillas. Los horticultores asiáticos se arrodillan en el huerto de la casa vivienda con gestos de cartomántica. Los almacenistas chinos invierten millares de dólares en balas y toneless que les son enviados por Sung-Sing-Lung – cacique alimenticio del barrio amarillo de la capital. [48]

The cane harvesting season is accompanied by a particular dynamic and power structures constructed around the *Colonia* and the activities surrounding the *zafra*. All these individuals are brought within the confines of the island and that of the *Central*, which, as we have seen from Usebio's perception of its structure, is something like a futuristic looking alien implant, embedded within the Cuban country-side and, much like a vortex that sucks in people and the surrounding land, it spews them out as well. As a centripetal force, the sugar industry draws in and attracts an increasing and diverse number of individuals to the island. Although a vital component to Ortiz's transculturation, and one that draws attention to the simultaneous centrifugal and centripetal forces that inform the development of a hybrid Cuban identity, denoting

[48] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, pp. 18-19.

unity within diversity, Carpentier nevertheless does not appear to be making the same statement as Ortiz.

Whereas Ortiz's 1940 theory explains a process that incorporates extraneous elements which impact on and subsequently contribute to Cuban cultural identity, Carpentier is not as prepared to accommodate the extraneous, which he clearly sees as waves upon waves of plagues. The first of these plagues as Carpentier describes them is that brought about by the presence of the US. His reaction to the *colonos* and critique of the North is clearly located within an anti-colonial discourse directed against economic and cultural incursions. At the same time we have here a sense of a multinational workforce that come into action for the harvest: we get a distinct feeling for the influx of a global seasonal workforce that impacts directly on life in the valley during the *zafra* for we are not only dealing with individual workers but a network of people and relationships that enter into the frame as a 'supporting cast'. This mainly male workforce has requirements, certainly an alimentary one which Sung-Sing-Lung provides, but a sexual economy is suggested here with the entry of the brothel madams, and the importation of prophylactics, indicating that the influx is such that the local cannot meet the needs. Neither the Italian or the French or the 'inevitable Jew' appears to have a lasting effect, although the most striking aspect in Carpentier's illustration is the racist driven representation of non-Cuban blacks, described as a second plague.

In the passage that follows, Carpentier introduces the reader to the American Hotel, which is adjunct to the *Central* and functions as a centre of entertainment for the workers. Although the hotel forms part of the sugar mill's culture, Carpentier here deploys the space demarcated by the hotel as one that exhibits yet another aspect of North American commercialism. Much less streamlined than the mill, the hotel appears to be constructed out of a pastiche of neon signs, well known whiskey labels and cigarettes.

> *El hotel americano hace barnizar su bar de falsa caoba. Hay cigarrillos extranjeros con las figuras de príncipes bizcos. Ladrillos de andullo envueltos en papel plateado. Fátimas con odaliscas. Maracas que ostentan escudos reales, khnedives o mocasines indios. Los cafetuchos y cantinas se adherezan. Cien alcoholes se sitúan en los estantes. La caña santa, que huelle a tierra. Los rones "de garrafón". Los escarchos turbios, cuyas botellas-acuarios encierran un retoño de azúar candi. En algunas etiquetas bailan militares con sayo de wiskis escoceses. Carta blanca. Carta de oro. Las estrellas de coñac se vuelven constelaciones. Hay torinos fabricados en Regla de anís en frascos*

patrioteros con cintas de romería. Medallas. La Exposición de París. El preferido. Una litografía que muestra una ecuyere con traje de lentejuelas y botas a media pierna, sentada en las rodilas de un anciano lujurioso y condecorado. No falta siquiera el Mu-kwe-ló de arroz, preso en ventrudos potes de barro obscuro que llegaron al caserío, despues de cincuenta días de viaje, vía San Francisco, envueltos en manifiestos del partido nacionalista chino.[49]

Carpentier brings together innumerable mentions of trademarks and commercial objects that appear to be strewn together in random disarray. Roberto González Echevarría refers to the text as a 'meeting place for a meaningless plethora of signs,'[50] suggesting that in these descriptions Carpentier plays homage to surrealism and 'instead of the umbrella and the sewing machine on the operating table, we have here *écuyères* and Scottish soldiers, or in the hurricane "a sloop on the roof of the cathedral"'.[51] González Echavarría indicates that the metaphoric play with signs can be attributed to Carpentier's imitation of the Futurists and some of the mechanical tics of the Cubists. He further notes that these Surrealist descriptions are interspersed with authorial statements that openly critique the North, with the following being exemplary of such commentary: '*El día echo a andar por el valle. Mil totís asomaron sus picos negros entre las hojas. Despertó el pescador noruego de un anuncio de Emulción, con su heráldico bacalao a cuestas; se hizo visible el rosado fumador de cigarillos de Virginia, plantado en campiña cubana por hombres del norte*'.[52] Although some signs appear random whilst others, like the above, point directly at the subject being evaluated, I would nevertheless suggest that the appearances of multiple signs and adverts in the narrative are far lass accidental than they may appear to be. We are given the impression that they are haphazard, the soup of signs created by the hurricane being one such instance, but the fact remains that these signs, trademarks and commercial objects, individually and collectively, form part of a wider network of cultural significations that could only be present within the cosmopolitan and multinational environment Carpentier describes. This is a landscape that for Carpentier is becoming transformed by imports and a culture that is becoming eroded and is under threat from Yankee materialism. This is also an environment that he

[49] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 19.
[50] Roberto González Evhevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, p. 72.
[51] Roberto González Evhevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, p. 72.
[52] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 167.

attempts to resist but it is not easy to separate this mass of multiple significations into separate areas, some more meaningful than others. The hurricane offers us an example that illustrates the difficulties of distinguishing between some signs and others. The descriptive passages that take us through from 'Temporal (a)' to 'Temporal (d)' appear with the aid of the hurricane, to bring together fragmented parts of adverts, clothing, neon lighting and natural vegetation into a eclectic landscape of signs in a scenery removed from the world of the *Central* and the Yankee hotel although contained within a multicultural and hybrid Cuban context.

> *Ya los ríos acarrean reses muertas. El mar avanza por las calles del cuidades. Las viviendas se rajan como troncos al fuego. Los árboles extranjeros caen, uno tras otro, mientras las ciebas y los júcaros restisten a pie firme. Las vigas de un futuro rascacielos se torcieron como alambre de florista. CIGARROS, se lee todavía en un anuncío lumínico, huérfano de fluido, cuyas letras echarán a volar dentro de un instante, transformando el cielo en alfabeto. COLÓN, responde otro rótulo en el lado opuesto de la plaza martirizada. El ataúd de un niño navega por las calles de las Ánimas. Encajándose en el tronco de una palma, un trozo de riel ha dibujado una cruz. La prostituta polaca, olvidada en un barco-prisión, empieza a reír. CI. A. ROS. Las letras que caen cortan el asfalto como hachazos.* [53]

The collection of symbols here does not wholly depend on trademarks or commercial objects but relies heavily on the allegorical significance Carpentier gives to natural features of the landscape such as the trees; the ciebas and the júcaros, native plants remain intact whilst the imported ones break under the strain of the winds.

But even as some structures survive whilst others falter, the potential for transformation is raised here. The fading neon sign advertising cigarettes, although eventually blown apart by the winds, illuminates and transforms the dark skies as it flies past, and continues to transform itself as each individual word looses its grip one at a time. Certainly a surreal image, particularly when we add this to the little boy's coffin adrift down the watery streets, and Roberto González Echevarría has a point regarding Carpentier's homage to the Surrealists. Nevertheless, the coming together of all these signs is far more suggestive of a fluid and mutable dynamic (perhaps like Ortiz's which is based on change and flux), of cultural referencing and signification. This last proposition becomes all the more interesting if we consider Louis A Pérez Jr's suggestion of Cuban cultural identity not as a fixed and immutable construct but rather as cultural artefact; one that is contested and contesting and formed from

[53] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 47-48.

representations often filled with contradictions and incoherence, almost always in flux. This cultural identity constantly adjusts to and reconciles perceptions of reality with changing needs.[54] Pérez Jr. discusses culture as a work in progress, one that is constantly responding to the historical and as such it is historically contingent as both national expression and individual construction, possessing multiple forms, often simultaneously, sometimes successively.

The inherent irony is that as much as Carpentier's text draws attention to these multiple meanings, he also attempts to disavow them by separating them. And to some extent so does González Echavarria when he separates the surreal images from the more direct political discourse. The multicultural and sign infused tableaux are often set against the tropical pastoral (yet another hybrid form?) as a means to create difference between Anglo-Western induced influences and the 'natural unspoilt' Cuban landscape, but how can Carpentier differentiate within the multi-cultural descriptions between the North's colonising force and Cuban culture and the surreal? This point is all the more evident in the following descriptive passage of Havana.

> *El Café Versailles, con sus pirámides de coco y su vidriera llena de moscas. El Louvre, cuyo portal era feudo de limpiabotas. La ferretería de los Tres Hermanos – que había embadurnado sus columnas con los colores de la bandera cubana. Y luego el desfile de ornamentaciones rupestres:...En un puesto de esquina tres chinos se abanicaban entre mameyes rojos y racimos de platanos...Menegildo estaba maravillado por la cantidad de blancos elegantes, de automobiles, de caballitos con la cola trenzada que desfilaban por las calles de esa cuidad que se le antojaba enorme.*[55]

Instead of a description composed of neon signs and commercial trademarks we find that the Havana Carpentier illustrates is composed of multinational influences that appear as commonplace and not as alien intrusions or incursions. The names of places alone reveal a cosmopolitan environment as equally based on the exogenous as the cigarette and whiskey brand names found in the Yankee hotel. In this particular instance the projection of Havana gives us an indication of the valorisation within Cuba of European locations. Both Versailles and the Louvre lend their names to an ice-cream parlour and possibly to a hotel. The ironmonger's shop front seems to be held up by columns, perhaps even neoclassical ones, but the fact is that that these

[54] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture* (The Ecco Press: New York, 1999), p. 8.
[55] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 133.

structures have been adorned with the colours of the Cuban flag. Thus any classical structures of European origin are translated onto a local context, and although signs of a European cultural colonisation, these signs in their reformed state demonstrate an inability of the sign to travel intact. Even the presence of the three Chinese men fanning themselves amongst tropical fruit reconfigures them in their surroundings.

The transferral of cultural signs to and from other destinations certainly alters them, and therefore, even the symbols representing North American incursions become integrated into an already existing matrix of configurations. Although the presence of the *Central* indicates the triumph of colonialist power, during the storm we find that the American adverts are washed away by the unrelenting wind and streams of water. Placards and labels reappear after the storm as a jumbled up alphabet soup, with meanings and significances rearranged. We could argue that the storm functions as a cleanser in an attempt to wash away these North American cultural signs, but this is not the outcome. What we are left with, instead, are images that can not be original because they are transformed firstly through their re-contextualisation within a Cuban landscape, and secondly, by the hurricane's centrifugal force. And neither can they be identical to the original source of power. Although a certain measure of mimesis is present in these signs and commercial trademarks, the scenes quoted above also display a hybrid presence and it is this very difference that defines them. Homi Bhabha refers to the displacement of the sign carrying colonial discourse as emblematic of the ambivalence of colonial presence, the authority of which is split between its appearance as original and authoritarian, and its articulation as repetition and difference.[56] The presence of this double inscription, argues Bhabha, reveals the deep-seated split in colonial discourse and the ambivalence of its authority. But it seems to me that the integration of colonial signs in the Cuban society Carpentier illustrates, and his embracing of some signs and the critiquing of others, displays a split in his narrative; one that reveals the ambivalence in his acknowledgement of the constituting parts of Cuban culture, particularly when, and as Louis A. Pérez Jr. suggests, Cubans participated willingly in the absorption of US culture into theirs. Their participation was indispensable to the success of the US hegemony and therefore, Cubans bore some responsibility for their own domination. Cubans often re-appropriated North American representations of 'Cubaness' as a

[56] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken For Wonder' *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 107.

strategy calculated to accommodate North American market forms. American culture, way of life and other cultural and material trends and forms were introduced by Cubans and without duress as part of their everyday life in the belief that this approach promised a better life. As such, North American ways could not have been imposed from the outside without Cubans on the inside being willing and eager to transform themselves.[57] This called into question the means by which Cubans experienced cultural authenticity; doubts are also raised about the authority and adequacy of Cuban institutions to articulate and advance national interests. Pérez Jr. further argues that the complicity in this process involved Cubans of all classes, gender, race and areas: 'US forms had so thoroughly penetrated the structure order of daily life that it was almost difficult to make a sharp distinction between what was "properly Cuban" and what was "North American". In the end, to challenge "North American", as after the Cuban revolution of 1959, was to challenge what it meant to be Cuban'.[58]

I would therefore suggest that as much as the transformation and displacement of colonial signs draws attention to the deep-seated ambivalence of colonial authority, the process by which Cubans integrated US cultural artefacts into their society significantly led to the challenge of their own, post-colonial identity. Although it is clear that the US sign is transformed even as it is taken for wonder by the Cubans,[59] the absorption of US cultural objects by Cubans and their integration of them into their society create irredeemable tensions between the hybrid reality of society through the absorption of US culture, and any critique levied against the North. To critique North American incursions would simultaneously lead to the challenge of Cuban cultural identity from within.

Even as Carpentier attacks the North, his challenge is not clearly located from within this hybrid multicultural society. It is clear from Pérez Jr's argument that the absorption of US culture together with the European influences ensured a dynamic of change and the continual hybridisation of cultural identity. These were not all negative influence and as Salman Rushdie suggests it is through these disparate and multiple forms that 'newness enters the world'[60] In this sense we have the impression of a hybrid Cuban cultural identity informed and formed by the continual presence of

[57] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture*, p. 10-12.
[58] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture*, p. 12.
[59] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken For Wonder', p. 102.
[60] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, p. 394.

these signs, and the resistance to them because the hybridity produced mongrelizes cultural expression. Although Rushdie embraces mongrelization, Carpentier perceives these signs as markers of neo-colonialism that threaten the essence of Cuban cultural identity.

To locate his challenge against the US from the centre of Havana would challenge the basis on which Cuban constructed their cultural identity. Carpentier is nevertheless aware of the complicity that takes place here, but then again he separates the political from the social, placing the blame for US economic incursions on politicians. Chapter Twenty Seven, 'Politica' is rather telling in pointing out the complicity of Cuban politicians with the US.

> *Lo cierto es que la sabia administración de tales próceres había traído un buen rosario de quiebras, cataclismos, bancos podridos y negocios malolientes. Roída por el chancro del latifundio, hipotecada en plena adolescencia, la isla de corcho se había vuelto una larga azucarera incapaz de flotar.*[61]

Certainly a great metaphor for Cuba's sinking economy. The US management of sugar, aided by backhanders dished out to corrupt politicians, is here held responsible for the endemic exploitation of Cuba's economy. The wave of cultural influences and products from the US is continuous and unrelenting. The final bastion of resistance is seen by Carpentier as 'los negros': and not just any, but Usebio, Menegildo and his kind.

> *¡La campiña criolla producía ya imágenes de frutas extrangeras, madurando en anuncios de refrescos! ¡El* orange-crush *se hacía instrumento del imperialismo, como el recuerdo de Roosevelt o el avión de Lindberg...! Sólo los negros, Menegildo, Longina, Salomé y su prole conservaban celosamente un carácter y una tradición antillana. ¡El bongo, antídoto de Wall Street! ¡El Espíritu Santo, venerado por los Cué, no admitía salchichas yanquis dentro de su panecillos votivos...! ¡Nada de* hot-dogs *con los santos de Mayeya!*[62]

Whilst the political and cultural complicity taking place in Cuba is clearly recognised by Carpentier, and amidst the references that point towards a hybrid culture, the novel always draws towards making distinctions between two worlds. Tensions between multiculturalism and distinctions between the supposed white and black worlds underpin the plot's progression. We have already seen evidence of hybrid signs in the

[61] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 120.
[62] Alejo Carpentier, *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*, p. 121.

rural landscape, but Carpentier is nevertheless attempting to maintain differences between the cosmopolitan vision of Havana and the Cué family; of the black world of tradition and religion to that of politics and change. It is here, at this stage that space becomes an urgent imperative since it seems that the Afro-Cuban world as demarcated by Carpentier is the only space seemingly beyond the reach of the United States. His aim therefore in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* is to preserve Afro-Cuban cultural identity by keeping it in a separate sphere, a marginal one even. Menegildo's story is thus developed as a rather enclosed world that appears to operate outside historical change, and the ultimate ramifications for this are important for Carpentier since his aim here is to depict the black world as the final bastion of Cuban tradition. Roberto González Echevarría explains this dynamic as follows:

> Time and history follow a different rhythm in that micro-world of the blacks; which may explain the sub-title of the original edition of the novel: *historia afro-cubana* (the 1968 edition has *novella*). Subject to history, the white world is caught in a process of decay, invaded as it is by the effluvia of American products and customs that pollute the countryside. The white world is one of time and gradual decay; the black world has the strength of permanence. Within the context of the white world only comedy is possible (the pimp wars), whereas tragedy is the trademark of the black. The signs generated by white culture (read politics, change) are comical, ephemeral, meaningless; those of the black world are permanent and full of meaning.[63]

The most distinct feature about this dialectic is the contrast made between colour, that is black and white and the features ascribed to them, as if these world are indeed distinct spheres, informed by particular rites. We therefore have the white world caught up in the broad flow of history informed by world wars, politics and sugar production and prices, whereas the black is seen from the perspective of the Cué family unit, of Menegildo's life cycle represented though a number of initiations that structure his life around a series of rituals and repetitions that resist linear progression but are instead the fulfilment of a predetermined set of events.[64] Still, how distinct can these spheres be when as Pérez Jr. observed, the presence of multiple external signifiers makes it difficult to distinguish between what is truly Cuban and what is not. This hybridity recalls the intergration of exogenous cultural and racial elements as the continually impact on society. Notions of hybridity further recall José Martí's

[63] Roberto González Echevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, pp. 77-78.
[64] Roberto González Evhevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, p. 78.

philosophy on *meztizaje*.[65] Afro-Cuban culture and black religious practices are based on the syncretic and hybrid, but it seems clear that distinctions are being made here between types of hybridity; between cultural hybridity and *el mestizaje*; the syncretism of the white world is seen as something separate by Carpentier leading us to the conclusion that we are dealing here with two distinct notions of hybridity each drawn along racial lines.

Carpentier cannot keep these spheres entirely separate and I have been drawing attention throughout this chapter to examples of seepage between sites. Making Afro-Cuban religion an agent of political history further violates the atemporal quality Carpentier ascribes to the Afro-Cuban site. Roberto González Echevarría suggests that this is a problem that Carpentier cannot resolve since he is constantly engaged in a décalage between History and black history, and the insertion of the latter into the former; thus both worlds are undermined by the process.[66] Although the narrative is structurally undermined, González Echévarria draws attention to the split between Cuban and black history. Carpentier's engagement with Afro-Cuban cultural identity as a separate cultural identity is nevertheless significant. The syncretism informing the santería and ñáñigo rituals are also separated from the rest of society and as such we are dealing with a very self contained notion of syncretism. Concepts of racial hybridity seem to function separately from the hybridised white Creole cultural identity and attention is drawn to a duality in the perception and projection of a cultural identity. Nicolás Guillén's recital before the Lyceum articulated this sense of a split self between black cultural identity and the received notion of blackness as it enters into the concept of a syncretic Cuban cultural identity. But as my previous chapter discusses, Guillén's projection of his identity forms part of an negotiated process: the space in which he articulated his *mestizo* cultural identity was a liminal one caught between the syncretic notion of cultural identity and the black racial stereotypes that constructed him as Other. Either way he is rendered virtually invisible caught between one space and another. Whereas Carpentier prioritises Afro-Cuban cultural identity, this excessive, albeit degraded, visibility can only exist in a segregated, marginal form. Vera M. Kutzinski suggests that Afro-Cubanism had all the makings of a folkloric spectacle whose political effect

[65] See Introduction/Chapter One, p. 21 and José Martí, 'Nuestra América', in *Nuestra América*, 'Introducción de Pedro Henriquez Ureña (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1939), José Martí, 'Mi Raza', *Obras Completas 2* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975).
[66] Roberto González Echevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*, p. 88.

was to displace and obfuscate actual social problems and conflicts, especially racial ones. As such, the mythic Afro-Cuban underworld Ortiz and others constructed dealt with more than quests for cultural identity but also the need to find a space that was seemingly beyond the reach of the United States.[67] The display therefore of Afrocubanismo as a fundamental aspect of Cuban cultural identity is projected as a black hybrid signifier whilst white hybridity is seen to remain outside these parameters. And to challenge the North American source of this hybridity challenges the very premise on which Cuban cultural identity is constructed. It appears that syncretism and hybridity within a Cuban context offers the appearance of diversity but a closer interrogation of the structures informing these concepts draws our attention to tensions and divisions that need to be covered up rather than celebrated as Rushdie celebrates mongrelization. The racial tensions together with the neo-colonial fears create a tentative base from which the multicultural and indeed, *el mestizaje* are negotiated. Although syncretic principles in their inception since we are dealing with the coming together of the exogenous with the local, we are certainly not dealing with the 'bastard child of history' when it comes to *el mestizaje* since the black and brown and white do not leak into one another.[68] Because concepts of racial hybridity, *el mestizaje* and syncretic models such as transculturation are so implicated in the perpetuation of racial inequality and in creating other forms of knowledge about blackness, they appear to adhere to colonial concepts of race rather than postcolonial ones. Challenging questions are therefore raised about the terms under which these concepts of hybrid identities expand on notions of the postcolonial. These questions will continue to be interrogated in each subsequent chapter and it will be interesting to note if the later texts engage with hybrid identities in the same or similar ways, or if the passing of time, and the influence of academic disciplines such as postcolonial studies create less implicated and more self aware concepts of cultural identity.

This may well be the case in my next chapter in which I deal with the 1959 Cuban Revolution. By focusing on the Cuba Revolution I hope to reintroduce themes of *mestizaje* and of hybrid cultural identities as they came to be reconfigured under the socialist ethos that informed the Revolution. Because the events of 1959 indicated a rupture with the past, that is, a neo-colonial one and the political and ideological

[67] Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets: Race and Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* (Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 145.
[68] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, p. 394.

drives informing them, they also indicated a new beginning and a sense that decolonisation had finally been achieved. As discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, Roberto Fernández Retamar's writings on the figure of Caliban are certainly informed by post-colonial drives that embrace hybridity and contestation. Focusing on this period therefore offers the opportunity to examine the Revolution as potentially a post-colonial event, to compare the themes of the previous three chapters with the events taking place and to observe how new themes or how previous ones change to suit the experience.

5. The Politics of Location, Cultural Identity and Ideology within the revolutionary process.

> Cuba stunned us. This is an overwhelming revolution, an overwhelming country and people. We had to establish the genre and the form of our film accordingly...[1]

> "In every rupture we intellectuals are accustomed to see first an ideological problem and then, always as a result of this, moral and sentimental problems. These resulting problems can only be resolved through the solution of the fundamental ideological conflict." In this sense, says the poet [Roque Dalton], revolution is a constant challenge: its advance makes it insufficient simply to accept its overall principles and latest positions in a general way, "but requires permanent incorporation of its totalising practice." The process brings on a crisis of individualism.[2]

5.1

The triumph of the 1959 Revolution would bring a new force and set of ideological imperatives, informed by a radical ideological shift, which reopened and rearticulated the concerns over cultural identity. Marking a cultural and ideological renaissance, this shift can be seen as entering into the periodic declarations of an independent identity. Attached to this idea of independence (primarily because the 1898 War of Independence failed to establish Cuba as a republic in the full sense of the word), the question of establishing a ('new') post-colonial identity was just as relevant, if not more so, post-1959. The subsequent Soviet presence on the island, however, draws attention to, if not the limits of independence, then to the procedural manner in which new forms of colonialism come to bear in postcolonial times. Postcolonialism as a process of engagements and disengagements has particular

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[1] Sergei Urusevsky, 'On Form', *Iskusstvo kino Magazine*, 1965, translated by Nadia Kizenko, cited in Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p13. http://www.milestonefilms.com/pdf/Iamcuba.pdf Urusevsky (1908-1974) was *Soy Cuba/Ya Kuba's* cinematographer.

[2] Roque Dalton, *El intelectual y la sociedad,* Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1969, p. 92, cited by Michael Chanan, 'Lessons of Experience', *Memories of Underdevelopment,* Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, director, and *Inconsolable Memories,* Edmundo Desnoes, Author (U.S.A.: Rutgers Films in Print, Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 4.

resonance given Cuba's protracted disentanglements from Spain and later, the United States. I would like to investigate this notion further in this chapter, by considering the Soviet affiliation with Cuba as symptomatic of the recurrence of this process. Nevertheless, as much as we consider the postcolonial as a process, the 1959 Revolution made certain demands of Cuban artists. The ideological shift introduced after the 1959 Revolution led to the subsequent demand for conversion, or *el desgarramiento* as a mark of the ideological rupture with the past. The ease suggested at times by an ever responsive process like Ortiz's transculturation is therefore unsettled by such ruptures in society where reformulations are forced (as *un desgarramiento* suggests). But what occurs to those who resist conversion? Does sticking to the past reaffirm a familiar sense of one's own cultural identity or does it lead to alienation from the renewed sense of cultural identity? And indeed, as Roberto Fernández Retamar interrogates these issues from within the Revolutionary movement: '*¿es posible un intelectual fuera de la Revolución?, ¿es posible un intelectual no revolucionario?, ¿es posible pretender establecer normas de trabajo intelectual revolucionario fuera de la Revolución?*'.[3] I will be discussing the issues raised by conversion, and the ideological schisms through Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's gritty *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968), which, together with Mikhail Kalatozov's film *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* (1964), a Cuban/Soviet production, interrogate the events surrounding the 1959 Revolution as ones that draw attention to ideological schisms and re-engagement with neo-colonialism. Whilst *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* does not offer an entirely Cuban perspective, or an intimate one as perhaps Nicolás Guillén's performance did, the very presence of a Soviet crew offers a viewpoint from which to interrogate representations of Cuban cultural identity from an angle that intriguingly engages with the perceived hybrid quality of Cuban cultural identity.

This sense of the marvellous and extraordinary can be read in Urusevsky's stunned reaction to Cuba (see this chapter's opening quote) and it is one that he aimed to 'capture' through technological and cinematic innovation. The above quote is also a view informed by an outsider looking at a new and exotically perceived reality, and the need for generic invention to represent it. I will be discussing the extent to which the Soviet eye/I reveals the geopolitical and ideological implications of the Soviet

[3] Roberto Fernández Retamar, 'Diez Años de Revolución: El Intelectual y la Sociedad', *Casa de las Américas*, Numero 56, Sept 1969, p. 7.

presence, the tensions that informed the role of the artist within the revolutionary process, and how these factors impact on representations of cultural identity.

If in the previous chapters we see cultural identity expressed through diverse modes and from different racial and generic imperatives, after 1959 artists and intellectuals were caught up within the mandate of a newly established revolutionary government. Underpinned by the drive to represent the revolutionary reality in its immediacy, the break with the old regime and the start of a 'new' Cuba were major imperatives and ones that raised questions as to whether this shift would bring about literary change and the development of a new genre that would be true to the Revolution's ideological ethos.

The concerns surrounding representation and the need to reflect veracity and immediacy were fulfilled to a great extent by the Revolutionary Government's recognition of the power of the media and cinema. Even as the Cuban Revolution brought about a period of intense and rapid reform, it also enabled the birth of a new Cuban cinema. The Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art (*Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* – ICAIC) was set up in March 1959, three months after the Rebel Army entered Havana, and under the first decree concerning cultural affairs passed by the Revolutionary Government.[4] Media had already been recognised and successfully deployed as a tool of dissemination by the Rebel Army, which had set up their own radio station, *Radio Rebelde*, in the Sierra Maestra. When they entered Havana, the Rebel Army occupied radio stations and published newspapers as part of their strategy to establish order. Underpinning the formation of the ICAIC was the recognition, at the time, of the immense changes being experienced, with the need to document the historical events as they were occurring. In an interview Jorge Fraga, who has been involved with the ICAIC from the outset, expressed a clear awareness of the momentous events, together with the immediate need to document them:

> There was something about the spirit of that time. It was impossible to recreate it. Every day, every hour, every minute something was happening that was worth being filmed. Everywhere. It was the most intense, most powerful time. Life was being lived with the highest energy. You didn't sleep. You didn't eat. You didn't go home. You were always thinking and doing.[5]

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[4] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image* (London: BFI Publishing Ltd, 1985), p. 19.

[5] Jorge Fraga, quoted in 'The Cuban Film Institute: Past and Present, An Interview with Jorge Fraga' in, *A Decade of Cuban Documentary Film,* Written and developed by Susan Fanshel, Edited by Maxine Burrow, Designed by Diane Ghisone (New York: Young Filmmakers Foundation Inc., 1982), p .9.

The development of Cuban cinema post 1959 was therefore informed by a living and actual historical process and not just as a series of cinematic products, and as Michael Chanan suggests, it was 'a most powerful force in the collective memory of the Cuban people, popular historian of the Revolution second only to Fidel, and thus a force of social cohesion'.[6] Given the institutional and ideological mandate that informed the film institute, filmmaking mainly involved subjects that were relevant to the revolution, social reform, and the experiences of Cubans during these times. Thus, film became a populist medium that projected images of reform and was of every day relevance to an audience that could immediately relate to such events. Such was the case with documentaries that promulgated the importance of the Agrarian Reform law in 1959, which led to the expropriation of North American property in Cuba, and subsequent U.S. retaliation. As a major thematic within the ICAIC's remit, documentaries on such issues were invariably informed by an anti-American and anti-imperialistic ethos.[7] In adopting this stance, the ICAIC certainly projected a political and contestatory position against the United States for a local and overseas audience, thus disseminating an ideological and political message about Cuba's internal and external policies.

The camera also created the effect of authenticating the image, functioning as a first-hand witness to the events and history. As Jorge Fraga added, filmmakers would just go out into the streets and make films; 'improvisation was not the ultimate answer for *our* cinema, but because of historical and political circumstances we took the small amount of equipment we had and went onto the streets to film what was happening'.[8] Although a mediated process, Fraga seems to suggest that the immediacy narrowed the distance between these images and any temporal or aesthetic removal and, more importantly, gave the impression of authenticity as opposed to improvisation, which relies on invention. The general awareness of the 1953-59 years as a dramatic and historical experience that needed to be recorded for posterity gave rise to memoirs, narratives, books and films about the struggle, and in this sense the lived experience of the fifties was ascribed a critical role in the task of nation building

[6] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, p. 3.
[7] Michael Chanan,, 'Lessons of Experience', *Memories of Underdevelopment,* p. 17.
[8] Jose Fraga, quoted in 'The Cuban Film Institute: Past and Present, An Interview with Jorge Fraga', p. 9, (my stress).

and reconstructing and exalting a national past.[9] Mikhail Kalatozov's film *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* fulfils these aims, performing a historical function in its representation of the years of struggle under the second *batistato*; it does, however, lack the immediacy of the radical events and changes that so prompted Jorge Fraga to go out in the street and film. My intention, therefore, is to discuss *Soy Cuba/Ja Cuba* within the nation building drive of the 1960s to see how the recent past the film draws upon serves as a platform on which a post-Revolutionary history and cultural identity is reconstructed. As discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, Roberto Fernández Retamar's writings on the figure of Caliban are certainly informed by revolutionary and post-colonial drives that embrace hybridity and contestation. My earlier chapters have been concerned with external influences and their incorporation into themes and genres regarding their attempt to represent Cuban cultural identity. The (at times uneasy) accommodation of the exogenous contributed to concepts of hybridity and resistance. Whilst with the 1959 Revolution another external influence -the USSR- becomes potent, so does the need to resist US interference. The very presence of a Soviet crew in Cuba and their participation in this joint production is itself telling of Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union during the period, but if concepts of *mestizaje* and hybrid, syncretic models of cultural identity served to unite and provide contestation, under what terms can notions of racial and cultural hybridity re-enter the Cuban context within the post-colonial given the embedded neo-colonial presence of the Soviets and the continued threat of the US? Against whom, then, is resistance staged? Does *el mestizo's* constestatory position change under the socialist ethos of the Revolution?

5.2

> I remember the Soviet director Kalatozov came here in the early sixties, and he said to us: You need to film *this* moment. It doesn't matter how. Because we - he was referring to the Soviet Revolution - have very little material about that time in our history; there are practically no film records of Lenin.[10]

[9] Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000), p. 178-79.

[10] Jorge Fraga, *Op.Cit.*, 'The Cuban Film Institute: Past and Present, An Interview with Jorge Fraga', p. 9.

The idea behind the writing and filming of *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was to celebrate the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Filmed in black and white and in documentary form, it was inspired in its nationalistic intent and revolutionary spirit by the soviet director Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), whose film *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925), commemorated the Russian Revolution and its egalitarian ideals. Eisenstein was also a forerunner in creating cinematic aesthetics for the representation of history in film and the transformation of propaganda into art. *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* recalls aspects of this aesthetic: the film traces the glorification of Cuba's liberation from the Batista regime and the United States neo-imperial incursions, just as Eisenstein's film acknowledged the liberation of the Russian peasants from Czarist rule. The film's nexus is therefore very much anchored in a Russian cinematic tradition, together with the assumption of a shared revolutionary and ideological experience. It would seem that Kalatozov is also driven by a wish fulfilment to capture the Revolution's historical immediacy on film, something that had not been possible in Russia. *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* takes the form of five episodic vignettes that trace Cuban history from the final years of the second Batistato, leading up to the impending triumph of the Revolution. The storyline, principally didactic and in the tradition of socialist realism, focuses on Cuba, the island, which is given a female voice, and individual Cubans as they suffer under North American imperialism. The Cubans then offer resistance, and predictably the film ends with the emergence of the revolutionary hero, a bearded man who looks rather like Fidel Castro. An apparently straightforward message is suggested, one that functions at a unifying level, connecting each of the five vignettes through the call for arms against oppression and for the freedom revolution would bring.

Each vignette is introduced by the voice of 'Mother Cuba', with the words '*Soy Cuba*', placing a stamp of authority over the events of each episode as well as serving a unifying function as these very words introduce each vignette. '*Soy Cuba*' therefore becomes a mantra, which asserts Cuban cultural identity and revolutionary ideals with every repetition. 'Mother Cuba's' voice is nevertheless dubbed by a female Russian voice-over who asserts that she too is 'Mother Cuba', creating a doubling that serves to disrupt unity and continuity. Originally filmed in Spanish, *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was dubbed in Russian, with English subtitles added to the film in the early nineties for the film's screening at the Telluride Film Festival. The film's sound track is at times muffled, the principle dialogue, in Spanish, is audible, although the

Russian voices appear to have been mixed slightly above those of the Spanish ones, as is the Soviet 'Mother Cuba's' voice. Whether or not these sound anomalies are down to the film's age, its storage, or the film stock, they contribute to the impression that Cuban voices cannot speak for themselves but are rather spoken over. Upon its release, *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was not well received, denounced by Cuban authorities as traitorous, and dubbed 'I am NOT Cuba'.[11] Perhaps Cubans did not identify themselves in the film, or rather recognised a Soviet presence that unsettled the Revolution's drive for independence. Following this reception, the film was subsequently 'buried' or 'lost', apparently in the 'Kremlin's film archives awaiting rediscovery',[12] which occurred during 1992 when *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was screened at the Telluride Film Festival in a tribute to Kalatozov. The film's subsequent marketing, its 1995 video and theatrical release under the auspices of Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola have further served to lift *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* international profile.

Still, the film was a Soviet/Cuban production, and if we are dealing with a film that aims to display a unifying message at a national level, *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* dual title (triple if we include the film's English translated title), together with the presence of the Soviet crew, unsettles the Cuban nationalistic expression. A practical exercise certainly informed the close collaboration between the Soviet industry and the Cuban, particularly for the ICAIC, which during its early years looked towards socialist countries for assistance in training and technical equipment. Kalatozov's team brought their own transport and equipment to Cuba for the making of the film, and by informal arrangement all this equipment was left behind in Cuba once filming was completed.[13] However, the Soviet team left behind more than equipment, also incorporating their artistic vision of Cuba into the production, a vision that was informed by their own ideological and artistic conversion under Soviet rule, and by the fact that they were filming Cuba as outsiders looking in. The more recent

[11]Gary Morris, '*I am Cuba* D.V.D Review', http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue09/reviews/iamcuba/text.htm, p. 5.
[12] Mark Savlov, 'Movie Guide *I am Cuba*', *Austin Chronicle*, http://www.austinchronicle.com. The 're-discovery' motif is used by Savlov to describe the film's re-emergence. I am not sure about the accuracy regarding the film's storage 'deep' in the Kremlin because as far as I understand *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was ill received in Cuba and not in the Soviet Union and the film would not have necessarily been suppressed in the USSR. Nevertheless, the combination of the Kremlin as a monolithic storage container and the film's subsequent rediscovery from its vaults adds to its mythic quality as well as recalling the terms under which Guillén's poetry was 'discovered' as an cultural artefact.
[13] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, p. 130.

emergence of the film during the 1990s under the translated title of *I am Cuba* further diffuses the film's message, particularly since the title is not an abstract term but a direct, first person proclamation. The film's title therefore makes a direct assertion of what and who Cuba and Cubans are, and of who speaks for them and asserts authority over the island. Ironically the voice-overs, subtitles, the Soviet collaboration and the rediscovery of the film by Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola render this singular first person narrative voice plural, and the act of national reclamation becomes muted under the voices of international claims. Rather than appearing as the main protagonists in a film about their revolution, the film and its historical significance, Cuba and Cubans appear to be mediated through a process of linguistic, cultural, political and colonial translations that take possession of the film's unifying mantra. Even as 'Mother Cuba' reclaims Cuba for Cubans with every chant, the diversity of influences and voices in the final cut, rather than addressing the nationalistic immediacy and euphoria Jorge Fraga perceived when filming in the early 1960s, point instead towards the ongoing geo-political, historical and neo-imperial dynamics that have played such an important part in shaping post-1959 Cuba. The film in its present format is marketed as follows:

> Milestone presents:
> A Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese presentation
> Directed by Mikhail Kalatozov
> Cinematography by Sergei Urusevsky
> Script by Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Enrique Pineda Barnet.[14]

Ironically the only Cuban name to appear in this line up is the last one. The voice-overs, sound, and credit listings are, I would suggest, 'tells' that reveal the underlying network of structures that inform the film's production, and through which we can see a continual process of engagements and disengagements with neo-colonialism. *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba*, comes to represent a frame where these dynamics continually come into play, sometimes in ways that appear as part of a wider marketing strategy, as in the credit listings so informed by an artistic hierarchy, but when we consider the recurrence of a Soviet presence (and a US one), and their cumulative effect, we come to feel that the film is over inscribed by these features: ones that overburden the sense of revolutionary liberation and post-colonial renewal. This is one of the features that

[14]Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', p. 1.

make *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* such an interesting frame of interrogation. In the film's 'rediscovery' *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* historical temporality and Cuba's antagonistic relationship with the United States is reiterated, reflecting the consequential tensions between both countries through the Soviet presence on the island, as well as the continued influence of the United States on Cuban policy. Reformulations of Cuban cultural identity, as I discuss further down, are invariably contained within this dynamic.

As theorised through Fernando Ortiz's emphasis on transculturation, the impact of external forces on Cuban society were cited as a major contributing factor to the ever-changing face of Cuban cultural identity. Although it is clear that the United States remains a significant player in this dynamic (an issue I continue to engage with in the next chapter in my discussion of the Cuban stronghold in Miami), the 1960s also introduced a new exogenous element, and this was the Soviet Union.

Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba was co-written by the renowned Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1933-) and the Cuban novelist, poet and filmmaker, Enrique Pineda Barnet (1933-). Yevtushenko became a popular spokesman for a young generation of poets who refused to follow the directives of the Stalin regime together with its doctrine of social realism. His work was often at odds with the Soviet government, and in 1963 he received severe censure after the publication in Paris of his *Precocious Autobiography*. (He is currently teaching six months a year in the United States).[15] Pineda Barnet published his first novel in 1953, but was also writing for television and theatre; his involvement in film came through his collaboration in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* and his association with the ICAIC. Barnet has remained very involved in the Cuban cinematic industry, both as writer and director, and is now one of the most respected directors in Cuban cinema. The film's director, Mikhail Kalatozov (1903-73) had, only a few years earlier, won the Palme d'Or for his film *The Cranes are Flying* (1957), at the 1958 Cannes Film Festival. Kalatozov's career in the Soviet film industry had nevertheless been one of compromise between aesthetics and ideology. His cinematic trajectory is one that has been marked with severe censorship for his depiction of the Red Army in his 1932 film, *Gvozd v sapoge (Nail in Boot)*, and acclaim for his 1943 film about the defence of Stalingrad. In 1944 Kalatozov served as Russian consul in Los Angeles, reportedly to strengthen ties between Soviet and

[15] Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', p. 15.

North American filmmakers. Upon his return to the Soviet Union, he became Deputy Minister of Cinematography, but by 1950 was again involved in controversial films that met with severe official opposition, with one particular film, *Vernye druz'ja (Faithful Friends* 1954), banned until a year after Stalin's death. The tension between art and ideology was less apparent in the emblematic *The Cranes are Flying,* where Kalatozov was permitted far greater poetic and artistic licence than would have normally been allowed. Rather notably, this film was a product of the 'Khrushchev Thaw', and was released less than two years after the pivotal Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party (1956), which led to the temporary relaxing of censorship, and marked a period of relative cultural liberalism in the Soviet Union.[16] *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was co-produced by Mosfilm and the ICAIC, and therefore was well entrenched in the established new revolutionary order in Cuba as well a being indicative of the involvement of the Soviet Union in Cuba.

By the time Kalatozov commenced filming *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* in January 1963, Cuba was bracing itself against serious military incursions by the United States. Just two years earlier, in April 1961, in a CIA backed mission, aircrafts camouflaged with Cuban markings bombed Cuban airfields. Castro followed this attack by proclaiming Cuba a Marxist-Leninist state on April 16, and by April 17, the aborted United States sponsored assault commenced on the southern coast of Cuba at Playa Girón. Those captured were subjected to public interrogations and televised trials, which took full advantage of the media to project anti-American sentiments whilst reiterating revolutionary order. In January 1962 the United States enforced its trade embargo against Cuba, and expelled it from membership of the Organisation of American States (OAS). This was followed by the naval blockade of the island in October 1962 and the subsequent Cuban Missile Crisis. The impasse was finally diffused by the retreat of the Soviet Fleet and the removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuban soil.[17] The sentiment in Cuba was, therefore, not one of cultural or ideological

[16] Maxim D. Shrayer, 'Why Are the Cranes Still Flying', *The Russian Review,* Volume 56, Number 3, July 1997, p. 425.
[17] See Olga Miranda Bravo, *The U.S.A. Versus Cuba: Nationalizations and Blockade*, trans. Fernando Nápoles Tapia (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1996). This book offers a background on the final years of Batista's regime in relation to his economic associations with the United States and subsequent embargoes placed upon Cuba from 1959 onwards by the United States. Whilst it certainly functions within the ideological parameters of the present regime, with regular deferrals to Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro's explanations of facts and figures, it also offers important dates and facts. Another significant aspect of this publication is that it came at a time when Cuba's economy was still reeling from the loss of Soviet subsidies after the collapse of the Soviet Block. The book's preface

liberalism, or expansion, but one of withdrawal, and defiance of U.S. imperialistic onslaughts, both economic and military, together with a vociferous reinforcement of the ideology that had led Cuba to victory in the 1959 Revolution. Whilst these events led to a greater social cohesion, Cuba became a bonded state; rather ironically these very tensions underpinned a period during which major demographic changes were taking place through the steady mass exodus of Cubans, primarily the bourgeoisie, from the island to, on the whole, self imposed exile in the United States. Those that remained on the island were united by heart-felt nationalistic and ideological sentiments, whilst émigrés were considered as traitors to the cause. Michael Chanan succinctly describes this experience as follows:

> It was [the Cuban Missile Crisis] another of the experiences of the Revolution's early years that played a definitive role in forging social cohesion and bonding the island's unity, like the experiences of the Literacy Campaign and the Bay of Pigs. To talk to Cubans who lived through it, it was a moment in which individual fears were submerged in the collective, and national consciousness took on a peculiarly tangible form. They knew they were targets for a kind of attack that no one, if it came, would be able to escape, and although for the first time in history they had become masters of their own country, they were powerless to prevent it.[18]

Several points of interest are highlighted here, such as the articulation of social and national cohesion with a dynamic that is fraught with tensions. The sense of a collective is normally accompanied by feelings of empowerment, but in this case, powerlessness was also a by-product. At the same time, as the Cubans on the island braced themselves against the threat of invasion, they also ideologically and geographically excluded the Cuban exiles. The ideological and the nationalistic became conflated with the geographical, and with the polarisation of a Cuban cultural identity. Given that the great majority of those that left the island were white bourgeois, Cuba became racially blacker.[19] *Mestizaje*, as we shall see further down,

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suggests that the book is so necessary now 'because Cuba is opening its doors for foreign investment, seeking aid to pull out of an adverse economic situation [...]', pp. 9-10.

[18] Michael Chanan, 'Lessons of Experience', p. 11.

[19] See Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds., *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture* (Melbourne, New York: Ocean Press, 1993). Pérez Sarduy and Stubbs note that Cuba is demographically and socio-culturally far less white now than it was in 1959, with the initial exodus of the early sixties substantially contributing to this fact. Whilst this suggests that the population is more racially mixed and point towards a sense of racial democracy through the projection of the mulatto, 1981 statistics points towards a less fluid situation. According to the statistics one-third of the overall population were non-white, but the figure in Eastern Cuba was two-thirds, and there are

remained a strong signifier within the national: nevertheless, a change is noted in the nationalistic and ideological distinction made between those that remained in Cuba and those that left. The sense of a bonded zone indicates a break away from the 'outside world', whilst creating both an inclusion and exclusion zone within Cuba. Social cohesion was certainly a by-product, and one that inadvertently functioned as a vehicle with which to reiterate the Revolution's established new order for the wider good of the national collective on the island. It also led to a non-converted and excluded national collective outside the island. If we look back to my earlier chapters, the articulation of a united nationalistic and cultural expression during the first half of the twentieth century was informed by the drive to unite in the face of US incursions and entrenchments on the island as much as it was concerned with cultural renovation. Models, such as the transcultural dynamic expressed by Fernando Ortiz, focused on cultural and racial origins; the Revolutionary government's drive towards unity during these early years was more focused on ideological and artistic centralisation.[20] Here we see the re-emergence of unity as an overriding motif in defining notions of cultural identity. The presence of this form of an ideologically (and geographically) enforced sense of unity raises question not only about the endurance of such a structure, but also the terms under which such unity can be projected given the Soviet presence within the island and the external US ones. The focus on a bonded and cohesive cultural and nationalistic identity can only be maintained within the confines of the island (albeit in a splintering form because of the Soviet-Cuban dynamic), with the basis of Cuban cultural identity based on conversion and ideological affiliation. Anything or anybody that fell outside this remit failed to reflect the Revolution, and cultural identity began to be redefined according to geographical and spatial locations, and ideologies. Rather that creating social cohesion then, attention is drawn to the schisms in Cuban society, ones that continue to the present.

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areas in Cuba that are 'overwhelming white, and others where it is overwhelmingly black' (p. 10). Therefore, given these facts, the question of racial mix is not a straightforward one.

[20] Race in post-revolution Cuba remains a problematic issue. As during the first half of the twentieth century the race question became subsumed under a nationalistic umbrella, the promulgation of socialism conflated social equality with racial equality. Roberto Fernández Retamar's deployment of Caliban and the *mestizo* as the defining model for Cuban racial and revolutionary expression harks back to José Martí's 'beyond race' characterization of cultural identity, thus creating the impression of racial equality. Significantly, and as Pedro Pérez Sarduy states, 'the slogan "neither Black nor Red" formed part of a white backlash against major redistributive measures in the early revolutionary years. Even before socialism had been proclaimed, racism and anti-communism were being equated'. Although the Revolution enabled better access to public facilities for all Cubans, this was not entirely indicative of ethnic democratisation. See Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds. *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture*, p. 9.

The emphasis on conversion and the options open to those that remained on (or left) the island is expressed in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's gritty *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968). The film's chronology starts in 1961, and is set against the backdrop of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the mass bourgeois exoduses, and ends in 1962, with the nuclear threat of the Cuban Missile Crisis. *Memorias* handles the theme of post-Revolution bourgeois alienation through Sergio, a 'wannabe' writer (played by Sergio Corrieri, who incidentally also plays the role of Alberto in one of *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* vignettes). We view Cuba through Sergio's bourgeois eyes as he witnesses the changes, tensions and real fears of a nuclear strike, with the film's closing frame focusing on a large mushroom cloud looming over Havana. Since the film's point of view is concerned with the role of the artist in revolutionary Cuba, the ironic handling of Sergio's position suggests that, by implication, anyone identifying too much with his response to the crisis would demonstrate that they were still caught up in the old order. The implications for Sergio are serious since in not converting he implicitly fails to endorse the Revolution's ideology; return to his old life is impossible and he appears to be suspended between the old and the new, and alienated from both. Sergio as the potential writer becomes symbolic of the 'artistic and intellectual community discovering itself in the act of breaking down the vocabulary of its own existence'.[21] In other words, the character (who shares his name with that of the actor) undergoes the intellectual/artistic/ideological/identity crisis of the artist within the Revolutionary process, and plays out the tensions between aesthetic and ideology. Referred to as *el desgarramiento,* which denotes the ideological rupture with the past, the artist could only write himself into existence in the very act of deconstructing and denying the very premise on which his identity (as that of the nation state), had been created.[22]

If in the previous chapters we see cultural identity expressed through diverse modes and from different racial and generic imperatives, after 1959 artists and intellectuals were caught up within the mandate of a newly established revolutionary government. During this period the artist had to deal with the fast moving historical reality of the first years of the revolution, and the ideological rupture the revolution brought with it. As Roberto González Echevarría suggests, most Cuban writers belonged to the bourgeois, a fact that should not be surprising given the nature of

[21] Michael Chanan, 'Lessons of Experience', p. 9.
[22] Michael Chanan, 'Lessons of Experience', p. 4.

Cuba's pre-revolutionary society. The relevance of artistic trends and aesthetics were questioned because of their ideologically loaded positioning, but in denouncing former styles, artists were faced with a crisis of representation and of ideological affiliation. Underpinned by the drive to represent the revolutionary reality in its immediacy, the break with the old regime and the start of a 'new' Cuba were major imperatives. Representation therefore needed to be different and new as a means to avoid the re-inscription of a pre-1959 class-based discourse which would limit the Revolution's success and message. As Roque Dalton states:

> *Lo que pasa también es que las proposiciones de la revolución están embarazadas de futuro y muchos de nosotros seguimos ostentando patéticamente demasiadas fidelidades al pasado, nuestro peor enemigo en el fondo.*[23]

Artists were faced with the need to 'convert' from their previous bourgeois affiliations to the revolutionary ones: implicit in this conversion was the reality that 'to be revolutionary before the spring of 1961, when the Revolution was declared socialist, was one thing. It was another to be revolutionary after that'.[24] But we are also dealing here with the disavowal or at least the jettisoning of the past. Such conversion was described by Roque Dalton with almost religious fervour through the proposition that artists take '*un baño social*', thus evoking a vision of the Cuban intellectual as 'born again', after his submergence in the baptismal experience of the social and ideological actuality of the Revolution.[25] Conversion therefore, as González Echevarría argues, was a real phenomenon in Cuba, one that raised questions as to whether this shift would bring about literary change and the development of a new genre that would be true to the Revolution's ideological ethos.[26] Sergio potentially plays the role of the 'artist' caught up in this dynamic:

> *Es un pequeño burgués que tiene inquietudes y ambiciones culturales, literarias, que hace gala de preocupaciones existenciales, sociales, a su alcanze y su medida. Él tiene la suficiente lucidez para darse cuenta que su*

[23] Roque Dalton, 'Diez Años de Revolución: El Intelectual y la Sociedad', *Casa de las Américas*, Numero 56, Sept 1969, p. 8.
[24] Roberto González Echevarría, *The Voice of the Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 111.
[25] Roque Dalton, 'Diez Años de Revolución: El Intelectual y la Sociedad', p. 8.
[26] Roberto Gonzaléz Echevarría, *The Voice of the Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature*, p. 112.

clase no es culta, que es falsa, que cada día se americaniza más, cosa que detesta, tanto como el pragmatismo y la falsa cultura norteamericana. Ve en Europa la cuna de la cultura, del pensamiento. Tiene cultura para rechazar lo falso que ve en su clase. Pero algo le falta para poder abrazar la otra causa y tratar de luchar por ella. Por eso Sergio permanence en una tierra de nadie.[27]

As a result, Sergio has not quite converted: it is too painful and *el desgarramiento,* although an ideological repositioning, is also a harsh and alienating process. *Memorias del subdesarrollo* toes the party line, with its sophisticated and ironic perspective aiming to expose the bourgeois artistic 'reality' as something that has to go because it challenges the unity of the new order and socialist realism. It also offers a blueprint for the artist to follow, or rather, the outline of what to avoid and what to reject. Ideologically the film attempts to be didactic, disseminating a message to the artist about how to operate within the new order. At the same time, however, the film is not able to escape the fact that, because of the political climate in Cuba, it also points towards the cultural and social implosion of Cuban society and a crisis of representation. *Memorias* cannot escape the political reality that has led to the fragmentation and the displacement of society itself through the mass exodus from the island, or the ideological alienation of others. As a consequence, the film's irony invariably displaces itself. Although *Memorias* deals with the artistic *desgarramiento*, the same sense of alienation was felt across the island. The ease suggested at times by an ever responsive process like Ortiz's transculturation is unsettled by such ruptures in society where reformulations are forced (as *un desgarramiento* suggests), but questions are raised by these enforced conversions, such as, what occurs to those who resist conversion? In the film we see Sergio walking away aimlessly as a mushroom cloud looms over the horizon, but the reality of his own cultural identity as a Cuban, let alone as an artist, is seriously undermined, as would have been that of other Cubans. And if as Dalton states, the past must be forgotten, does not the act of holding on to past memories reaffirm a familiar sense of one's own cultural identity, or does it, in post-1959 Cuba, lead to the alienation from the renewed sense of cultural identity? And does *el desgarramiento* lead to the alienation from the past and from one's 'original' cultural identity? These are questions that carry implications for the terms under which Cuban cultural identity is represented as a united one since splits

[27] Sergio Corrieri in an interview given to Manuel W. Zayas, in 'Sergio habla con Sergio: Dossier Tomás Gutiérrez Alea', *Cine Cubano*, Number 152, 2002, p. 45.

are created between the past and the present, between ideologies, and between conversion and non conversion, and between geographical locations.[28]

Cuba during this period was closing up like a clam, and I would suggest that it is within this context that *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* should be viewed. Kalatozov and his crew were certainly informed by the Khrushchev Thaw, and the creative freedom this entailed, but they were articulating their expressive 'freedom' at a time, and in a country, where there could be little, if any, ideological thaw. As artists in their own country the Soviet artists certainly challenged state directives, but even as they operated within a Soviet system that was changing, things were very different in Cuba. *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was, or rather should have been, a propaganda film to celebrate and reinforce the sentiments of the Cuban Revolution, whilst also affirming unity during a period of crisis and uncertainty. The already apparent schisms challenged any unifying message, but a further rift existed between the Cuban ideological stance and that of the Soviet crew. Although implicit differences that only became fully apparent upon *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* release, the fact that these differences exist challenges the notion of ideological unity and uniformity within socialist states. We do not know what actual aspects of the film brought about the ban, but questions are raised by the Soviet collaboration; we may well ask whether *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* is able to express an affirmation of freedom and create a foundational historical base when such a strong Soviet presence is felt. Where do the Soviets fit into this so called collective national feeling; where does their artistic, economic and military intervention make a difference, and to what extent might this replicate the US neo-imperial structures that Cubans were liberating themselves from?[29] The next section will discuss these issues more directly through an analysis of the film's aesthetic and its voice-overs.

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[28] All these question continue to impact on the two chapters that follow since Chapter Six enquires into terms under which cultural identity is reconstructed in exile and certainly questions of rupture and the alienation from one's past life inform such notions. Chapter Seven on the other hand deals with an internal form of *desgarramiento* that leads to a subjective look at an underground, contestatory albeit degraded form of cultural identity that aims to challenge official representations of cultural identity.

[29] This in itself raises questions about the Soviet Union as an imperial force; do we normally think of the former USSR in imperial terms or only through North America's rhetorical creation of the evil spread of communism, which in turn legitimised U.S. incursions into countries they felt were under threat from the 'evil'. To what extent were the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis a consequence of two imperial powers coming head to head?

5.3

Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's distributors, Milestone Pictures suggest that 'the film's artiness is undeniably a distraction from the message of struggle, and to the original audience the beautiful images must have been a long way from the reality in the New Cuba'.[30] Evidence can be found to support this hypothesis given, as we shall see, the experimental nature of the film, although any reality of the 'new' Cuba would have centred itself on a socialist re-formulation. (We are basically talking about one construct after another). The film's first draft was a scene-by-scene recreation of the Cuban Revolution, but both Kalatozov and the Soviet cinematographer Urusevsky opted instead for a more 'artistic' approach. The meaning of this 'artistic' form is difficult to imagine without evidence of the original draft with which to compare. Interestingly though, the writers felt that their first draft was burdened with too much historical material and opted instead for a 'cinematic poem' in which the 'main heroine would be the revolution – the hero would be the people'.[31]These gender allocations are significant in view of the female voiceover, although gender roles also come to play an important role in setting the foundations for the emergence of the concept of cultural identity within the revolutionary process.

Innovation was a driving force in the film's production; Kalatozov and Urusevsky experimented with camera angles, hand-held camera shots and filters to create the effect of a cinematic vision that would express the moment as well as their personal vision.[32] We are therefore led to believe that they were engaged in finding a 'new' cinematic technique to capture Cuba's renaissance on film. It would seem that their amazement at their surroundings as outsiders standing in awe (see this chapter's opening quote) drove aesthetic reassessments. The 'reality' for Urusevsky is so different from his norm (although not necessarily for Cubans) that he needed to develop a genre with which to represent Cuba's singularity.

Kalatozov developed the most incredible high angle shots, a mark of the innovation required to create the images. The elevated positioning of the camera also offers a more than usual voyeuristic effect, and very notably so in the film's opening frame, as an aerial shot swoops over the island as the Cuban and Russian voices of Mother Cuba proclaim that each of them is Cuba.

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[30] Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p. 3.
[31] Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p. 7.
[32] David Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p. 14.

I am Cuba
Once Christopher Columbus landed here.
He wrote in his diary:
"This is the most beautiful land ever seen by human eyes."
Thank you Señor Columbus.
When you saw me for the first time,
I was singing and laughing.
I waved the fronds of my palms to greet your sails.
I thought your ships brought happiness.
I am Cuba.
Ships took my sugar and left me tears...
Strange thing – sugar, Señor Columbus.
It contains so many tears but it is sweet...[33]

As with Columbus's rhetoric of discovery and the scope of his vision (and narrative voice), questions are raised by these opening words for indeed, whose I/eye view are we getting in this frame and others, and who speaks for Cuba? The first frame also gives the impression that we are looking at Cuba for the first time, the voice-over refers to Columbus's first sighting of the island, and rather more notably, the camera re-enacts this sighting of Cuba in its approach to the island from across the sea. To this end, as Kalatozov's camera pans the coastline, analogies can be between his camera and Columbus's sighting of Cuba. But whereas Columbus visualised the land and spoke in his name and that of the Spanish crown, this unity does not take place between the camera and the voice of Mother Cuba. The eye of the camera is not the same as the 'I' of the original Cuban narrative voice (it is Kalatozov's and the viewers), although their synchronised approach and introduction to the land suggest that both are one. In this sense, the camera's eye and presence are legitimised by the authenticating voice of Mother Cuba. The fact that Raquel Revuelta's 'voice of Mother Cuba' is 'voiced-over' by a Russian speaker adds to the dynamic of bringing (even inviting) exogenous elements into the island, but this 'invitation' challenges any authority in Raquel Revuelta's message. As these voices speak, the camera sweeps over the ocean, announcing a new dawn, and in doing so, the camera focuses on a huge cross/crucifix implanted on Cuban soil. Although the crucifix (the first of many to appear in the film), seems anomalous in a socialist context, it is noteworthy that whenever Columbus landed on new territories he would claim them with a wooden

[33] The voice of Cuba, Raquel Revuelta in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* opening scene. The verse is the first stanza of a poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Enrique Pineda Barnet, in Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film. The transcripted voiceover appears in this translated form in the press kit, p. 2.

crucifix, thus implanting his presence, his name as Christ bearer, and his authority over the land. The visualisation of the crucifix denotes physical appropriation, but religious connotations remain. Catholicism ceased to be the official religion after 1959 because the church was identified with the bourgeois oligarchy; the significance of these crucifixes is therefore inconsistent with the Revolutionary ideology.

As the high angle camera shot penetrates the island it focuses on a man in a boat as he makes his way through a murky canal past houses on stilts. The camera follows him through what is evidently a ramshackle village where poverty is rife. As we follow the camera through the waterway, the viewer suddenly enters a very different world, and a journey that commenced on Cuba's coastline and past an impressive landscape, leads us to the film's first vignette, set during the Batista years. Kalatozov juxtaposes the decadence and presumed glamour of the era with the impoverished peasant earlier witnessed. Nightclubs, music, palatial hotels overrun by North American businessmen, the singers and prostitutes they exploit define the first vignette. Kalatozov's camera swoops up from the village to the high-rise buildings of the city, presumed to be Havana, with this opening scene demonstrating the cinematic pyrotechnics at play here. The film's hallucinogenic quality, as well as Kalatozov's artistic and personal vision, creates an intense and vibrant opening to the film. Infra red film stock was used to create the extreme levels of black and white contrast, creating a starker image; wide angle lenses and cranes, together with the extensive use of hand-held cameras give *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* a voyeuristic impression and the feeling of the camera as an immediate participant observer of events. The long camera shots have a penetrating aspect to them, in particular during the pool sequence, claimed to be one of the greatest moments in documentary cinema,[34] which starts on top of a high rise building and swoops over a pool party featuring women in bikinis, men, music, alcohol, before descending down the side of the building into the party, where the camera follows a brunette as she gets up from her chair and dives into the pool. The camera then, without an edit, dives into the swimming pool where it tracks the underwater movements of the swimmers. Both opening shots offer conflicting views of Cuba, the meagre peasant existence and the decadence of the Batista regime that exists on the back of other's hard work.

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[34] Gary Morris, '*I am Cuba* D.V.D Review', p. 3.

From this we move to the second vignette which presents another aspect of exploitation under Batista. The storyline introduces us to Maria and René, two lovers; the personal detachment and hedonism of the earlier scene is replaced by a focus on their relationship, with the articulation of a proto Revolutionary Cuban cultural identity becoming apparent in the representation of this couple. When Maria first enters the scene we are unaware that she leads a double life as a reluctant prostitute in a nightclub. Her first scene takes place outside Havana's Cathedral, where her boyfriend, René, sells fruit from a stall. He is quite a fair looking *mestizo* and comes to represent an aspect of the revolutionary spirit Fernández Retamar claims for Cubans. As mentioned in my Introduction/Chapter One, the *mestizaje* brought about by conquest and miscegenation and adopted by José Martí in the nineteenth century, became reformulated within the context of the Cuban Revolution in the writings of the Cuban poet Roberto Fernández Retamar. Caliban's centrality to the Caribbean as signifier of cultural and racial identity is explained by Fernández Retamar as follows:

> This is something that we, the *mestizo* inhabitants of these same isles where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity: Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language – today he has no other – to curse him, to wish that the "red plague" would fall on him? [35]

In locating Caliban within the Revolutionary ethos, his rebel yell articulates the break with the old order and a move forward within the socialist ideology of the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Caliban the *mestizo* also comes to represent the proletariat engaged in class and anti-colonial based action and René comes to symbolize a facet of the 'new' Cuban, a figure to which we will return in the other vignettes as the concept of *el mestizaje* develops alongside an ideologically driven notion of male, and by equation Cuban, cultural identity. Maria is also of mixed race: as a *mulatta* Maria is a representative national symbol through her *mestizo* heritage, but she is weighed down by the fixity of the signifiers that represent her. As a Cuban cultural icon the mulatta is a loaded racial, sexual and desiring presence. Just as the protagonists of the mini-dramas of Nicolás Guillén's *sones*, discussed in Chapter Three, are presented as

[35] Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Caliban and other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker, Foreword by Fredrick Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 14. See also this dissertation's Introduction/Chapter One.

meta-theatrical because they have already been codified by a Cuban theatrical and literary tradition, Maria appears as a character well entrenched in nineteenth century stereotypes rather than as a reformed figure. Madeline Cámara Betancourt offers the following description of the *mulatta* tradition:

> In graphic images, we see a well contoured body but vulgar in gestures, underscoring the physical attributes of sexuality such as the breast and the buttocks: posing in front of a possible voyeur, dressed provocatively, with lascivious features, not facing the public directly but instead focusing on the man that looks at her. As a literary character, she is a woman of unbridled sexuality, of amoral behaviour: lazy, a lover of disorder and excessive entertainment, ambitious and opportunistic, and even in some cases exhibiting a tendency to venereal or mental disease – a product of her inferior and impure racial condition.[36]

Maria exhibits a number of these features; she is beautiful, her curvaceous figure and sexuality is particularly notable when we see her 'at work', although in her first scene with René she is presented as innocent, but highly sexualised. Still, Maria's prostitution is used as a vehicle through which to highlight her exploitation by North American men who use Cuba as a sex destination; her body is therefore analogous to, and the locus of the 'rape', and exploitation of the island. Maria comes to represent Cuba: she is seen as powerless and trapped between hiding her secret existence from her honest boyfriend, and her own economic employment through prostitution. Maria's gender also aligns her with the voice of Mother Cuba; her sexualised presence however renders problematic her association with Cuba as well as defining it. As a *mulatta*, and as a woman who is cheating on her boyfriend, Maria is perceived as a femme fatale; as a prostitute, rather than standing for a traditional symbol of wife and mother, she represents instead a 'bad wife and bad mother'. Although she appears redeemable as a victim of circumstances she can never be a symbol Cuban cultural identity or Mother Cuba, but instead remains in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* a loaded trope that re-entrenches her representation as one that is caught up in racial stereotypes of the nineteenth century.

In comparison with Maria, René is seen as a pure symbol of Cuban cultural identity. He is the one that is being cheated on and is therefore innocent. As a fruit

[36] Madeline Cámara Betancourt, 'Between Myth and Stereotype: The Image of the Mulatta in Cuban Culture in the Nineteenth Century, a Truncated Symbol of Nationality', *Cuba, the Elusive Nation, Interpretations of National Identity*, eds., Damián J. Fernández and Madeline Cámara Betancourt, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), p. 107.

seller he comes to represent a 'natural' man, his link to the land implying the return 'back to nature' and to José Martí's spirit of *mestizaje*, seen as the foundation of *el hombre natural* as opposed to *el criollo exótico*.[37] As discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, the *mestizo* is illustrated by Martí as an amalgam of the *blanco*, *mulatto* and *negro* and in this form he appears as a democratically (re)configured autochthonous figure. The need to develop the concept of an autochthonous Cuban during the post-1959 years was, I would suggest, as pressing then as it was for Martí during the 1898 War of Independence, since the suggestion of *lo autóctono* (re)inscribes Cuban cultural identity with authenticity and assures moral and legal legitimacy over the Revolutions. Consequently, René is well entrenched in such foundational myths as well as embodying the relevant emphasis for the present Revolution. His association with the land is also brought up-to-date as this reinforces the significance of agrarianism to the development of the Revolutionary Cuban economy and the expropriation of lands from North American hands. Land, therefore, comes to represent Agrarian Reform and the recovery of Cuban soil, whilst also serving to reinforce a dual mythology of the land as a life-giving force of identity and provider of economic renewal.[38] René and Maria become scenarios in which their bodies are called upon to represent the wider national cause. This inscription was certainly present on Guillén's body as he performed his *sones* before the Lyceum, and as discussed in the previous chapter, Carpenteir's representation of Afro-Cuban culture as a separate space was symptomatic of his desire to find a Cuban site that was seemingly beyond the reach of the US. This centrality of black cultural and racial signifiers to Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturation was discussed in Chapter Two. However, as much as racial hybridity is prioritised within concepts of cultural identity, a disjunction exists between this and the actual location of race within the national. This is not to say that there is no place for the *mestizo* or *mulatta* in Cuban society, but as Vera M. Kutzinski suggests in her study of the *mulatta* in Cuban society, this place is defined through the terms under which Cuban society consistently represents itself through both figures, and this contains the *mestizo* and *mulatta* within prescriptive roles. To this end they come to embody the power relations that inform constructions of cultural identity in colonial and postcolonial

[37] José Martí, 'Nuestra América', *Nuestra América*, 'Introducción de Pedro Henriquez Ureña (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1939), p. 14.
[38] Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams*, p. 192.

Cuba.[39] My chapters on Ortiz, Guillén and Carpentier certainly surmised this fact, but it would appear that similar racial codes resurface post-1959 in representations of cultural identity.

The next frame takes the viewer into the seedy nightclub where Maria works. In this sequence we see black artists miming to a love song, and rather notably their lip-syncing is out of sync with the dubbed soundtrack, signalling the artificiality of this frame. We are also given a rather unsophisticated interpretation of US exploitation, with the camera's focus on very unattractive Americans 'who exercise their "manifest destiny" in the crudest ways imaginable against the desperate inhabitants of the sugar-rich island'.[40] It is also the case that Kalatozov did not cast professional actors for many of the roles, assembling his protagonists instead from all walks of life, with students playing students and peasants playing peasants.[41] In this sense, authenticity is further emphasised, the suggestion being that these are 'real' Cubans performing their own drama. One such casting is that of the black singer at the bar; Ignacio (his real name) had lived in America before the revolution and was famous as the falsetto lead of the pop group, The Platters.[42]

Maria's entrance into the nightclub introduces the viewer to the underbelly of the Cuban economy, one that transforms the earlier 'wholesome' setting and Maria herself, into the prostitute Betty. Seen as a reluctant participant in this life, the hand-held camera follows her unwilling movements in radical jerks, visualizing her loss of control, and by extension, the loss of control the island is experiencing under US domination. Maria/Betty later takes an American man back to her room in the slums of Havana, where he pays her for sex. This becomes a very overwrought and symbolic scene, at the end of which we see the American run from Maria's ramshackle room in the slums, but not before eating the tangerine René had given her earlier. The American rather significantly also wanted to buy Maria/Betty's crucifix; she has been wearing this on a chain throughout the earlier scenes, with the lighting lifting up the image of the crucifix on her breast, but she had removed it before having sex. Again, the symbolism here is obvious and unsophisticated, particularly when the American insists on buying her crucifix. It is here that Maria/Betty draws the line, refusing to

[39] Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets: Race and Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* (Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 5.
[40] Gary Morris, '*I am Cuba* D.V.D Review', p. 3.
[41] Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p. 9.
[42] Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p. 9.

part with her crucifix although the American has already had her tangerine! Again, the valorisation of the crucifix in this scene as in the opening one is interesting because the observance of catholic rituals and the wearing of symbols such as crucifixes were delegated to a less official site within Cuban society as in the Soviet Union, leading one to feel that the film unwittingly discloses a religious practice or dependency that should not (officially at least) be there.[43]

When the American leaves her room, but not before René discovers them together, the camera follows him through the slums to reveal the other Cuba. This emphasises Cuba's split identity between the decadence and affluence of the Batista endorsed bourgeois lifestyle and that in the slums. As the American walks past the shanty town Mother Cuba's voice calls after him: 'Don't avert your eyes, Look! / I am Cuba. / For you I am the casino, the bar hotels and brothels. / But the hands of these children and old people are also me'. It seems a straightforward didactic form of drawing attention to the island's subordination to US Imperialism. The symbolism expressed here together with the film's monochrome quality is also reminiscent of silent movies and it is rather telling that for such a film over-inscribed with voice-overs and sub-titles, there is surprisingly little dialogue. Pineda Barnett wrote the following about Kalatozov's vision:

> Kalatozov told us about his idea of a script where dialogue would not need translation. In other words, to try to include the least possible amount of dialogue, including only the words strictly necessary and in that, they would be so expressive there would be no need for translation.[44]

An awareness that *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* would be shown before a Soviet and a Cuban audience is evident, as is the intention to universalise its message. Ironically,

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[43] Whilst a syncretism between the catholic and African in *Santería* also inform the significance of religion in Cuba, the insertion of crucifixes given the socialist/Marxist position seems ironic, particularly when the representation of *Santería* remains absent in *Soy Cuba/Ya Kuba.* The Afro-Cuban poet Nancy Morejón gives this overview of her family's perception of religion during the early years of Cuba's post-revolution years:' I was raised in a mostly atheist atmosphere. Theoretically, we declared ourselves Roman Catholic and Apostolic, just like everyone else did, more or less. That is, we were baptized and I received my first Holy Communion. But religion did not have any other impact on us. As an institution, the Catholic Church didn't have any power in the world in which I grew up. My father was a relatively atheistic man; he cursed religion in every sense. Yet religion in Cuba, in its popular sense, is fundamental – Santería, Spiritualism, the religious beliefs which are now called magico-religious systems'. In 'Two Conversations with Nancy Morejón', Ruth Behar and Lucía Suárez, *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* ed. Ruth Behar (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 130-31.

[44] Enrique Pineda Barnet cited in Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', Milestone Film, p. 8.

however, translation seems inescapable here since the film, in its original and present forms, displays linguistic, geographical, cultural, historical and generic translation across time and audiences. The film in its original form is constantly engaged in a process of translation for two audiences, one that does not understand the original, and another that does, since the Cuban audience would not understand Russian and vice versa.[45] Whilst the deployment of expressionism was intended as a universalising devise, Kalatozov is also engaged in translating Cuban 'reality' as he perceives it, into an aesthetic which is informed by his own technical and artistic vision. The night club scenes are very reminiscent of Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), incorporating Fellini's glamorisation of Roman night life together with the decadent and sexual overtones. Undeniably a scene that aimed to expose North American use of Cuba as a place where they could play out their sexual fantasies, the stylistic analogy with a Fellini film, which wallows in a personal vision of the decadence in Rome, also sexualises the night club scene in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* for an outside audience. The scene is therefore ambivalent in its effect, just as the deployment of Maria as representative of Cuba's plight is; in visualising Maria's sexualised body in the context of Fellini's film, the image of Cuba as a sexual body that is for sale rebounds rather than creating the intended distance.[46] The issue of temporality is important here since *Soy Cuba/Ja Cuba* has been screened in more recent years and responses to the film are mediated by present day perceptions of the island. One contemporary critic responded to the nightclub scene as follows:

> Opening in a seedy, American-overrun nightclub, the camera whirls about, taking in the boozy, sexy ambience of capitalistic decadence and setting the tone for what is to come. [...] everything from huge, extended crane shots to various filters to bizarre and highly experimental camera angles you've never seen before; it's as if everyone in question forgot the propaganda they were supposed to be creating and just went gaga, drunk on the sheer beauty of Cuba and making up new film techniques as the went along. Audacious, thrilling, erotic...[47]

[45] Just as a point of interest, the Milestone Press release offers this description of Kalatozov during the filming of *Soy Cuba/Ya Cuba*. 'His appearance was a cross between that of a Soviet Politburo official and that of a distinguished Italian actor nearing the end of his career'. To what extent is the film indicative of this 'split personality' – and by extension, the split identity of Cuba itself?

[46] See Chapter Seven where I discuss the loaded deployment of sex and images of a sexualised body politic in the writing of Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, who uses sex as a counter hegemonic carnivalesque performance that invariably also opens up the view of Cuba as a welcoming sexual body.

[47] Mark Savlov, 'Movie Guide *I am Cuba*', *Austin Chronicle*, http://www.austinchronicle.com.

It would seem that the reviewer is also taken with desire by the film's 'sheer beauty of Cuba', as were the filmmakers. The technical experimentation is also suggestive of the artists' perception of Cuba as a playground where they could project, even sublimate their artistic desires to a location which they rather mistakenly associated with freedom. This dynamic is however complicated by the opening sequence in which Columbus is quoted: 'This is the most beautiful land ever seen by human eyes'. The eyes observing the land are Russian, most of the crew is Russian, and the original voice of the narrator is voiced-over by that of a Russian, who is also saying, but this time in Russian; 'This land is the most beautiful land....'. To what extent does this implicate the film makers themselves, and by association the Soviet Union, with colonial desire to convert Cuba into a Soviet Satellite State? It is difficult to know if these implications went undetected by the Castro regime, but it is ironic that in the act of celebrating their liberation from one neo-imperial force, the Cubans were engaging with another.

What was certainly noticed by the above critic was the emphasis on technical and visual innovation. *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba's* visual aspects appear to take precedence: in comparison to the film's artistic and technical sophistication, the film's didactic and often crude anti-imperial message is obvious, but this seems to be disregarded by a more recent North American audience, with aesthetic and technical values being privileged over the anti-North American propaganda.

The subsequent vignettes continue with juxtapositions between the bourgeois and the proletariat, the Batista regime and those opposing it. North American exploitation is further emphasised in the story of a smallholder whose lands have been sold from under him to the American Fruit Company, leaving him out of business and homeless. In defiance he burns his fields, but the smallholder's actions expand on the notion of cultural identity as one that is masculine, as is the revolutionary impulse. In burning the field a revolutionary spirit not seen in René is enacted and extended in the next vignette which focuses on Enrique, a militant student in the University of Havana who plans to kill a corrupt and murderous plain clothed police official of the Batista regime. Enrique's allegiance is to Fidel Castro, who is still held up in the Sierra Maestra, but we also see his loyalty and actions in term of a moral dilemma when it comes to the potential murder of another Cuban. Although the police official is guilty of untold crimes, distinctions are made between revolutionary action and that of a repressive regime. Enrique's deliberation over the ramifications of his actions should

he kill his target, sets him on a moral higher ground; the fact that he eventually finds himself unable to kill the policeman legitimises the Revolution's aims as ethical and moral. Kalatozov depicts the rebels as freedom fighters and liberators, an important message in 1964 given that the Rebel Army now constituted the government. Enrique's dilemma and eventual death is presented as pivotal within the Revolution, and foundational in mythologizing the historical nexus of the new Cuba and the new Cuban man, one that is educated, moral, linked to the land (and a return to nature), whilst moving forward in Revolutionary renewal. In being gunned down by the very man he had planned to assassinate, Enrique's martyrdom is assured, as is his fighting spirit.

His death, staged and filmed in a surreal manner, suggests the mythological; when the bullet hits his chest Enrique falls back in slow motion and in a spread eagle fashion. High-density lighting was placed behind him and the camera, rendering Enrique a black silhouette against a blindingly bright backdrop, thus giving the scene a dream like aspect. Special effects were created with the use of blasts of water from the police hoses aimed at Enrique, rendering the image's density 'watered down' by the streams of water as they hit Enrique and the camera. In his dying position Enrique is like the crucified Christ as much as he is the revolutionary hero, with echoes of José Martí's fall during the opening days of the War of Independence. There are also very strong shades here of Goya [48] and Manet's [49] images of revolutionaries, with Enrique's death functioning at a local level whilst also appealing to a universal, romanticised image of the revolutionary. He is certainly the Cuban hero as he is carried away shrouded in the Cuban flag. The image of Enrique's death is further emphasised as an aspect in the foundational mythology when the next vignettes take us closer to the stronghold of the Rebel Army and the idealisation of the revolutionary moment and the renaissance of the new Cuban cultural identity in the figure of the male revolutionary, although Mother Cuba remains feminine.

Another single camera shot takes us through a cigar factory, where people are rolling cigars and then out and above rooftops to a location in the swamps where three

[48] See for example Goya's *The 3rd of May 1808 in Madrid: The Executions on Príncipe Pío Hill*, in which he depicts the events that followed the people's uprising against the French in Madrid on May 2, 1808. See *Goya*, Manuel B. Mena Marqués (Madrid: Fundación Amigos del Museo del Prado, Alianza Editorial, 1999).

[49] Manet's *The Execution of Maximilian* (1868-69). Third and final salon composition exhibited in New York and Boston in 1879-80 after being suppressed by the French authorities for being too political. See *Manet by Himself*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (London: Time Warner Books U.K., 2004).

rebel soldiers have been captured by government troops. They are interrogated repeatedly by the troops with the following question: 'Where is Fidel?", and in an unashamed homage to Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* each of the soldiers reply 'I am Fidel'.[50] A question of loyalty to the cause and their leader, together with their strength of conviction is enacted. In the assertion that they are Fidel, revolution is placed in the hands of the people and not just the figurehead; in the articulation of the question 'Where is Fidel?', together with the suggestion that Fidel is everywhere, analogies are drawn with the voice of Mother Cuba, ever present and repeated like a mantra in every vignette. A *Radio Rebelde* broadcast resounds in the final frames as impending victory is announced and the locus of victory and a new Cuban society is visualised in the mobilised Rebel Army as it marches forward. Mother Cuba articulates unity of expression and action in the move towards a new beginning in the following enunciation:

> I am Cuba.
> Your arms have gotten used to farming tools,
> But now a rifle is in your hands.
> You are not shooting to kill.
> You are firing at the past.
> You are firing to protect your future.[51]

These are her closing lines and they illustrate the main thrust of the film's message, that is the break away from the past and the creation of the base from which a future Cuban nationalistic and cultural identity will rise. However, the continued mediation of her voice jars with this message; surely 'I am Cuba' means something different in the Russian version and to a Soviet audience than it would to a Cuban one. Rather than projecting unity of expression, the double-voiced Cuba signals the opposite, with the attempt to contain and control a message being frustrated by the Soviet presence. Questions are also raised by the emphasis placed on a male heroic Cuban as liberator of the feminised island, an articulation that enforces prescriptive gender structures and roles. Although the power of the Revolution is placed, it would seem, in the hands of both men and women, indeed of all Cubans, *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* projects a problematic message of gender roles that jars with the presumed socialistic, egalitarian ethos.

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[50] The Kubrick homage is also interesting given the communist tone of *Spartacus*, and the script writing of the blacklisted Dalton Trumbe.

[51] Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Enrique Pineda Barnet, in Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit', p. 6.

Equally, how do we deal with each individual vignette when they are essentially fragments that only give an impression of unity at a thematic level? This raises questions as to whether *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* inadvertently presents an exercise in fragmentation and displacement, thus becoming a mirror of the multiple ideological and geographical refractions of Cuban society during the 1960s rather than social and ideological cohesion.

Mother Cuba's narrative voice introduces each vignette and unifies each of them through the constancy and repetitiveness of her voice and words. Raquel Revuelta's voice takes the form of a first person narrator, (although her Soviet counterpart's voice may be louder), and Michael Chanan refers to the convention of a voice on a soundtrack, suggesting that a voice can be more direct than a camera in the message it wants to impart. In the absence of a voiceover the camera has to adopt other techniques: in film, the camera cannot say 'I' but it can, albeit voyeuristically, show us what it is focusing on, whereas a voice speaks directly.[52] In *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* we have both a voice that speaks directly to an audience and a camera that is apparently functioning with a directional intensity that one would expect in a silent movie. As mentioned earlier, Sergei Urusevsky's hand-held cameras and high angles create a voyeuristic gaze that fixes, desires, participates, and penetrates; although we have a voice that appeals to the viewer to look at Cuba and engage with the poverty and suffering of the pre-Revolution years, the camera seems to be informed by another set of technical and voyeuristic imperatives.

Urusevsky, the film's cinematographer, was known for his 'poetic' camerawork, and in an interview he stated that they saw the film as a kind of poetic narrative, with the 'voice of Cuba' taking the form of a poem, penned by Yevtushenko. I have contrived to put this dialogue together in the form of a poem to see how it functioned, my main interest being to determine whether the dialogue and the film conveyed the same message, or if they competed with each other. I am de-contextualising the 'poem' from the film's format, but an interesting point is that the 'poem', devoid of visual pyrotechnics, is didactic, and fully identifies itself with the values of the Cuban Revolution.

I am Cuba
Once Christopher Columbus landed here.

[52] See also Michael Chanan, 'Lessons of Experience', *Memories of Underdevelopment*, p. 4.

He wrote in his diary:
"This is the most beautiful land ever seen by human eyes."
Thank you Señor Columbus.
When you saw me for the first time,
I was singing and laughing.
I waved the fronds of my palms to greet your sails.
I thought your ships brought happiness.
I am Cuba.
Ships took my sugar and left me tears...
Strange thing – sugar, Señor Columbus.
It contains so many tears but it is sweet...

I am Cuba.
Why are you running away?
You came here to have fun.
Go ahead, have fun!
Isn't this a happy picture?
Don't avert your eyes. Look!
I am Cuba.
For you, I am the casino, the bar, hotels and brothels.
But the hands of these children and old people are also me.
I am Cuba.

I am Cuba.
Sometimes it seems to me that the trunks of the palm trees are full of blood.
Sometimes it seems to me that the murmuring sounds around us are not the ocean,
but choked-back tears.
Who answers for this blood?
Who is responsible for these tears?

I am Cuba.
There are two paths for people when they are born.
The path of slavery – it crushes and decays.
And the path of the star – it illuminates but kills.
These are the words of José Martí.
You will choose the star.
Your path will be hard, and it will be marked by blood.
But in the name of justice wherever a single person goes,
thousands more will rise up.
And when there will be no more people,
then the stones will rise up.
I am Cuba.

I am Cuba.
Your arms have gotten used to farming tools,
but now a rifle is in your hands.
You are not shooting to kill.

You are firing at the past.
You are firing to protect your future.[53]

One stanza accompanies each vignette and as such represents its thematic drive. The stanzas operate chronologically with the beginning indicated by the 'discovery' of Cuba by Columbus. Everything begins, (as we have also seen in previous chapters), with Columbus, but what follows is the history of Cuba during the 1950s; this is a history that is powerfully evoked in Yevtushenko's poem, which tells us about the cost in human life and suffering. In the film's reviews, technical innovation has been a central focus of discussion, and one may well be led to believe that when first screened the responses to the film's display of cinematic originality also became the film's focal point, rather than the actual events depicted.

As each vignette chronicles the events leading up to the triumph of the Revolution and the break with the Batista and bourgeois past, the struggle and the path to freedom become formative in the nurturing of the revolutionary spirit and the foundation of the nascent Cuban identity. The 'poem's' final stanza definitively marks the end of an old order and the start of a new in the firing at the past to obliterate it. I wonder, however, to what extent this can be asserted when *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* enacts a new beginning as much as it discloses the lingering echo of imperialism that resonates in the Soviet voice-over and camera.

The nationalistic image of Cuba is also one that has remained revolutionary and male; Maria's body remains the locus of exploitation, an image the Revolution aimed to put an end to, and whilst the voice of 'Mother Cuba' is female, it is, to a great extent, disembodied, with the male hero coming to the fore. Interestingly, even as change is indicated in each quest for identity, the mulatta figure, such a potent national signifier, resurfaces with some regularity, indicating continuity in gender perceptions and nationalistic reliance on the fixity stereotypes bring. Whilst Guillén unsettles black and gender stereotypes by drawing attention to their artificiality, Kalatozov's deployment of gender ascribed roles to represent Cuba as female, together with the analogies the film makes between the exploitation of Maria's body and that of the island, raise questions about the arbitrariness informing ontological and ideological shifts when the representation of women remains entrenched within the sexually loaded and desiring trope of the *mulatta*. *El meztizaje* as a national

[53] Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Enrique Pineda Barnet, in Denis Doros, '*I am Cuba* Press Kit'.

signifier carries a different emphasis in René, who is seen as a pure symbol of Cuba. As a fruit seller, a profession that links him to the land, René comes to represent the 'natural' man (José Martí's *mestizo*). Both are symbols that indicate a return to nineteenth century foundational discourses whilst also representing a new quest for identity. Surprising continuities have been noted here, particularly in the representation of women, the configuration of René with Enrique to create the new man, is, however, a revised concept of cultural identity although this too borrows heavily from Martí's *mestizo*.

Fernández Retamar's post-1959 Revolution concept of *el mestizaje* also echoes Martí's, and he 'democratizes' race along nineteenth century lines in his exercise of a Marxist position of contestation. In aligning notions of racial hybridity with the socialist Revolution of 1959, and the Revolutionary rebel yell, Fernández Retamar gives us an indication of how concepts of hybridity are ideologically driven, and this is something he bases on a dialectical model of signification between colonial authority and subject, and along class lines. The Cuban model of cultural identity however, expressed through René and Enrique, is far more complex than Fernández Retamar's theory allows for. Contained within the ideological thrust of the Revolution, his concept of a contesting cultural identity is configured along the dialectical lines of Bhabha's hybrid, and locates identity as a product of the master/slave, Cuban/US (neo-colonial) relationship. The internal dynamics and racial precedents informing *el mestizaje* in Cuban society remain present in the representation of the *mulato* and the *mulatta*, although they appear unacknowledged by Fernández Retamar. The construction of *el mestizaje* in Cuban society, as I have been discussing in previous chapters, draws our attention to a wider context of significations based on the multiple audiences for which such concepts are projected and the reasons why. The Revolution's ideological imperatives, discussed at the top of this chapter, instilled a sense of vitality and the possibility of post-colonial transformations; the ideological constraints nevertheless fail to engage with the complex dynamic informing representations of cultural identity. Instead we find cultural identity contained within a Marxist class based dialectic that subsumes racial difference. The difference noted in Fernández Retamar's model is that the Caliban figure is a far more empowered one than, for example, the notion of *mestizaje* that Alejo Carpentier illustrates in the Afro-Cuban world he constructed in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!.*, which he describes as a separate space seemingly beyond the reach of the United

States. Both nevertheless align and appropriate the values historically ascribed to the black struggle for emancipation to represent Cuba's neo-colonial plight.

Despite these continuities, the 1959 Revolution brought about irredeemable schisms. The need for conversion and *el desgarramiento* indicate the ideological rupture with the past, but ruptures in society where reformulations are forced (as *un desgarramiento* suggests) raise questions, as suggested in my discussion of *Memorias de subdesarollo*, about alienation: what occurs to those who resist conversion? If, as Roque Dalton states, the past must be forgotten, does *el desgarramiento* lead to the alienation of the past and from one's 'original' cultural identity? These are questions that carry implications for the terms under which Cuban cultural identity is represented from the 1959 Revolution onwards, since splits are created between the past and the present, between ideologies and conversion and non conversion, and between geographical locations. The presence of these structures undermines unity of expression as much as it challenges the concept of a united Cuban cultural identity. I shall continue to interrogate these questions in the next two chapters, with the following chapter engaging with the terms under which cultural identity is reconstructed in exile and out of the experience of rupture and the alienation from one's past life.

6. Cuban Cultural Identity in Miami.

> In some ways Miami is the closest place to Havana. Miami is a place in which 10 percent of Cuba's population lives; a place that could become home to another 10 to 20 percent of the island's population. It is a border town, a place in which immigrants from the island arrive daily. A place in which the political and cultural discourse revolves around the question of homeland in ways not found in other cities of the United States. It is a site in which foreign and domestic policies are played out constantly.
>
> In other ways, Miami is the furthest point from Havana.[1]

> Miami [is] a city that considers itself too American to be Cuban and too Cuban to be American.[2]

6.1

This chapter on Ana Menéndez's short story collection, *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* (2001), deals with the reformulation of a Cuban cultural identity as it comes to be represented in a potentially displaced form in little Havana, Miami. I will be suggesting that the short story form Menéndez deploys creates a site empathetic with the issues of fragmented identities, split across time and space, with each story creating a separate, yet interconnected space which links the protagonists of her stories with each other, as well as with Cuba. Ana Menéndez bases most of the short stories of her collection *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* (2001) in Miami; they are informed by the experience of the mass Cuban diasporas that took place between 1959 and the early 1960s, and subsequent departures from the island, either imposed or self-imposed. As such, these stories are products of *el desgarramiento* and the ideological and geographical ruptures that followed on from the 1959 Revolution. The attempt to classify Ana Menéndez's collection, and the writings of Cubans living outside the island raises interesting questions; whilst these writings are certainly informed by some 'disembodied' connection to a Cuban literary tradition or cultural

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[1] Maria de Los Angeles Torres, 'Beyond the Rupture', *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* ed. Ruth Behar (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 39.

[2] Ana Menéndez, 'Baseball Dreams', *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* (London: Review, 2001), p. 131.

heritage, and a sense of belonging to a homeland, they are also very much anchored within a North American tradition and outside of the 1959 Revolution's ideological thrust. They nevertheless are a product of the rupture and they display the resistance to the ideological conversion that followed. How then should we approach the material? Can we define Ana Menéndez's writings as Cuban, Cuban-American, North American, or does something called a literature of exile cover these narratives? [3] Does *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* form part of a Cuban canon or does it remain marginal to one, just as little Havana remains distant from, and smaller than the Havana that lies across the Florida Straights? [4] As a text that addresses a Cuban readership and questions of exile, as well as functioning within a Cuban and North American context, *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* seesaws between countries, cultures, as much as it articulates the ways in which Cuban cultural identity finds expression on and off the island. I hope to examine the dynamic of imitation and repetition as it informs representations of cultural identity through time and across different geographic locations, and as a consequence of *un desgarramiento*.

Ana Menéndez is a second generation Cuban American who has been raised within a North American educational and cultural matrix, a positioning that has been described by Gustavo Pérez Firmat as the '1.5 generation' because they were either very young when brought over to the United States, or were born in the States to first generation Cuban exiles. In a re-constructive move, Pérez Firmat proposes that Cuban-Americans are defined by their hyphenated connections to their past, and by their present cultural and geographical sense of belonging, suggesting that Cubans living in North America are 'no more American than they are Cuban – and vice versa'.[5] In this sense, the hyphen creates a bridge between both sides as well as

[3] The question of a 'literature of exile' *per se* is a definition that deserves further discussion; for the present I will use the term to denote a literature that has been written outside the 'homeland' by writers whose departure was enforced or came about through ideological /political differences, and whose return is difficult or unlikely. Within the Cuban context writings by Christina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and Zoé Valdéz, *Café Nostalgia* (1997) can be read in these terms.

[4] By the same token, writings by Cuban and Latino writers, although considered 'minority', are being very well received by the North American mainstream. Second generation Cuban writer Oscar Hijuelos won the Pulitzer in 1990 for *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love,* Christina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*, and Ana Menéndez *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* have all been well received within U.S. mainstream and literary circles.

[5] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Life on The Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 6. Gustavo Pérez Firmat focuses on the lives of Cuban Americans such as Gloria Estefan and Desi Arnaz as examples of the Cuban articulation of cultural identity in the United States. Both become representative cultural icons through which Pérez Firmat illustrates their ability to oscillate between both cultures whilst always maintaining their Cubanness. In this way Estefan and Arnaz act as cultural signifiers that denote the cultural, linguistic performances and translations

denoting a balancing act, between the Cuban and the American. In suggesting the balancing between cultures, Pérez Firmat does not necessarily take into account the actual wrench or distance, both temporal and spatial that exists between Cuba and North America. The Cuban exiles do not find themselves at an equidistant position between both. Although the 1.5 generation function as cultural translators within this dynamic, mediating between generations and cultures, a role that Ana Menéndez fulfils to a large extent, her stories do not deal with a smooth transition between both locations or cultures but rather draw attention to the complexity in asserting a Cuban cultural identity outside Cuba's geographical borders and within a sense of alienation from one's own historical past and 'original' cultural identity.

The themes raised by Ana Menéndez resonate with discussions in my previous chapters on the question of imagining Cuba from the outside. These voyeuristic glances have been mainly concerned with colonial desire and appropriation (such as that demonstrated by the high camera angles in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba*), but in this case, and as a consequence of the mass diasporas of the 1960s onwards, I will be dealing with the rupture and the subsequent reconfiguration of Cuban cultural identity in exile. Cuba as a point of origin, and for the exiles, the place where the identity they construct for themselves is rooted, is viewed from a distance. And it is this distance and the act of remembrance that inform constructions and self-perceptions of identity. Indeed, the diasporas that followed the 1959 Revolution brought about the redefinition of cultural identity both in and outside Cuba creating polarisation between Cubans, Cuba, and the United States. Nevertheless, the Cuban community in Miami resists fixity as a block since people of diverse backgrounds and ideological positions comprise it:

> Miami is a city in which antagonistic chapters of Cuban history coexist in the same geographic space. It is one of the few places in the world where Batistianos (those who were part of the pre-revolutionary regime) cohabit with

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inherent in the Cuban-American way of life. The focus is, however, on celebrities. Although cultural icons that serve to demonstrate Pérez Firmat's hyphenated dynamic, their celebrity status enables a cultural performance and agency that would not be as relevant, available or accessible to a non-celebrity. Gloria Estefan and her husband are also staunch and powerful supporters of the right wing lobby as well iconic cultural figures. In this sense, the subjects Pérez Firmat chooses to discuss are perhaps not as representative as he suggests. They have successful careers and political agency irrespective of their Cuban-American positioning, and this in turn enables the perceived cultural agency as they operate within, as between Cuba and Miami. As success stories they can display their culture confidently and with agency, whereas this level of cultural assertion is not available to every Cuban-American and neither is the political or individual agency.

> disillusioned Fidelistas who were once their opponents, as well as recent immigrants who were part of the revolution and today critique it from a leftist perspective. It has become a depositary for the island's political memory.[6]

As such, any discussion of 'a community in exile' must deal with the constant stream of Cubans entering the United States as well as with their political diversity. The enquiry into exile is therefore not contained within a monolithic scheme, but within difference. A constant theme, however, in Menéndez's stories is that of inclusion and exclusion: after the Bay of Pigs invasion, the US trade embargo and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Cuba entered into a period of isolationism and insularism, with those who had left being quite firmly locked out and similarly, those that remained on the island and loyal to the revolution shut in. Those that left were labelled *gusanos* (worms), traitors to the revolution, and no longer welcome. Equally in North America, particularly in Miami, where the stronghold for Cuban American lobbying lies, the 'powerful and unyielding' groups within the Cuban American exile lobby refuse contact with the island (at least whilst Castro is in power or alive), and often use 'violence to terrorize those Cuban Americans seeking to forge connections'.[7] As such, we are still dealing with a country that is split between those who stayed and those who left, and with polarised ideologies. There was a period in the seventies when relations between Cuban and Cubans living outside the island resumed, leading to what become known as 'the dialogue'.[8] The thaw in relations and the hope for reunification was short lived, leading to a resumption of insularity and bonded-ness; a

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[6] Maria de Los Angeles Torres, 'Beyond the Rupture: Reconciling with Our Enemies, Reconciling with Ourselves,' *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* p. 39.

[7] Ruth Behar, 'Introduction' to *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* p. 2. During the thaw in relations of the 1970s, the right-wing section of the exiled community reacted to the renewal of communications with violence, and a member of the Antonio Maceo Brigade –the group that spearheaded the dialogue- was murdered. In 1989 Miami was named the capital of U.S. terrorism after eighteen bombs were detonated in the homes and businesses of Cuban Americans working for better relations with Cuba.

[8] This took place in 1978 when communications were opened between Cubans living outside and the Cuban government with the aim of bridging the ideological and geographical rift through the Family Reunification Programme, and by acknowledging the rights of all Cubans living abroad to visit their homeland. By 1979 one hundred thousand Cubans living in the United States had returned to Cuba for one-week visits. But as Ruth Behar explains:

> The return of *la comunidad,* as Cubans living outside the island came to be called, unloosed repressed desires among many of those who had stayed. The storming of the Peruvian Embassy in 1980 by Cubans demanding political asylum drove a wedge through the romance of the "dialogue." It led to the Mariel boatlift and the departure of 125,00 Cubans, even more than had returned to visit from the United States a year before. [...] After Mariel Cuba closed up once more like a clam to those of us who left. The nation continued divided, even more divided that before.

Ruth Behar, 'Introduction' to *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* p. 8.

Manichean dialectic of inside and outside, of physically belonging or not belonging to one's homeland, became consolidated. (Easier to sustain, I would suggest, at an official level given the amount of money Cubans Americans send to Cuba). At the same time it is very telling to note the change of terminology used to define the Cuban exiles; once *gusanos* for abandoning the revolution, they became at the time of the 'dialogue' *la comunidad* (the community) that had come home, a term reinforcing that they were a necessary and integral part of the island's composition. The absence or lack was felt by both sides at the time, and continues to be felt at least by the community that is without, always looking from the outside in.

Against this backdrop of events, Ana Menéndez deals with the lives of the community 'without', living mainly in Miami and in search of a memory, even the memory which will help them define, or re-define, what it means to be Cuban in exile. In this sense I will be suggesting that the terms under which the community in exile seeks identity forms part of a recurrent search, particularly since this is protracted, and the terms under which identity is constructed change with time and across generations. Because we are dealing with a culture that is defining itself outside the boundaries of the island, all attempts are informed by distance, both spatial and temporal, leading to a fragmentary experience in which questions are raise over how a cultural identity is reformulated once transplanted to another country? Indeed, does a culture defined by a lack of proximity become an echo of its former self, and to what extent is little Havana just that, in contrast to La Habana in Cuba? Are we dealing with a case of mimicry or imitation, or is the transferral of cultural identity from one location to another informed by a different set of rules? The concept of an echo or replica as the fundamental source of cultural affirmation brings to mind the abduction in 1961 of a replica of the statue of the patron saint of Cuba, Our Lady of Charity, *La Virgen de Cobre,* from Havana. Although the status of Our Lady of Charity as a nationalistic symbol was strongly questioned after the Revolution,[9] for those in exile she later became the locus of a displaced nationalism as well as, I would suggest, representative in her replicated state of cultural reconstruction off the island.

When the statue was smuggled to Miami, she was presented before 25,000 Cuban exiles who awaited her arrival in a football stadium, as if this was a piece of

[9] See María Elena Díaz, 'Rethinking Tradition and Identity: The Virgin of Charity of El Cobre', *Cuba, the Elusive Nation, Interpretations of national Identity*, eds. Damián J. Fernández and Madeline Cámara Betnacourt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 43-59.

Cuba they could call their own. The Virgin was some years later placed in a shrine overlooking the sea, facing towards Cuba. As such she was a powerful symbol for the Diaspora and those in exile. Meanwhile, the original statue remained in Cuba in its original shrine in the town of *El Cobre*, where the Virgin has been an object of veneration since the seventeenth century when fishermen recovered her from the sea. It was not until the nineteenth century that her cultural and religious significance culminated when the Virgin became an important symbol as the protector of those who fought for independence, and the birth of a new Cuban nation. As such, *La Virgen de Cobre* is well entrenched in the ethos of Cuban independence and as a national signifier, with these very sentiments being embodied by the replica in Miami, where she has come to represent a particular sense of nation formation for Cubans there. An essential function of *La Virgen de Cobre* in Miami has been to generate a specific kind of displaced nationalism and a reinvention of the exiles' connection to cultural traditions of the homeland. The shrine that houses the Virgin has murals that tell a version of Cuban history, which, on the one hand, claims national heroes like José Martí whilst on the other, represents the revolution with figures of *balseros* (rafters).[10] These rafters are therefore symbols of the Diasporas; of the continual flood of Cubans who leave Cuban shores, often holding on to inner tyres, to avoid persecution or because of ideological differences. The rafts themselves and the dangerous journey across the Florida straights give a firm indication of the lengths dissident Cubans need to take to leave the presently hermetically sealed-in island. Because fishermen recovered the statue, a boat with three fishermen is traditionally included in the base of replica statues. These fishermen have now come to represent the *balseros,* with the Virgin watching over their safety as they cross the sea to Miami. I would therefore suggest that the notion of the echo or the replica, as a process of cultural translation underpins any enquiry into the issue of Cuban identity in Miami, not because it is 'unreal' or less authentic, but because it is displaced. Rhetorically, the shrine has come to represent a diasporic space for Cubans in exile but it is also charged with strong political meanings just as *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* was informed by a powerful ideological nationalism. Both mural and film, however, project divergent messages, raising questions about cultural reconstructions and

[10] Maxine Molyneux, 'Review of *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami,*(1997)', by Thomas A. Tweed, *Journal of Latin American Studies,* Volume 31, Number 1, Feb., 1999, pp. 213-15.

suggesting parallel cultures as well as foundational events that have brought about parallel notions of identity.

Although the Virgin's renewed significance in Miami enacts a process of cultural translation from one location to another, the very act of translation creates difference as seen in the mural of the Virgin's shrine but the 'original' is also altered because of its inability to travel intact; the emergence of a Cuban 'community' in Miami is therefore indicative of the dynamics informing the projection of cultural identity off the island as much as it points towards the need to redefine identity on the island in the absences of those without.

The historical time span of Menéndez's collection shifts from pre-1959 to events of the 1960s and 1970s, up to the present day. The historical sweep of her stories affords a site whereby the reformulation of cultural identity can be interrogated across time and space. Her work certainly engages with postcolonial theories such as those of migrant identities discussed by Salman Rushdie, and the role of the postcolonial intellectual in transferring cultural practices and translating them onto the adopted culture, an activity that renders cultural identity hybrid as well as creating a bridge between both locations. This is a position that Rushdie describes as one that renders identity both plural and partial.[11] Menéndez as a 1.5 generation Cuban-American certainly functions as a translation artist, her identity is caught between locations and, as the 1.5 suggests, generations. And indeed, Rushdie deals with the inaccuracies of memory when he suggests that 'we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands'.[12] As my discussion progresses, we shall see that *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* engages with imaginary constructs of Cuba that resonate with Rushdie's theory of imaginary homelands. Still, Menéndez's role as author, and the terms under which she represents, is not necessarily based on the translation of her own memory of Cuba onto the Cuban-American experience, but instead, with the dynamics informing the transmission of stories and memories, and as I will be suggesting, it is in the process of transmission (more than through the actual content of the stories) that Cuban cultural identity in the US is redefined and reinforced. For this reason, I would suggest we consider the

[11] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), p. 15.
[12] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, p. 10.

concept of the 'echo' as a framework of investigation for the interrogation of movement and translation of cultural identity across space, and across generations. As an echo of the original (just as La Virgen de Cobre in Miami is), difference is produced in this first, immediate engagement with the figure. As a displaced representation of the actual Virgin, we are not dealing with a pattern of mimicry or imitation, because this not the case of one representation reforming another, but of two virgins that symbolically come to signify Cuban cultural identity. One is more distant that the other from the point of origin and this renders her an echo of the former, but she is no less authentic as a cultural signifier. The concept of the echo, therefore, allows us to discuss the terms under which Cubans reconstruct and represent their migrant cultural identities as ones that, although displaced always harks back to a point of origin. The transmission of stories therefore, enacts this function as they are passed down through generations and across locations as a device through which cultural identity is reinforced and Cuba idealised and imagined. The concept of an echo provides a dynamic whereby the very echo produced in the retelling of each individual story is invariable informed by change and the inability of each story to remain identical or intact after each subsequent telling. Indeed, the nymph Echo could only repeat the last word spoken and give back the sounds she heard and as such, stories are presented as incomplete. [13] But as an echo of the original spoken word, the telling of the stories resonates with the past and with each former telling. Although repetition is involved, the focus of Echo's activity was in the telling since this was the only activity that originated from her since her words could no longer be original. Because the basis on which Cuban cultural identity in exile is constructed and represented is based on repetition through time, and through displacement, a point of origin, Cuba, becomes increasingly distant but the echo nevertheless resonates though time and returns to the point of origin. To this end, I will be suggesting that the echo, as well a providing a vehicle for representations of migrant identities, articulates, through the activity of transmission, a point of recognition for the construction of cultural identity.

[13] Ovid, 'Book III Echo and Narcissus', *Metamorphoses*, trans., Mary Innes (London: Penguin Classics, 1955), pp. 83-87.

6.2

As this chapter's opening quotes suggest, Miami (as the 'first port of call'), could rather controversially be considered a second city of Cuba in terms of demographics, but then it is also its echo, and smaller, as the name little Havana suggests.[14] At the same time, whilst there is political agency, at least that which comes from the right wing Cuban Lobby, at a cultural level Ana Menéndez presents a dynamic whereby the search for the American Dream traditionally felt by immigrants becomes somewhat inverted, with a future life being informed by the eventual return to Cuba. Ana Menéndez's short stories deal with the concept of homeland, and the hope of return, with this investment in the return somehow curbing a future, a dynamic that is articulated by Menéndez, herself as the daughter of Cuban exiles as much as by her short stories, which are informed by a dual (if not paradoxical) dynamic of departure and the dream of return; as Menéndez states in a interview:

> My parents, I think, raised my sister and me with the thought that we would all be returning to Cuba as a family very soon. So we spoke only Spanish until we entered kindergarten and during the summer vacations my mother taught us Spanish grammar and my father taught us to memorise Martí. And, of course, they talked about Cuba and what they had left behind constantly. Growing up I felt more Cuban, than American.[15]

At a personal level therefore, and at a thematic one, her short stories relate to a sense of 'coming home' or 'leaving home', and if we interpret 'home' as the place where 'our reality is so comfortable and well known,'[16] then leaving home is informed by uncertainty. Although *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* deals with the physical act of leaving and hopefully returning home, these stories also move towards some personal knowledge about the past, and the possibility of defining Cuban cultural identity in exile. The stories contained in this collection give the impression that they are heading towards some denouement, but this is not fully realised until the final story, and even then the reconstruction of a cultural identity is, as we shall see,

[14] The powerful Cuban right wing lobby is nonetheless influential within the U.S. political dynamic. This became particularly evident during the latest presidential elections when the deciding vote rested on the voting population in the state of Florida, a predominantly Cuban American voting state. Although distant and smaller than Havana, we should not underestimate the political clout of the Cuban American lobby.

[15] Ana Menéndez in an interview given in May 18 2001, interviewee's name not provided,

[16] Susan Lohafer, *Coming to Terms with the Short Story* (Baton Rogue, London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 95.

informed by the passing of time and the ever-fading links with Cuba. Identity is therefore diffused and informed by exile, loss, distance, and the lack of immediacy, making the imaginings of one's culture of origin an exercise of memory. It also becomes a question of adapting that memory to suit the experience, regardless of accuracy.

Indeed, the title short story of the collection is based in little Havana's Domino Park (Figure 3) and recalls a well-known joke which Máximo, one of the central protagonists of the first story, recounts. The joke articulates what I would suggest is a paradigm for the relationship with the homeland, the memory of it, and the present life in Miami/the United States, and the terms under which Cuban cultural identity is reconstructed. Both the joke and the location of Domino Park raise important questions about the performance and location of culture. The park is touted as an important tourist site alongside Miami Beach, being considered by tourist guides as something quintessentially Cuban, with the activity of playing dominoes viewed as 'authentic' Cuban culture in motion.[17] The suggestion here is that the playing of dominoes in the park, by Cuban exiles, offers a genuine spectacle of Cuban culture in the centre of Miami. It is interesting to note that after the 1920s and up until the 1959 Revolution, North American tourism transformed Havana into a tourist mecca, but travel to Cuba from the United States by North Americans is no longer as straightforward as it used to be. The projection of domino playing in little Havana suggests an accessible cultural manifestation that replaces, in a displaced form, the desire for Cuba as a 'tourist' location as much as it does the notion of Cuban culture. In the spatial relocation of Havana as tourist destination in Miami, Miami is also however transformed into a nostalgic 'slice' of Havana.[18] I will return to the domino playing in Miami but will first look back at the contexts and levels of tourist spectacles in post Revolution Havana.

[17] This came to light during a 2002 research trip to Miami when I visited the Domino Park in little Havana twice; the first was as part of a guided tour of Miami, and little Havana was touted as an important tourist site alongside Miami Beach. The second time I went without the tourist guide but with a camera and made the above observations. In taking my camera I further participated and extended the politics of cultural spectatorship.

[18] For a discussion on the transformation of Cuba into a tourist destination together with the manufacturing of tradition see Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (Lincoln, London, University of Nebraska Press, 1997). Schwartz's discussion of the tourist phenomenon as a drama with players behind the scenes raises very compelling issues not only about the complicity in these events but also about the relationship between the actors and the audience in the manipulation of tradition. Both players/actors buy into or manipulate the cultural illusion to generate the tourists' interest, while tourists often knowingly buy in to it. In the case of Domino Park the players are reluctant and uncomfortable under the transformative tourist gaze.

Figure 3. Domino Park, little Havana, Miami. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

In the Havana of the 30s the Cuban tourist industry involved cabarets and casinos, as well as the manufacturing of tradition for tourist consumption. These, suggests Rosalie Schwartz, included the re-enactments of supposed ancient rituals once practiced by Siboney Indians:

> Under the uncharacteristic, almost perversely cloud-covered Cuban sky, dusky tribal warriors energetically invoked the favours of a seemingly reluctant sun god. Well-built young men, bare-chested but covered from waist to thigh by loosely woven fibre skirts, danced on sandaled feet before a beautiful young maiden seated aloft on a throne. As they twisted and stamped, long dark braids of hair bounced to and fro. Coloured headbands held the braids close to the scalp along side faces painted in sombre colours. Chanting obscure supplications to the deity, they brandished weapons – long bows and machetes – and moved rhythmically towards the place where the Daughter of the Sun presided over the choreographed ceremony. Meanwhile, curious onlookers crowded the stretch of sand between the Havana Yacht Club and the surf.[19]

As Rosalie Schwartz argues, these so-called ancient rituals had no foundation in Cuban history, although the event rendered such an emotive performance that the landscape and the clouded skies appeared to be less authentic against the aesthetic representation. Schwartz compares the above description with what little is known of the peaceful Siboney who she suggests

> [...]wore no clothing, although they did paint their bodies and used bones and stones for adornment. Their coarse, straight black hair hung freely, not braided, next to light-copper coloured (not dark skinned) faces. The ancient fishermen certainly did not wield machetes, the sharp, broad, metal cutting tools introduced by the Europeans in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, no evidence existed that the Siboney worshipped the sun. Though they buried their artefacts with their dead in ritual fashion, none vaguely resemble solar images. The conquering Spaniards has replaced native labourers with Africans, whose mixed race offspring differed dramatically in body size and skin tone from the pre-Columbian population. The dark skinned pseudo-warriors of 1930, borrowed from the National Theatre, descended from those African slaves sent to work on the island's sugar plantations. Never mind; the tourists loved this invented diversion.[20]

In this sense, a spectacle is being created and performed in a contrived form. Although a tourist show that plays on notions of ethnicity whilst raising questions about the troublesome quest for origins on the island and the deployment of these

[19] Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island,* p. 74.
[20] Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island,* p.75.

symbols, the projection of this 'traditional' discourse recognises itself for what it is; both the audience and the spectacle are mutually complicit in what is being produced and why.[21] The industry projected an image of a Cuban cultural heritage that would have appealed to an outsider's perception of what this very culture was, rendering it spectacle as cabaret.

The translation of the Cuban domino players into the Miami context, and into that of the tourist industry comes across rather differently in that it does not present itself as a choreographed cultural event, although it is perceived as one by the tourists who observe the players. Domino Park and the playing of dominoes are, as the title story illustrates, defined as 'spectacle'. If we regard examples of 'spectacle'[22] as performance by the Kirov Ballet or the Sun Worshipping Ritual, it would seem that a disjunction exists between this, and what appears to be the everyday habit of playing dominoes in this park. Whilst Schwartz's example deals with the complicit activity in the invention and projection of a tradition to captivate an audience, to what extent are, or can the domino players be, complicit in their activity? An important aspect here is that the players are contained within the park's enclosure where they play dominoes amongst themselves whilst being observed by the tourists who look on from outside the park's parameters.

In the Menéndez story Máximo is also engaged in delivering his jokes to the captive players in the park, and they all know they are being observed. This raises important questions about the dynamics of cultural spectatorship and performance, as well as about the transferral and translation of culture from one place to another. After all, what are we as tourists and as readers of the short story actually spectators of? On one level these could be men playing dominoes on any given morning, but was it more or less significant that they were Cuban, and what do dominoes have to do with it? The park is also enclosed by tall iron bars, probably for security reasons, as is the case in most public parks, but since this is not a very large park the bars give the impression of a cage in a zoo. Within this enclosure, and given the tourist labelling, a sense is given that the domino players are performing their culture, albeit reluctantly, for onlookers: perhaps this situation could be described as 'canned culture', both in its containment and its condensation. This dynamic, I would suggest, reinterpreted,

[21] Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 240.
[22] See Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*, p. 240.

translated, and displaced the presumed cultural significance of playing dominoes in a park.

Added to this we have the paradoxical drive that informs the Cuban exile experience, that is, the dual dynamic of departure and return. If the Cuban experience in the city of Miami is informed by this transitional and paradoxical drive, what kind of cultural investment can be made in their present location in Miami? Does this state of not belonging locate them in a 'no-man's land', when their home is some place other than the one they find themselves in, and how can cultural tradition and identity be transmitted and translated into such a transitional space? Whereas the perception of Domino Park operates at the level of tourist attraction, I will also be suggesting that the activities that take place inside the park perform a function within the Cuban community and its politics of cultural translation. Although on the one hand we are dealing with a translation of cultural identity for an internal audience, that is, for Cubans living in Miami, a location like little Havana and Domino Park also make this cultural translation visible to other audiences, raising the question: for what purpose, and for which audience is this translation necessary? Could it be the case, as Walter Benjamin suggests, that the translation process is meant for an audience that does not understand the original? [23]

The title story 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd' focuses on a day in the life of Máximo, as he meets up with his friends, most of whom are Cuban, in Domino Park. But even as the story is centred and located physically in the park, it is marked by temporal shifts in which Máximo looks back at his life in Cuba. He had left Havana on 1st January 1969, ten years to the day after the triumph of the Revolution, leaving behind 'the furniture and the pension he'd hoped to return to in 'two years' time. Three if things were as serious as they said'.[24] Although Máximo had never actually returned, the fact is that he continually returned in his memory and in his dreams. These shifts both disrupt the action that takes place in the park, and bring Cuba into the picture. Even as Máximo is located in little Havana, his memories drift across to La Habana. He is both present and absent, an ambivalent presence perhaps, but within this dynamic Domino Park becomes a 'no man's land' and a place where his identity is constructed, (re)constructed, and lost in the memory. In locating this

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[23]Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', *Illuminations* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1973), p. 69.
[24] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* (London: Review, 2001), p. 6.

exercise of cultural recovery through the act of remembering in the Domino Park, Menéndez creates a site, or a memorial, where the fractured perceptions and associations of Cuban cultural identity, in its Miami context, are played out, and to some extent anchored. Whilst Máximo's memories and thoughts play themselves out internally, and we as readers are aware of this dynamic, they also become externalised in the act of domino playing, and later in the act of telling jokes, with both these acts requiring an audience. Máximo and his fellow domino players know that they are being watched on a daily basis. In fact Máximo had earlier protested about '[...] the rows of tourists pressed up against the fence, gawking at the colourful old guys playing dominoes'.[25] To which he added that he did not want to be, '[...] the sad spectacle in someone's vacation slide show', but his friend Raúl rather significantly replied "'[l]et them take pictures, [...] What the hell. Make us immortal.'"[26] It is a statement loaded as much with frustration over the situation as with a wish (fulfilment) that the photographic evidence would anchor or fix their identity in some cultural reality rather than in the transitional position of exile that locates them between Cuba and Miami and their past and present lives. Ironically though, the photograph will always denote a double absence and it is through photography, as Walter Benjamin suggests, that a person's incognito is revealed,[27] but because this incognito, or representation of identity, is revealed through a photograph, the very presence of the photograph denotes the physical absence of the domino players in Cuba. The positioning of the park under the tourist gaze and through the camera lens is only possible because of its displaced 'cultural' presence.

Máximo is also known for his jokes, all of which are centred on Cuba, and function as a device to articulate the experience of exile and affirm some cultural connection to his homeland. He tells fellow players a well-known joke that I would suggest articulates a paradigm for their relationship with homeland, the memory of it, and their present life in Miami.

The joke centres around the story of a little Cuban dog called Juanito who, missing his friends that have left Cuba over the years, decides to 'take a boat' and make his way to the United States and catch up with them. As he walks down Bricknell Avenue he sees 'an elegant white poodle striding towards him, he forgets all

[25] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, p. 9.
[26] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, p. 9.
[27] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire A Lyric Poet In The Era Of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), p. 145.

his worries and exclaims, "'*O Madre de Dios, si cocinas como caminas...*'".[28] Not very politically correct, but his friends laugh, and Máximo continues to tell his joke within the context of a double audience, that of his friends and the gawping tourists. So the joke continues:

> 'Si cocinas como caminas...' Juanito says, but the white poodle interrupts and says, 'I beg your pardon? This is America – kindly speak English.' So Juanito pauses for a moment to consider and says in his broken English, 'Mamita, you are one hot doggie, yes? I would like to take you to movies and fancy dinners."
> 'One hot doggie, yes?' Carlos repeated, then laughed. 'You're killing me.'
> The other men smiled, warming to the story as before.
> So Juanito says, 'I would like to marry you, my love, and have gorgeous puppies with you and live in a castle.' Well, all this time the white poodle has her snout in the air. She looks at Juanito and says, 'Do you have any idea who you're talking to? I am a refined breed of considerable class and you are nothing but a short, insignificant mutt.' Juanito is stunned for a moment, but he rallies for the final shot. He's a proud dog, you see, and he's afraid of his pain. 'Pardon me, your highness,' Juanito the mangy dog says. 'Here in America I may be a short, insignificant mutt, but in Cuba I was a German Shepherd.'
> Máximo turned so the men would not see his tears.[29]

Such is the nature of the paradigm that it takes the form of a joke, and functions as a subterfuge which Máximo hides behind; the joke also dissimulates the painful dynamics that have translated, even transformed Juanito into a mangy dog. In this bittersweet joke Juanito fortifies himself in his present life with a constructed past identity, one that is informed by distance. This allows for a reinvention of the past, of an imagined identity, but in asserting this past identity Juanito's physical presence underpins its very implausibility and impossibility. The memory, or device that he deploys to construct his identity both recalls and truncates it in the same move since the physical presence of the mangy dog belies that of the German Shepherd. A much harsher reality is nevertheless recalled here, such as the one experienced by Máximo, a former university professor, who (like others) left behind him in Cuba a profession and a status which he had been unable pursue in Miami. Instead he waited on tables and catered until he could finally buy his own restaurant, where he employed other Cuban professors, doctors and accountants. As such, a duality of identities exists between their past and present ones, with their present ones performing at a reduced

[28] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, p. 28.
[29] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, pp. 28-29.

level, or at least one diminished by the reality of the translation of their lives. This renders their identities as echoes of their past, and something smaller perhaps, or at least different, just as Juanito's identity in Cuba is that of a pure bred German Shepherd, whereas in the United States he is a mangy mongrel.

This duality is extended to the performance of the joke, which rather than a light-hearted one, enacts and translates the experience and the reality of their lives in Miami. The element of spectatorship further compounds this dynamic. In the telling of the joke Máximo becomes spectacle, both as part of the Domino Park cultural package, and as the performer of jokes, together with the baggage that these jokes carry. In the telling of the joke Máximo and his friends buy into the dynamic of looking back at, and viewing their homeland both temporally and spatially from the outside in. On the one hand he performs as a cultural signifier to his immediate audience, his fellow domino players; on the other, Máximo and his friends are signified by the tourists who watch them, and take photographs of them, as cultural spectacle. Máximo and the other domino players in Domino Park are themselves being viewed as 'Cuban culture in motion' by tourists who are watching from the outside in. The telling of the joke is voiced-over by a tourist guide who translates what he sees to his clients in an amplified voice that echoes against the back wall of the park:

> Most of these men are Cuban and they're keeping alive the tradition of their homeland, [...] You see, in Cuba, it was very common to retire to a game of dominoes after a good meal. It was a way to bond and build community. Folks, you here are seeing a slice of the past. A simpler time of good friendships and unhurried days.[30]

And this is how cultural identity and tradition become translated for an audience that does not understand the original. The translator here merely offers information through a microphone, but this process cannot transmit anything but details of events that take are explained through a process of semantics that excludes any cultural and geographical significance.[31] But what is the original here anyway, if not another echo of an originary source which had become translated into a stereotypical preconception of a traditional Cuban culture, together with the assumption that it has travelled intact in all its so-called cultural significance into another time and place? This creates a

[30] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, p. 26.
[31] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of The Translator', p. 70.

voyeuristic effect, almost a telescopic one, with varying degrees of proximity and displacement, rendering any interpretation an echo of an echo. We as readers, me with my camera, add to this dynamic of spectatorship and extend it, so where can unity of experience be found in this situation?

Certainly, the Cuban experience in exile is a fractured one, but a wider sense of contemporary social fragmentation prevails. Although we have been focusing on diasporas, the movements of Cuban migrants and their displacement, tourists also form part of the movement of people, with this duality giving rise to two kinds of displaced thought. The first is concerned with, as has been discussed above, the transferral of signs, artefacts and baggage that exiles carry with them, creating the dynamic of cultural reformulation. Dean MacCannell very aptly refers to migrants, refugees and émigrés as 'travelling bricoleurs' to denote the transitional and compositional nature of cultural reconstruction. The other travellers, the tourists, consume culture as presented to them in brochures, and in this sense, culture is rendered consumable.[32] Both these dynamics underpin the cultural exchange in Domino Park, which becomes a location where, in the act of telling the joke a process of cultural reconstruction can take place. The tentative nature of this activity, however, creates tensions that undermine unity. At the same time, the tourist both subordinates the delicate process to its consumption, constructing it anew, whilst also depending on the sense of uprooted tradition, as displayed by the Cuban community in Miami, as part of the tourist's cultural experience. Therefore, although Máximo's notion of identity is perceived and constructed within a displaced nationalistic and cultural scheme, the dynamics of spectatorship actively reconstruct identity according to the moment and the viewer's positionality.[33]

6.3

If I therefore commenced my discussion of Ana Menéndez's *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* by tentatively using terms that denoted it as belonging to a body of writings of exile which dealt with the experience of diasporas, the very presence of these

[32] Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*, pp. 2-3. See also *The Tourist Image*, ed. Tom Selwyn (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 1996), particularly Selwyn's introduction pp. 1-32.

[33] The dynamics between spectacle and spectatorship are discussed further in my next chapter, which extends this issue through Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's *Trilogía de La Habana*, which, as a narrative that contains explicit sexual content, raises questions about the book as tantalising 'top shelf' material, and about viewing the Cuba he describes in terms of sexual desire.

dynamics underpins the impossibility of a unity of experience, and point instead towards a fragmentary and often antagonistic experience. I would suggest that the genre in which Ana Menéndez tells us these stories reflects this fragmentary nature, with the short, individual stories forming the sites of enquiry into themes of displacement, loneliness, and exercises of memory. As the stories unfold they become symptomatic of the actual structure, perhaps like a collage of the society that Menéndez is describing. In this instance, therefore, meaning is generated in the ways in which the short story collection, in its fragmentary composition, and in its content is interdependent. [34] This is much like the structure of Fernando Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar,* which cannot be read as a 'finished' text because of the multiple and constant textual revisions made to accommodate new inclusions to Cuba's racial syncretism. Because Cuban cultural identity is theoretically a continual process the book would always be defined by its unfinished structure. The vignettes in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba,* although presenting different stages of the events leading up to the triumph of the Revolution, can be read as an implicit indication of the societal implosion that was taking place in spite of attempts at unification. Valerie Shaw argues that the short story genre registers new instabilities in society by fragmenting the site of enquiry which becomes 'the splintering frame',[35] in which each individual splinter or rather, 'each short story present[s] a different shard, with no pretence to wholeness beyond itself.[36] The fractured/composite nature of the short story becomes indicative of the societal implosion together with its multiple elements. Each short story in the collection then comes to represent a different aspect of the Cuban diasporas, cutting across and beyond the Manichean dialectic to offer a less monolithic, more personal and individual view of social networks. The question is, do these short stories stand as fragmented, isolated diasporic experiences and only that, or is there an attempt by Menéndez to unify the work and the experience across different lines? Do we have here only fleeting impressions, or a cycle which thematically creates an impression of unity?

Each story deals with a different character with only a few of them appearing in more than one story. Characters are physically separated from each other by the parameters of each individual short story, and in this sense, each story presents a

[34] Susan Garland Mann, *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 8.
[35] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 228.
[36] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*, p. 228.

different shard and stands fragmented, as an isolated experience. As Raymond Joel Silverman suggests, the form of the short story can be deployed to emphasise the characters' isolated lives; 'the motif of walls between people, the lack of communication, all demand a structure which will intensify the feeling of the tremendous gulf between people'.[37] It also intensifies the fracturing power of time and distance along the wide range of the experience of exile. The scope of each individual story is underpinned by the protagonists' inability to connect with a past when all that is left are memories, and a paradoxical inability to connect to the present because they are living in the past. An estrangement from 'truth', as we have seen in Máximo's joke, also emerges through the fabrication of a past on which they have based their present lives, compounding the sense of distance and alienation. We encounter individuals who are distant from each other, husbands from their wives, and parents from their children who were born in the United States, or were very young when they left Cuba. As such, their relationship to their past and future is different to those of their parents. There also exists the important physical detachment from Cuba itself, and the physical splitting of families across geographical and ideological lines; each story is, technically speaking, separate since one story has to end before the other can begin. This hermetically seals one off from the other, and as Máximo discovers, '[t]he stories that opened in the sun always narrowed on to a dark place'.[38] At the same time, we come to realise these stories are also interdependent.

The title story, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', thematically provides an anchor for the other stories. In terms of location, Máximo's restaurant becomes the place where some of the stories take place. He also employs Cuban exiles, people like Raúl, who, when they leave the restaurant to go home, introduce us to their own stories within the confines of their home and experience. The title story then, sets up the themes of dislocation and memory that paradoxically unify the work; Máximo's joke functions at the level of recognition, particularly his own, of the terms on which his identify finds expression. It is also a paradigm, although in its initial deployment as a joke, we do not fully realise the extent to which the joke/paradigm unifies the short story collection, and the experiences of the protagonists, until the final story, 'Her Mother's House', which deconstructs the paradigm. This in itself carries

[37] Raymond Joel Silverman, cited in *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide,* p. 11.

[38] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, p. 7.

implications, for if the function of a final story is to bring about closure, a deconstructive move can also lead to the very opposite effect. Because the paradigm's meaning remains contained in a joke until the end, the joke, as a unifying motif, would depend on readers' responses to the stories, and prior knowledge of the significance of the paradigm/joke. And as Luscher suggests, short story sequences leave out more information (than say a novel) between one story and the next, it is therefore up to the reader's 'pattern making faculties' to create these connections and 'build textual consistency'.[39] This raises interesting issues, because if understanding, and therefore a sense of unity, is dependant on readers' response, we must ask ourselves if just any reader will do.

The joke of Juanito the mangy dog presents itself in a less subtle manner in Roberto G. Fernández's short story 'Radishes', which on the surface deals with a group of women, the majority of them émigrés, who work in a radish processing plant (of all places), and in this very unromantic and unlikely setting this group of women boast about their past identities in their homeland. And of course, they were all women of substance:

> Loly Espinoso, ex-wife of Senator Zubizarreta; Ana Maria Rey, wife of the poet laureate Lisander Perez; Pituca Josende, wife of Chief Justice Josende; Aida Lopez, the leading national contralto; Naomi Brown, nobody's wife anymore; Mirta Vergara, the freedom fighter; Maria Rosa García-Peña, daughter of the first President of the Ladies' Tennis Club, and Helen Valdes-Curl, wife of the late Pete Frey, the inventor of the improved muriatic acid.[40]

As the list unfolds we realise that their claims to status become increasingly absurd, and as the story unfolds the accounts they are clearly inventing about their past lives jar not only with the boundaries of what is possible and what is not, but seem all the more absurd in the context of the radish processing plant. As they reinvent themselves in the context of an imaginary homeland their activity also deflates the notions of their homeland and their past and present identities. Consequently, the ladies themselves debunk each other's identity with counter claims to higher status and prestige, with one claiming her heritage to a paradise where truffles are more common that wild flowers, another to a figurine made of an authentic Colombian emerald (which turns out to be jade), and a 40,000 acre recreational ranch together with Arabian stallions, and another whose family owned all the insects and birds. As you can imagine, the

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[39] Robert M. Luscher, 'The Short Story Sequence', *Short Story Theory at Crossroads,* eds Susan Lohafer and Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge, London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 155.
[40] Roberto G. Fernández, 'Radishes', in *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* p. 271.

question over who owned the water and the sky was a much-disputed matter. But the point is this serves to debunk the way in which exiles construct a 'collective' cultural identity whilst pointing towards the difficulties in asserting a stable identity when the historical reality is fragmentary and unstable, like an echo that fades with every wave.

If the first short story in Menéndez's collection sets up the paradigm by which Cuba is viewed, and the ways in which a Cuban cultural identity is constructed in Miami, in the final short story, entitled 'Her Mother's House', Máximo's joke is spelled out for the reader. The terms under which cultural identity is reformulated are brought closer to home, as the thematic ties are realised and in this sense some unity is achieved. In this final story Cuba is viewed as an actual location rather than an imaginary one by the main protagonist, Lisette, a Cuban American born in Miami two years after the Revolution. This defines her as one of the 1.5 generation (like Menéndez herself), who is now returning to Cuba as a young woman to visit the place where her parents came from and the house her mother left behind. Up until this moment she has only been privy to Cuba and her mother's home through the stories her mother had told her, and over the years Cuba and the house had become synonymous entities. According to Lisette's mother, her home had been a grand palace, just as Juanito was a German Shepherd. As with Máximo's jokes, her mother's stories had served to anchor her mother's cultural identity, but they had also nourished Lisette's own perceptions on who her mother was, and where she came from, with this forming a base for Lisette's own identity. Needless to say, when Lisette arrived in Cuba, the grand house with the vast acreage that had become the focal point of her mother's imaginings turned out to be

> a house with small windows. Uneven walls. Red tiles. Iron latches. The house of someone else's imaginings, a different story. Beyond the house stood the blue hills and Cuba green and unknown, the way the first Spaniards must have seen it.[41]

For Lisette, the distance between her mother's stories of Cuba and what she encounters is considerable. She had only 'known' the island through her mother, and whilst her return to the island could be interpreted as an act of territorial reclamation for all exiles, Lisette does not experience a homecoming, but instead finds herself in the position of discovering Cuba as if for the first time ever. Whilst what she saw

[41] Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, p. 219.

clearly did not match her mother's imaginings, at the same time this remembered and reconstructed past had served to construct her mother's identity in exile. That she had equally exiled herself from her past is also an issue, and one that accounts for the mother's reluctance to let her daughter return to Cuba. She feared that her identity would be debunked once her lie was discovered. At the same time, Menéndez is suggesting that this and other lies are platforms on which identities are constructed. In discovering this, Lisette (and Menéndez), debunk the premise on which a Cuban identity in exile is constructed as they blow open the Cuban myth of imaginary homelands. Whilst for Lisette this is a discovery that helps her move on and away from the dynamic that compels a return, the situation for her mother is different. Living in the imagined past and longing to return some day, Lisette's mother would ironically never be able to return because she would expose her own lie, one that she knows that she's told, and her own identity would unravel. It is for this reason that Lisette decides to continue her mother's lie when she returns home in spite of the fact that Lisette's mother must realise that she has been discovered. Whilst the lie remains hidden away, the myth of the house cannot be perpetuated in the same way because it has been exposed.

Menéndez closes a chapter in the history of Cuban diasporas and cultural imaginings in this manner, but what does she achieve in debunking the lie? On what basis then can an identity in exile be constructed and how can unity of experience be achieved with such a debunking strategy? If on the one hand both Juanito's joke and the mother's house perform a deconstructive move, they also operate at the level of recognition, one that would take place at the level of the collection's implied audience or readership. Meaning, or at least the unravelling of it, must depend on a specific readership and response. A Cuban-American readership would be well equipped to read into this paradigm. In this sense, whilst these stories debunk the premise on which Cuban American cultural identity is realised, they need to be repeatedly told to be recognised and the recognition of this dual activity functions as a unifying motif. The Juanito joke is a well-known one articulated in other contexts and stories, such as Fernández's 'Radishes', and as an often repeated story, a Cuban-American readership would have been well equipped to recognise its debunking strategy. And even as this strategy undermines their cultural identity, or at least the basis on which they construct it, the shared recognition of the difficulties of translating themselves into the Miami context brings about unity of experience. The tear that Máximo sheds after

telling his joke, and one which he hid, demonstrated the painful process of transplanting and translating oneself into another society, together with the pain in the recognition of the dynamics through which he asserted his Cuban cultural identity. Although the final exposé deconstructs identity at one level, it is also telling us that the reformulation of a cultural identity in exile is performed by means of these strategies. The recognition factor in the joke was untranslatable to the 'gawping tourists' because they were not the implied audience for which tradition was being translated; neither was tradition being translated, at least for Máximo, in the domino playing, but in the telling of the joke. This, together with the recognition factor serves as a reinforcement of shared culture and identity and the basis on which it is constructed. And it is at this shared level that a Cuban cultural identity is constructed in the US, and within paradoxical and conflicting views of home, the past and the present.

Because these themes are both constructive and deconstructive, tensions exist and persist between the fragment and the whole, Cuba and Miami, between each story and another, and the attempt to achieve thematic unity through the debunking tendencies of the paradigm amidst the reality of exile and rupture. These, however, cannot be resolved because they are the very structures on which Ana Menéndez mediates and represents Cuban cultural identity in exile. And what does this say of Domino Park? Perhaps the men who congregate there just gather to play dominoes, in a park, on any given morning, and the rest is much deeper than their visibility will allow. They certainly appear as echoes of their former selves in Domino Park and this sense of an echo creates the appearance of a diminished cultural identity. Then again, the fact that Máximo is so historically and geographically displaced from Cuba accounts for the need to tell and retell his jokes since it is through this process that recognition is achieved. Each repetition of his joke is an echo of the former one, but with each repetition the recognition factor increases, as does the reinforcement of the platform on which cultural identity is sustained. The point of origin then, to return to my earlier discussion of the echo, of these representations of cultural identity is through the act of telling. The distancing effect produced by the echo however, provides us with another structure under which to describe the fading connections the 1.5 and later generations of Cuban-Americans have to their parent's Cuban cultural identities. The generational divide leads to ever increasing distance and so, Ana

Menéndez's connection to a sense of Cuban cultural identity is tempered by her North America upbringing, and perhaps more so, than through her parent's story telling.

As migrant identities they are certainly hybrid, for as much as Máximo and Lisette's mother anchor their cultural identities on their stories of Cuba, they have also absorbed the cultural influences of their North American setting. Their North American setting, such as Domino Park, is further rendered hybrid by the presence of an activity perceived as representative of a Cuban cultural activity, but then, so is Cuba rendered hybrid as an imaginary construct. At the same time, the distance suggested by the echo and the passing of time suggest a diminishing of influences. As discussed in earlier chapters and above, Salman Rushdie celebrates hybridity as an ongoing process that is 'teeming' with 'infinite possibilities' that go on multiplying themselves over time. [42] I wonder however, if this is also the case in this particular Cuban context. Whilst the activity of domino playing and the terms under which cultural identity is translated, reconstructed, and interpreted renders such identity unstable and different, the hybridity suggested by this is not necessarily as applicable to the later generations. Although their hyphenated existence as Cuban-Americans indicates the 'straddling of two cultures', Menéndez also demonstrates that generations like hers are increasingly integrated into US culture. Does this situation then, render their cultural identities less hybrid rather than, as Rushdie suggests, forming part of a process that is teeming with possibilities? Postcolonial terms such as hybridity and Rushdie's exuberant celebration of hybridity as a narrative device provide very useful frameworks; I would nevertheless suggest that whilst the terms apply, the analysis may not when considered alongside this Cuban context. The binaries suggested between 'home' and 'away', and the distance between them as the basis on which the imaginary past and the present are constructed are not as defined in Menéndez's collection. These are no longer static positions and the present just goes on moving forward as the past moves further away. The relationship with home is then diffused through later generations, who would consider their home in the present location and not in the imaginary past.

Whilst Cuba is mostly imagined in Ana Menéndez's collection, a number of her stories look back at Cuba through a time-warped vision that harks back to a pre-1959 Cuba or to the actual revolution. There are references to more recent times, but

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[42] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, p. 16.

despite the fact that *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* was published in 2001, scarce mention is made of the severe economic crisis being experienced in Cuba during the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its withdrawal of subsidies. This reality of life on the island certainly remains invisible, and whilst the collection deals with exercises of memory, the present reality in Cuba is not clearly dealt with. The absence of the present crisis in the writings of Ana Menéndez signals a narcissistic drive inherent in looking back selectively to a particular historical period whilst neglecting to realise that Cuba has been moving forward all this time. In Chapter Seven I continue to explore the question of contesting but parallel representations of cultural identity, of official models of identity and of the less official as illustrated by Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's account of the economic crisis of the 1990s. Guitérrez's memoir reopens the interrogation of imagined and idealised representations of cultural identity, particularly those constructed by Cuba's official ideological machinery and the contrasts created by the actuality.

7. Official Ideology and the Representation of an Underground Cultural Identity.

Así que debo rehacer el cuento. Ahora sera mucho más fuerte. Sin una sola mentira. Sólo cambio los nombres. Ése es mi oficio: revolcador de mierda.[1]

And particularly at times when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art...become politicized.[2]

7.1

This chapter interrogates representations of Cuban cultural identity on the island during the 1990s, as they oscillates between nationalistic and individual imperatives, thus fracturing further the sense of the bonded so cultivated since the triumph of the 1959 Revolution. The sense of *desgarramiento* discussed in Chapter Five certainly impacted on the physical alienation felt by the protagonists of Ana Menéndez's collection of short stories, discussed in Chapter Six. The effects of *el desgarramiento*, that is, the simultaneous demand for ideological unity and rupture (from the past), as discussed in *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* and *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba*, was a recurrent motif in *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, which also demonstrated the fractured site on which Cuban cultural identity in exile is represented. My focus in this chapter is on Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*(1998), where I will continue to examine representations of cultural identity that are defined through the parallel demands for unity and rupture, and as a (counter)product of ideological imperatives. My discussion of Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* examined the terms through which the representation of Maria and René's cultural identities embodied the power relations informing constructions of cultural identity. In *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* our attention was also drawn to ideological constructions of Cuban cultural identity, but in prioritising an underworld (although not a racially informed one as Carpentier highlights in *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!*), informed by a sexual economy, and in

[1] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* (1998) (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1999), p. 104.
[2] Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', Imaginary *Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), p. 14.

giving light to emaciated, sexualised and decayed bodies, Gutiérrez questions the ideology underlining of representations of the heroic, revolutionary Cuban. The world Gutiérrez illustrates, and indeed the spectacle created therein, provides yet another textual site where theories of a united Cuban cultural identity can be interrogated. Here, as in my previous chapter I will be considering the contrasts created between the imagined, idealised Cuba, and the actuality, and by the same token I will be comparing hegemonic notions of a syncretic Cuban cultural identity alongside the marginal, less official idea of cultural identity that Gutiérrez offers. Challenging questions are raised by this comparison, and indeed, by Gutiérrez since the suggestion may be (as Carpentier proposes through his need to separate Afro-Cuban identity from the white, official cultural identity), that a 'genuine' cultural identity can only be found in the margins where it is out of reach of the hegemonic and ideological need for panoply and control. Liminal and marginal spaces are indeed recognised postcolonial sites which generate hybrid identities and provide positions of contestations,[3] although as a position *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* appears to complicate these concepts. Gutiérrez certainly challenges the official premise under which canonical texts on cultural identity are produced but questions are also raised about this enterprise, since in exposing the official discourse informing Cuban cultural identity, he also embarks on a mission that deconstructs the very premise on which his own cultural identity is based.

The Havana Pedro Juan Gutiérrez invites the reader to enter in *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* is defined by dirt, and *lo sucio* in the title takes on a number of meanings: the actual dirt of the surroundings, excrement, garbage, a state of mind, a kind of living, depravations and depravity that all amount to a form of dirty realism which reviews of the *Triología* have likened to that of the North American writer Bukowski. The trilogy contains a rape scene that is reminiscent of the one in Hubert Selby Jr.'s censored *Last Exit to Brooklyn.* Like Selby Jr.'s novel, *Trilogía* presents social and economic realities through their exposure, with the sexual forming an integral aspect of this reality. *Triogía sucia de La Habana* was also censored, banned in Cuba, and only published outside the island.[4] Although having surpassed

[3] See for example, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 – 1991*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.*

[4] As have been Gutiérrez's other publications, *El Rey de La Habana* (1999), *Animal tropical* (2000), *El insaciable hombre araña* (2002), and *Carne de perro* (2003) which have overcome the limits imposed

geographical boundaries, *Trilogía* was also written for a Cuban readership, one associated with the economic crisis of the 1990s, thus bringing these realities to the fore and refusing their sanitation by an official version of events. [5]

As Pedro Juan the narrator/author states:

> *En tiempos tan desgarradores no se puede escribir suavemente. Sin delicadezas a nuestro alrededor, es imposible fabricar textos esquisitos. Escribo para pinchar un poco y obligar a otros a oler la mierda. Hay que bajar el hocico al piso a oler la mierda. Así aterrorizo a los cobardes y jodo a los que gustan amordazar a quienes podemos hablar.*[6]

His first words draw our attention to the rupture being experienced in Cuban society, a consequence of the economic crisis, but he is also indicating that narratives must, out of necessity, reflect *los tiempos desgarradores*. Still, if his aim is to draw attention to the economic crisis and the imposition of censorship, this intention is frustrated through *Trilogía's* outright ban, which drastically reduced a local readership, who can now only read it if they acquire an illegally imported copy. Interestingly though, the limited circulation of illegally imported copies challenges the boundaries of censorship, a thematic that underpins a significant aspect of Gutiérrez's present literary occupation as much as it did his previous one as a journalist. Up until the early nineties, Gutiérrez had been a journalist, '*pero un periodista tiene que hacer muchas concesiones. Tienes que ocultar mucha información*',[7] leading to a dynamic of censorship and self-censorship. As a journalist, Gutiérrez had been privy to the 'truth', but his awareness of the parameters under which he was operating curbed his writings. The eventual refusal to write '*textos esquisitos*' in the absence of this

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on them in Cuba and have been widely published and translated into several languages. The publishing house Letras Cubanas has recently shown an interest in publishing *Animal Tropical*, raising questions about its content. What do the other books, particularly *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* contain, that *Animal Tropical* does not?

[5] The collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the 1990s and its withdrawal of subsidies to Cuba's economy led to a severe economic crisis in Cuba, and the implementation of measures by the Cuban government to counteract the fiscal deficit. This became known as a 'Special Period' in peacetime, during which time rationing, power cuts, potable water shortages, and unemployment became the norm. There was an acute shortage of basic goods, and this severe economic situation brought about recognition that the economic and political strategies implemented after the 1959 revolution were in crisis. It was feared that the acute pressures placed on the population would foment social unrest, leading to a much over due debate on the reform of the Cuban political system. Maxine Molyneux, 'State, Gender, and Institutional Change: The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas', *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America,* eds. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 291-292.

[6] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 85.

[7] 'El Rey de Centro Habana: Conversación con Perdo Juan Gutiérrez', interviewed by Stephen Clark for Librusa, http://www.librusa.com/entrevista7.htm , p. 7.

exquisiteness led to his dismissal; ironically it also freed him from censorship and allowed him to '*[escribir] todo lo que me sale de los cojones*'.[8] In drawing distinctions between his journalistic endeavour and his literary one, Gutiérrez divorces himself from an official discourse in an act of self-imposed *desgarramiento* that situates him outside the state's ideological machinery. *El desgarramiento* was discussed in Chapter Five as a real phenomenon that required artists and intellectuals to denounce their bourgeois past and convert to the ideological doctrine of the Revolution. Such conversion was described by Roque Dalton with almost religious fervour through the proposition that artists take '*un baño social*', thus evoking a vision of the Cuban intellectual as 'born again' after his submergence in the baptismal experience of the social and ideological actuality of the Revolution.[9] Instead Gutiérrez reverts to a pre-baptismal state as he steps out of the *baño social.* In this 'unclean' state, he is a *persona non grata*, although he is not an alienated unconverted Cuban (as is the character of Sergio in Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968)), but a formerly converted Cuban who has now disavowed the socialist ideology he had embraced. This fact places him in a particularly interesting position because he reverses the state of conversion to that of subversion.

In describing his writing as coming forth from, or finding expression through his loins, ('*de los cojones*'), he locates his writings in a 'lower stratum',[10] giving rise to a resonance between *Trilogía*, as it recounts in vivid and intimate detail the hand to mouth existence of our narrator/author, and a Bakhtinian carnivalesque narrative. In his overt refusal to comply with official discourse, Gutiérrez engages with a subject matter that reveals naked, sexually performing bodies, including his own, in which a bodily drama that challenges the façade of officialdom is enacted. To this end we are presented with a naked truth, and language and events to match, making this both a 'hard' book to read, and a difficult book to write. Like some grotesque bodily function/fiction, *Trilogía* has to be well digested and then expelled, giving it a definite cathartic drive, as confirmed by Gutiérrez:

[8] 'El Rey de Centro Habana: Conversación con Pedro Juan Gutiérrez', interviewed by Stephen Clark for Librusa, p. 7.

[9] Roque Dalton, 'Diez Años de Revolución: El Intelectual y la Sociedad', *Casa de las Américas*, Numero 56, Sept 1969, p. 8. See also this dissertation's Chapter Five, p. 14.

[10] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 309.

Sí, esa crisis personal y la del país me dispara a una situación de vivir al borde del precipicio. Yo tenía dos soluciones, o escribía de esa manera o me suicidaba o me volvía loco, y seguía con el alcoholismo que tenía, un alcoholismo terrible, me metía diariamente una botella de ron y me fumaba dos cajas de cigarros.[11]

Both crises lead to him to live in the brink of despair, this being fuelled by an economy of consumption based on cigarettes, drugs, alcohol and sex, elements that certainly feed into his narrative, as well as fuelling it; by operating at this level Gutiérrez experiences a carnival inversion of hierarchy in his dethronement from his post as a journalist to that of 'independent' writer. His new job as a refuse collector, where he literally uncovers the dirt, further extends the subversion in the disclosures he makes.

The state's 'clean up' dynamics, and those of Gutiérrez, both as a writer and as a refuse collector, become evident in an episode which describes the cleansing of the all too evident 'littering bodies' of the homeless and desperately poor people on the streets of Havana. The visibility of the '*mendigos y locos*', the unwashed, unsettles the official view, prompting their eradication from public sight, and their removal in *'[...] un camión grande, blanco, cerrado herméticamente y sin ventanillas, con unos letreros de una distribuidora comercial de electrónica*'.[12] Echoes of ethnic cleansing are certainly evoked here, but the truck as a white hermetically sealed vehicle suggests a metaphor for the state's attempt to 'white-wash' and contain a non-official existence in Cuba within the official. In his activity as a 'refuse collector' Gutiérrez resists containment, and whilst immersed in dirt, he certainly stirs the muck around without ever really cleaning it away or sweeping it under the proverbial carpet. His writing/refuse collecting challenges the regime's 'cover up' imperative, with resistance being offered at a discursive level through a narrative that refuses containment within a hermetically controlled Cuban canon, as it performs some sort of a bodily drama giving birth to words.[13] Although a form of resistance is enacted in response to the economic crisis and the politics of containment, the economic forces also determine social relations and exchanges, even bodily shapes and functions as they enter starvation mode. Whilst sub-cultures deploy the body as a material commodity through tattoos and piercing as a signifying practice to express opposition

[11] Cited in 'Pedro Juan Gutiérrez o la literatura como conflicto', the interviewer's name not provided, http://www.cubaencuentro.com/rawtext/entrevista/2002/05/02/7691.html, p. 2
[12] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 252.
[13] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 309.

because of its affordability, in *Trilogía* the body becomes the basis of an accessible counter economy and a source of gratification. [14] It would be difficult, however, to draw a straightforward analogy between a sub-cultural expression (which in itself is not a clear cut expression), and the world that we enter in *Trilogía.* Pedro Juan Gutiérrez articulates a form of resistance but we never feel that this is to create a 'sub-cultural' sense of community through signifying association, but rather a certain unmasking of the official 'reality'. As a dialectical structure that constantly responds to the absence of an economic backbone, the shape of Pedro Juan's narrative is also moulded by this lack, giving rise to the focus on an alternate economic engine, its inventiveness and entrepreneurial dynamic, in which our narrator becomes a pimp, drug dealer, and a refuse collector, activities that go some way to undermine state control over free enterprise.

Such a complete picture is revealed in this full-bodied narrative that a certain irony is expressed in Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's reaction upon viewing the body of his work.

> *Cuando ya la vi impresa en la oficina de mi agente en Madrid, me emocioné muchísimo porque era un pedazo de mi vida. Y me fui para donde yo me estaba hospedando y empecé a revirsarlo y me di cuenta de que el 85%, quizás el 90%, de lo que está escrito en Triología es totalmente autobiográfico, crudamente y excesivamente autobiográfico. A veces pienso que me desnudé demasiado delante del público, hice un* strip-tease *demasiado prolongado.* [15]

Whilst a strip-tease suggests some tantalising game, a gradual stripping away of layers, be they of clothing or meaning, the fact remains that whatever we take the body to mean, the body of work he was confronted with in his agent's office bared too much of his physical and psychological self. Consequently, the narrative's nakedness, or the naked bodies of *Trilogía's* protagonists all seem to be operating outside the regime's autocratic concern with silences and invisibility.

As a running metaphor therefore, the *sucio,* the dirty, is deployed in a literal sense, and refers as much to the narrator's state of mind, his lapsed, de-converted state, as to the explicit sexual content and the degraded view of Havana during the 'Special Period'.

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[14] Cf. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1979).

[15] 'El Rey de Centro Habana: Conversación con Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, interviewed by Stephen Clark for Librusa, p. 4.

The term 'Special Period' certainly functioned as a blanket expression that hid reality, one of increased state control as a means to contain the social and economic uncertainties that threatened a presumed stability. Whilst the 1959 Revolution brought about a Socialist 'festival' in the early sixties, Magaly Muguercia argues that Cubans were later 'taught to sacrifice invention for the sake of a myth called "unity", or rather "ideological firmness"'.[16] I discuss the euphoria of the revolutionary 'festival' in Chapter Five, and indeed, the creation of the ICAIC was based on the recognition of the momentous times being experienced together with the power of the camera to capture events. Although *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* does not capture the immediacy of the euphoria being experienced, it does create a foundational myth that promotes the state's ideological ethos and societal cohesion. The subsequent installation of Sovietization is also signalled in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba*; the Soviet presence, mass diasporas and worsening relations with the United States serving as a catalyst for the introduction of authoritarianism in Cuban society, and the subsequent containment of a post-1959 Cuban artistic and intellectual expression within a hermetically streamlined canon.

In the privileging of sexual activities, and in revealing naked bodies that resist official management, the streamlined and clothed body is supplanted, and protrusions normally hidden away become displayed in a very public manner. Gutiérrez is determined to challenge and subvert the official, quite literally from the bottom up: in this sense, Bakhtin's analysis of the subversive potential of folk expression provides the tools with which to discuss the transgressive strategies Gutiérrez deploys. Still, Gutiérrez's narrative is not really concerned with a sub-cultural or folk expression diametrically opposed to high culture. To suppose this would render the economic crisis marginal, impacting only on a specific sector of society, whereas the period in which *Trilogía* is set, the economic conditions and their overwhelming consequences affected all sectors of Cuban society. This defines Gutiérrez's narrative as one that voices a national concern rather than a marginal one.

In developing his discourse Bakhtin was certainly concerned with the increasing state control over intellectuals and artists through the imposition of the institutional/stylistic unity of Socialist Realism, an aesthetic control that invariably influenced the production of art during the post-1959 Revolution years through the

[16] Magaly Muguercia, 'The Body and its Politics in Cuba of the Nineties', *boundary 2*, Volume 29, Number 3, 2002, p. 176.

demand for conversion. As such, Muguercia's statement is suggestive in noting that festivities in Cuba ceased after Sovietization.[17] And this very rhetoric is the one Pedro Juan Gutiérrez counters when he refers to the Cuban discourse of racial and social democracy that reduces '*el mundo a unas pocas personas híbridas, monótonas, aburridas y "perfectas*"'.[18] The world Gutiérrez opens up in *Trilogía* resists the ideological parameters that inform the nationalistic discourse of racial diversity (within which the national becomes equated with equality) to reveal all that is hidden behind.

I would suggest then, that we consider *Trilogía* as a full bodied-narrative, one that, as Gutiérrez firmly argues, contains the complete picture. Whilst the actual banning of the book imposes its own limits on the localised circulation of *Trilogía*, the challenge to the official is evident in its outright ban. An international readership, however, widens *Trilogia's* context; in being a bestseller in Spain and other European countries, the narrative's transgressive scope is extended, as are the dynamics of spectatorship. Although Gutiérrez's deployment of naked and sexually performing bodies serves to break through the official discourse, reading *Trilogía* also becomes a voyeuristic activity. Whilst according to Bakhtin carnival is not a spectacle seen by people but rather something that they are immersed in,[19] I would argue that *Trilogía*, operates as both. If on the one hand the narrative is intensely introspective and concerned with life during the 1990s, it is also acutely concerned with Gutiérrez himself as spectator, voyeur, even as unofficial ethnographer, who is driven to chronicling these events as much as an exposé as by his libidinal desires. He is overwhelmingly the signifying subject of desire as well as, at times, the object of desire; as such he is both spectator as he recounts what he sees, and spectacle. Because the narrative is so explicitly sexual, it is interesting to explore the extent to which events become spectacle, the signifying object of a reader's desire. The carnivalesque offers us a useful analytical tool to examine this full-bodied narrative and its politics of spectatorship. We need however to locate Pedro Juan Gutiérrez in this role as author/narrator and consider how clear-cut his authorial intent is when the biographical and sexual are important driving forces.

[17] See my discussion of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* in Chapter Five on the question of the ideological conversion to which artists were subjected.
[18] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, pp. 15-16.
[19] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

7.2

The sexual content particularly contributes to viewing sex both at the level of a performance to be looked at, and of sex as a transgressive act. Christian associations of the sexual act with evil, sin and the Fall come to bear in *Trilogía's* Havana, with the Fall drawing some analogy to the period and the state of the republic. We are also dealing with an author/narrator who has fallen on hard times, is an alcoholic and depressed. A fallen state and hellish analogies are very relevant in locating the first person narrator, the candid protagonist/author Pedro Juan who tells us his story as he moves back and forth in time through 1994 – 1997.[20] The fact that author and protagonist share the same name is indicative of, and the nexus, of his split role as spectator/spectacle. Gutiérrez underwent a personal crisis during the 'Special Period' with both crises being interconnected. Nonetheless, Pedro Juan's personal micro crisis is not a hyperbolic representation of the macro crisis, but is seen as an effect of the period, and of a state of mind. Both crises are fixed in a particular moment in time, although one is always in opposition to the other, and both appear to be spiralling out of control.

In Pedro Juan's case the catalyst for his breakdown and subsequent claustrophobia came after becoming trapped in the lift of his apartment block. This entrapment is a pivotal event and given graphic outlet in the story entitled 'Yo claustrofóbico', which sets the scene for the morbid tone of the material. Pedro Juan's apartment block is consumed by a metaphoric and actual darkness through the material absence of light bulbs. The totally decrepit state of the building, which was practically a ruin, is also analogous to his state of mind:

> *Es un Viejo aparato de los años trienta, quiero decir que tiene rejas y es abierto. Es feo porque es americano, no como aquellos hermosos ascensores europeos de esa época que todavía trabajan suavemente en los hoteles del boulevard de la Villette y en otros barrios viejos de París. No. Éste es un cacharro más tosco y simple. Muy oscuro porque los vecinos se roban los*

[20] In commencing his trilogy in 1994 Gutiérrez anchors the narrative in the dramatic events of August 1994, when the growing numbers of people leaving the island reached its peak. Those that left Cuba did so by taking to the sea in home-made crafts, with a recorded 3,335 leaving the island in June 1994, compared to 2,857 for the whole of 1992 and 3,541 for 1993. By August 20 these numbers had reached 8,116, with 1,189 Cubans leaving on the 20 itself. Between 1991-4, the U.S. coastguards picked up 45, 575 rafters. The massive exodus of 1994 was accompanied by an increase in street violence, embassy occupations and armed hijacking of vessels. Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000), p. 210.

> *bombillos y con una peste permanente a orina, porquería y al los vómitos diarios de un vecino del cuarto piso. Uno sube y baja lentamente mirando el paisaje alrededor: cemento, oscuridad, pedazo de escalera, las puertas de cada piso, alguien que espera y al fin se decide a seguir por la escalera, porque el ascensor se detiene cuando quiere y donde más le gusta. Muchas veces decide detenerse sin coincidir con las puertas de salida. Frente a uno sólo está la pared de cemento áspero del pozo, y la gente grita: <<¡Ahhh, sáquenme de aquí, coño, que esto se trabó!>>.*[21]

The comparison with the classical and well-preserved buildings found in Paris only serves to emphasise the degraded physical appearance of the apartment block. Besides this, the lift is located in the centre of the building as it moves up and down through levels. The lift appears to have a mind of its own, stopping and starting at random, as it carries people down (or up) to the various levels whilst offering a view beyond its bare cage of cement, dirty stairwells, darkness and the smell of urine and vomit. Forced containment is suggested by the lift as it directs bodies to any floor it chooses to set them off at, if at all. Anybody in the lift's interior is characterised by a total lack of self-determination, with this interiority being set off against the panoramic views to be had in the exterior glass lifts found in some hotels in Havana. This is a different time and a different place, one which points towards some sort of a living hell. When Pedro Juan becomes trapped in the lift, badly injuring his arm in his desperate panic to get out, he describes the lift as a vehicle that takes him '*directo a la caldera del diablo*'.[22] Hell is where he is when at home, and at a psychological level. The *inferno* trope is a recurring one, with hellish references throughout the individual chapters together with Pedro Juan's recognition of the damming effect this is having on him:

> *Mucha gente a mi alrededor estuvo injectando rencor y odio en mi corazón. El final era previsible: ingresar al caos, seguir hacia abajo y no parar hasta el infierno. Cuando estuviera asándome en aceite y azufre en llamas ya no habría remedio.*[23]

Whereas Pedro Juan's apartment block has eight levels, if we consider the added accommodation built on the roof, the roof becomes converted into a ninth floor. Dante's *Inferno* is composed of nine circles and I would suggest that a resonance exists between the levels in Pedro Juan's apartment block, and Dante's circles of hell. The roof, which is where Pedro Juan 'resides', presents itself as the first circle, limbo,

[21] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 30.
[22] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 31.
[23] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 204.

with the dreaded lift negotiating access to the lower levels. The first section of *Trilogía*, entitled 'Anclado en la tierra de nadie', further recalls a state of limbo where a sense of belonging to a place is absent, leading to aimlessness and dislocation. Circles two and three refer to lust and gluttony; in Pedro Juan's case his addiction to alcohol and drugs amount to a form of gluttony, whilst also drawing attention to the lack of food (oral gratification) that has led to an over-emphasis of physical gratification. The fourth circle of the *Inferno* is defined by avarice and prodigality that in *Trilogía* is equated with the greed and coveting of material goods others may have. Although prodigality suggests squander and wastefulness, the trilogy displays a combination of both squander to feed addictions, and an acute awareness of the value of meagre belongings. Anger and sullenness inform the fifth circle and *Trilogía's* second part. Entitled 'Nada que hacer', this section echoes apathy and sullenness as it repeats the 'nothing to do' theme throughout its stories, an attitude that leads to the violence and heresy that have become the norm throughout the trilogy, as well as in the sixth and seventh circles of Dante's hell. The panderers, seducers, hypocrites, thieves and counterfeiters who inhabit the eighth circle are encountered in every day interactions where relationships are false and based on predatory intent and economic gain. The ninth circle, the Frozen Floor of Hell,[24] can be located as the depths of despair Pedro Juan finds himself in. He describes himself burning in hell, where his

> *[...] pellejo estaba achicharrado y pestilente a gases sulfurosos cuando logré detener la caída. Y comencé a recuperar algo de lo mejor. Me costó trabajo. Nunca volví a ser el mismo.*[25]

Although not frozen like Dante's Hell, the experience of this level of existence has led to an emotional detachment and a certain hardening of moral and ethical concerns. In this sense we have a much heightened emotional awareness via our narrator's engagement with this level of living, and an inherent freezing of emotions and a tangible desensitisation in the predatory nature of social and human interactions. The iciness of hell contrasts with Cuba's climate. Although *Triología* is comprised of three sections, there is no comparison between this and the three sections of the *Divina Comedia*, which follows a trajectory of redemption until paradise is within reach. Pedro Juan's Havana is never seen in paradisiacal terms; indeed, the Inferno

[24] See Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert and Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).
[25] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 204.

trope is deployed to great effect by Gutiérrez, who plays on the concept as a reflection of the social realities both he and the island are merged in. References to hell abound, but instead of locating himself solely within an authorial role similar to that of Dante, who observes the sinners as Virgil guides him through hell, Gutiérrez is a self-confessed sinner and immersed in his punishment as well as acting as observer. Although Pedro Juan shows some improvement after reaching 'rock bottom', there is little indication that he has experienced a trial by fire or rites of passage since relatively minor improvements occur throughout the three sections of his trajectory. The turning point signalled in Pedro Juan's recognition of his situation is frustrated because events are not arranged in chronological order, with temporal and spatial shifts occurring within and between each chapter. When we reach *Trilogía's* final sections it appears that Pedro Juan is still caught up in a nightmarish narrative set in some kind of 'anti-paradise', with a rite of passage never quite finding expression. In fact, the final story appears as a self-fulfilling prophecy, with its protagonist, Cholo, representing a potential older Pedro Juan, still wandering through the usual haunts and after the same type of sexual gratification. The analogy created between Cholo and Pedro Juan signals a pessimistic ending for our author/narrator.

We consequently appear to be caught in a time warp that shifts back and forth just as the lift moves up and down at random. In this sense the lift also represents a space where the temporal, the macro and the micro merge, particularly when Pedro Juan refers to his claustrophobia in the following terms: '*[...] estuve atrapado muchos años. Estuve encerrado dentro de mí, derrumbándome dentro de mí*'.[26] The lift, as a trigger for his claustrophobia, draws our attention to the interiority that comes to define Pedro Juan's life, as he becomes all the more focused on the very private activities of sex, drugs, black market trading, and racketeering. The public turns inwards to a structure that inverts the sites in which the private and public are located, privileging the private discourse as a counter hegemonic one to the public, official one, which it hopes to expose as fraudulent. The unofficial is presented as the hard, painful, but 'truthful' 'reality'. When Gutiérrez articulates the *derrumbe* in his personal life the barriers between the private and public, fiction and autobiography, as between author and narrator are collapsed.

[26] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 31.

This apparent absence of self-restraint, together with the subjectivity of the memoir type narrative,[27] which openly engages in the fictionalising of the self,[28] raises questions about the boundaries between author/narrator, fact/fiction, dream/nightmare. Uncertainties are created through the absence of a consecutive narrative strand, leading to the impression of both a fragmented self and the dislocation of human interactions. Each of *Trilogía's* three sections is comprised of individual self-contained stories, much like journalistic snapshots of events surrounding sexual exploits, and deals with the overriding concerns of earning some money to provide food and alcohol. These snapshots recount events in the absence of chronological order, frustrating any attempt at unity, just as the characters we encounter resist conformity within an institutional matrix. At the same time, the very deployment of a narrative 'snapshot' technique recalls Gutiérrez's journalistic background, the tensions however between unity and disunity are felt both at textual and interpersonal levels. Notwithstanding Pedro Juan's presence in most events, which gives us the impression of unity, the introspective drive creates distance as it signals human dislocation, and Pedro Juan's inability to make meaningful connections, thus giving rise to the impression of a fractured unity:

> *En definitiva, así es como uno vive: por pedacitos, empatando cada pedacito, cada hora, cada día, cada etapa, empatando a la gente de aquí y de allá dentro de uno. Y así uno arma la vida como un rompecabezas.*[29]

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[27] As a genre, the memoir has served an important function in post-revolutionary Cuba because of its fundamental concerns with the question of post-1959 identity. See Miguel Barnet's *Biografía de un Cimarron* (1964), which constitutes a nation-building vehicle for a modern Cuba. See also Roberto Gonzalez Echevarría's *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1998), and *The Voices of The Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), particularly his chapter on *Biografía de un Cimarron.* This drive is far from straightforward in *Trilogía.* It is significant that the 1986 edition of *Biografía de un Cimarron,* published to commemorate the book's 20th anniversary, coincided with the period of the massive exoduses of the 1980s. These had been triggered by the storming of the Peruvian Embassy in 1980 and resulted in the Mariel boatlift in which an estimated 125,000 Cubans left. A steady flow of departures has continued since. The re-publication of a unifying 'vehicle' such as *Biografía* came (perhaps rather unwittingly) at a crucial time to reiterate revolutionary and national unity during a moment that pointed towards disunity. Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's memoir, although also published during a time of crisis, resists a unifying discourse by drawing attention to a crisis that is threatening the nation state rather than recalling a foundational fiction to plaster over it. Pedro Juan Gutiérrez nods to the cimarrón's biography when he finds himself '*metido a cimarrón'* (p. 125). Whilst the runaway slave's exploits are linked with emancipation and the emergence of national independence, Pedro Juan's situation only becomes a short moment of respite from an unrelenting state of economic and moral penury.

[28] '*Porque la literatura tiene que ser creíble, tú no puedes escribir todo lo que sucede, hay que escoger, seleccionar y hacer una cosa apetecible y sobre todo creíble. Me baso en toda esa realidad, pero hago literatura donde se mezclan realidad y ficción de una manera creíble*'. Cited in 'Pedro Juan Gutiérrez o la literatura como conflicto', p. 2. The boundaries between reality (whose reality?), fiction, and the arbitrary nature of selection are therefore important considerations.

[29] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 204.

It is interesting to note that whilst the protagonists in Ana Menéndez's *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* perceive that a return to Cuba completes their identity, the fact is that even on the island, a sense of dislocation and alienation prevailed. Although anchored on *terra firme,* the protagonists construct identity within the immediacy of the moment rather than looking too far ahead into the future. Nevertheless, even as we experience this narrative's body in '*pedacitos*', the narrative structure fractures the monolithic official discourse that aims to contain this existence. In drawing attention to the alimentary and sexual economy that shapes identity and physical appearances, Gutiérrez creates a drastic contrast between the 'national' male and female bodies viewed in Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba/Ya Kuba* and the emaciated or overtly sexualised bodies in his narrative. Indeed, as Muguercia argues, the Cuban population lost weight in a disturbing way during the nineties after a serious epidemic of neuritis swept the island, a consequence of the severe lack of food and the extraordinary physical expenditure of energy for day-to-day survival.[30] As such, a constant theme in *Trilogía* is food; the absence of it, lethargy and bodies that are both shaped by the economic crisis.

The concern with food is evident from the first story onwards. Ironically entitled 'Cosas nuevas en mi vida', the first episode, rather than cataloguing the accumulation of material items, deals with life in the absence of such goods. The mention of food becomes a mantra that signals a lack, with every repetition both bringing home the severity of the deprivations and simultaneously rendering them the norm rather than an extremity.

> *Tenía hambre. Claro, solo tenía un té, una tajada de melon y un café en el estómago. En la casa me comí un pedazo de pan con otro té. Ya me estaba acostumbrando a muchas cosas nuevas en mi vida. [...] A vivir casi sin nada.*[31]

We are dealing here with basic and minute amounts of food, but Pedro Juan's philosophy of life, as he now lives it, is shaped by lack: if he wanted to buy some rum, there was no one to buy it from, and even if he had some money, '*no había nada*

[30] Magaly Muguercia, 'The Body and its Politics in Cuba of the Nineties', p. 180.
[31] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 11.

que comprar'.[32] Alimentary consumption is replaced by the experience of its very absence, and the experience of absence fuels his narrative; we as readers consume his experience. If food and drink are scarce, so are cleaning materials and both the dirty body (in all its aspects) and the changing shape of the body through starvation are interconnected.

For example, Pedro Juan recounts the experience of Berta, an elderly lady of his neighbourhood, in the following terms:

> *Ella [...] se ha acostumbrado al silencio, al hambre, a estar muy delgada y sin dinero, encerrada en su piso, que cada día está más sucio, por dos razones: no tiene dólares para comprar jabón y detergente, y no tiene fuerzas para limpiar.*[33]

Even as a refuse collector Pedro Juan becomes somewhat of a pariah because he cannot get rid of the smell of sewage on himself; ironically however, this was the only means with which to earn money and feed himself. The experience is isolating, leading to a narcissistic awareness of the self and of others. The rooftop becomes a vantage point for both introspection and viewing neighbours, one of which keeps chickens and pigs to provide food. Also associated with smells, the animals convert the rooftop into '*un sitio pestilente*'.[34] In keeping these animals and through her appearances, Pedro Juan's neighbour becomes a physical reminder of the economic plight: '*La mujer trabajaba en un comedor obreo y conseguía las sobras para aquellos animals. Ella también estaba flaca y destruida*'.[35] Even as she collects scraps to feed the animals, her wasted body shows scarce nourishment, with this image juxtaposed against one of her former self: '*Entonces ella era muy linda. Una mujer alta, hermosa, con esa gracia alegre y pícara de las mulatas. Ahora no. Estaba decrépita, demasiado flaca*'.[36] When we encounter fuller bodies, they too are inscribed by the effects of the economic crisis with Pedro Juan's perception of a former girlfriend, Margarita being informed by a dual sexual and alimentary economy:

> *se estaba reponiendo y engordaba. Ya no estaba demacrada. De nuevo tenía las nalgas duras, redondas y sólidas a pesar se sus cuarenta y sies años. [...]*

[32] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 11.
[33] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 297.
[34] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 95.
[35] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 95.
[36] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 95.

Oh, no resistí la tentación y, después de un buen rato jugando con ella, ya había tenido tres orgasmos, se la metí por el culo.[37]

In the absence of food, oral gratification becomes replaced by physical gratification. Whilst the sexual is certainly a major source of pleasure for the trilogy's protagonists, I would also suggest that the over emphasis on the physical poses a challenge to the 'order' found in canonical narratives that endorse family structures and nation building 'romances'. Rarely does the sexual lead to the formation of an enduring relationship, and is generally informed on predatory motives or on self-gratification. Individuals therefore resist their institutional management; we are never really aware of any corporeal discipline or the importance of contraceptive practices, or of the control of sexually transmitted diseases.[38] The management of the body in the new canon demanded that elbows be kept neatly on the table, and for one 'to walk without protruding the shoulder blades or hips, to hold in the abdomen',[39] with emphasis placed on delimiting the body's confines. If sexual gratification brings about pleasure, at times the only source of pleasure, it also introduces into the equation the exchange of bodily fluids, and a black economy in return for money, or sex or food. Just as the emphasis on dirt is an intrinsic, inescapable signifier of the 'Special Period', so is '*saliva, aliento y olores fuertes, orina, semen, mierda, sudor, microbiois, bacterias*'.[40] In the deployment of sex, dirt, prostitution, and of naked and starving bodies, Gutiérrez enacts resistance to an official discourse through bodies that do not behave according to institutional rules; in revealing them, he resists a censorship that would cover them up. This is a double-edged activity, particularly when it comes to the representation of women. Although the depiction of men is far from straightforward, women are often seen as liberated through prostitution and the financial security it can bring them. Nevertheless, in this exposure, women's bodies also become highly sexualised and desirable, with the loaded image of the Cuban *mulatta* resurfacing here again.

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[37] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 10. Numerous depictions of the body in either a sexualised or abject form recur in Gutiérrez's narrative, and whilst informed or constructed in response to a lack of consumption or an over abundance of it, the representation of women's bodies is not a straightforward practice. Although women are often empowered through sexual proclivity, not all women in *Trilogía* are depicted as strong. Those that fall outside the economic or sexual exchange such as the elderly, live at the mercy of predatory neighbours and men.
[38] See Michel Foucault, *Crime and Punish: The Birth of The Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1977).
[39] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* p. 322.
[40] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 11.

An unsuccessful attempt to reform this character takes place in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* by placing responsibility for Maria's prostitution on the North American businessmen who exploit her. In equating Maria's body with that of Cuba an ambivalent association is created since her prostitution and betrayal of René, although symptomatic of the times, is perceived as wrong. At the same time, the association between Maria and the *mulatta* also renders her a displaced national signifier, one that represents Cuba as body that is for sale, and one that corresponds with the perception of Cuba as the locus of colonial and sexual desire. The North American apologue cannot be used in the same way in *Trilogía*, where *mulattas* are very often described in terms of exuberant physical appearance and sexual proclivity whilst also being predatory in their touting for business. In this sense, many of their clients become their 'victims', whereas Maria was depicted as a victim. They also achieve some freedom from iconic, historical figurations. The women in *Trilogía*, particularly *mulattas*, are often described as children of Changó and Ochún. In Cuban Santería, Changó is the lord of thunder and very sexually potent, whilst Ochún is the *orisha* of sensuality. Endowed with healing powers, Ochún is also maternal, but more significantly is never subordinate to her lovers. Within the syncretic, even dissimulation dynamics of Santeria, Ochún is representative of La Virgen de Cobre, Cuba's patron saint.[41] In locating Cuban women within this combination of patronage and associations, Gutiérrez bolsters and empowers a number of the women in *Trilogía.* Although many of the *mulattas* are often described in terms of sexual desire and their physical attractiveness, they are not passive, but making their own decisions, even if it is to prostitute themselves to earn much needed cash. Many are shrewd businesswomen whose ultimate aim is to marry out of the island. Interestingly, the *mulatta* trope is appropriated by many of these prostitutes, who, in the full knowledge of her signification and patriarchal basis as an object of men's desire, use the *mulatta's* characteristics to entrap men. This, again, empowers the females characters, as well as operating at a counter canonical and patriarchal level. Furthermore, Gutiérrez juxtaposes this image of the 'liberated' Cuban woman of the 1990s with that of the presumed liberated revolutionary woman, seen in the following excerpt from a socialist pamphlet:

[41] See Miguel Barnet, *Cultos Afrocubanos: La Regla de Ocha, La Regla de Palo Monte* (El Vedado, Cuidad de La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1995).

> *"¡Liberacíon de la mujer mediante Revolución socialista!" El título con letras robustas sobre una mujer soviética, joven, vestida de negro, con abrigos, guantes y bufandas, seria, con los ojos más hermosos y tristes del mundo, y un fusil AK cruzado sobre el pecho. Había una suave dulzura en aquella rusa triste, seria y vestida de Negro. Nada feroz. Seguramente era una cálida y dulce rusa. En una esquina decía: "Guardia de honor soviética." Luisa intentó leer el folleto, pero no entendió nada, y poco a poco lo gastamos para ir al inodoro.*[42]

This now defunct image of the revolutionary woman – although not really the Cuban woman but one that owes its presence and ideology to the Soviet Union – is indicative of a type of liberation that is more about iconicity than actuality. The Russian girl, rather than being liberated is contained within an ideology and an aesthetic, whereas in contrast to this, the *mulattas* in *Trilogía* manipulate the discourse that determines them for personal and financial gain. Whilst this Russian ideal aims to give the impression of an aggressive, independent fighter, the tender, sweet, almost childlike appearance of the woman is at odds with the phallic AK she holds against her body. In the juxtaposition of both models the Soviet aesthetic is rejected in favour of a more 'authentic' Cuban woman, although it is difficult to imagine where the authentic lies in *Trilogía*.

Because sexual activities are associated with the 'earthy' and perceived as 'natural' bodily functions, the suggestion is made that these activities are more authentic than the ideologically informed rhetoric that aims to control prostitution and free enterprise. Still, the 'authentic' is also mediated and informed by monetary exchange and pimps; the cost of 'liberation' is high. Despite early efforts of the Revolutionary government to eliminate the image of Cuba as a sexual heaven by sponsoring highly publicised campaigns to re-educate prostitutes, the 1990s totally undermined this initiative. Whereas Maria's role in *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* functions as a cautionary tale, which encourages reform, her loaded signification together with her setting within the film inadvertently re-enact the desiring and sexual trope. In exposing the existence of the sex market in Cuba during the 1990s, Gutiérrez draws attention to a crisis and enacts a subversive move in this exposure, drawing attention to the state's inability to provide for its citizens. As Ruth Behar suggests, the increasing hardship brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Block saw a massive return of prostitution with 'the state struggling to maintain control over the many

[42] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 199.

Cuban female (and gay male) bodies [...] "on the loose"'.[43] In resisting their containment, Gutiérrez defies the State's clean up tactics; in revealing them he also recreates the image of Cuba as a sexual body that is currently for sale. Although prostitution is seen as a survival strategy, Havana has also become a sex destination for foreign men in much the same way as it was before the Revolution.[44]

7.3

Bodies, therefore, are highly sexualised because they are not streamlined or hermetically sealed; they copulate and defecate. The language used to describe them is filled with Bakhtinian bodily images such as 'genitals, bellies, defecations, urine, [...] noses, mouths, and dismembered parts',[45] thus, in exhibiting bodies that surpass societal norms, a challenge is enacted. Although the focus has been on women's bodies, the introspectiveness and narcissism inherent in Pedro Juan's narrative directs us to observe Pedro Juan exposing his own body, displaying and admiring it:

> *Aproveché que estaba sola, me la saqué y se la mostré. Pensé que se calentaría. Yo tengo una hermosa pinga, gruesa, oscura, de seis pulgadas, con una cabeza rosada y palpitante, y mucho pelo negra. En realidad, me gusta mi propia pinga, huevos y pendejos.*[46]

Whilst certainly informed by a narcissistic, masturbatory act that confirms this process of writing, a high level of voyeurism, even spectatorship takes place here because Pedro Juan is exposing himself here to both a woman and a readership. We as readers participate as voyeurs when we enter this world and observe the strip tease, emotional and physical, as performed by Pedro Juan and others. Notwithstanding Pedro Juan's immersion in the activities and the world of *Trilogía*, he is also the narrative's authorial drive and in his former occupation, had been a State journalist.

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[43] Ruth Behar, 'The Erotics of Power and Cuba's Revolutionary Children', *Cuba, the Elusive Nation: Interpretations of National Identity*, eds. Damián J. Fernández and Madeline Cámara Betancourt (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2000), p. 142. The writer Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990), *Antes que anochezca* (1992) and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in his film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993), deal with the repression of homosexuality in Cuban society and the relationship between heterosexuality and citizenship. Pedro Juan Gutiérrez deals with homosexuality in *Trilogía*, but the stories are very strongly led by heterosexual drives and a *machista* discourse. Nevertheless, an interesting development takes place in Gutiérrez's *Animal tropical* (2000), in which the protagonist, the same but older Pedro Juan of *Trilogía*, has relationships with men and women, whilst resisting being labelled as bisexual.

[44] Ruth Behar, 'The Erotics of Power and Cuba's Revolutionary Children', p. 142.

[45] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 319.

[46] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, p. 79.

To what extent then is he a journalist/ethnographer who observes and documents for some ulterior motive, and to which is he a man experiencing and documenting his crisis? It is not easy to locate Pedro Juan either as a lapsed journalist who is acting as a participant observer, or as a down and out who finds himself in this terrible situation, or both. After being asked in an interview '*¿Como llegas a esos personajes y, sobre todo, qué te hace sumergirte en esos ambientes tan sórdidos ?*' [47] Gutiérrez replied by saying that his years in journalism had given him this ability, and that he was not interested in writing about the bourgeois classes or the 'dandy' because they had no literary value for him: '*Ese no es mi mundo, el mundo de mis personajes es mucho más sucio, un mundo mucho más pobre*'.[48] Gutiérrez locates himself outside the bourgeois 'world', at least in a literary sense, but he also draws a distinction between his own world and that of his protagonists. It would seem that he is both inside and outside the trilogy's Havana, whilst maintaining distance.

Pedro Juan's elevated position in his building sustains this, but still, he is emerged in his surroundings both through circumstance and later choice, and for this reason it becomes increasingly difficult to separate both Pedro Juans. [49] Perhaps it is not necessary to do so, but this creates the doubling of his own identity as one that is drawn between that of writer/protagonist, observer/participant leading to ambivalence over his positionality and intention. Since Pedro Juan is implicated and actively participates in unsavoury activities, our reaction to him is also ambivalent and we wonder if we, as readers, are placed (like in Dante's *Inferno*) in some form of moral position, depending on the way we respond to the 'sinners of hell', including Gutiérrez. There is certainly no resolution to this positioning, Gutiérrez can be both ethnographer and participant but this does not lessen the irreducible rift that exists between both positions, a rift that, I would suggest, exists within the narrative as a carnivalesque practice of transgression, and this very act becoming spectacularised as the object of an audience's remote gaze.[50]

[47] Cited in 'Encuentro en la red – Diario independiente de asuntos cubanos', Año III, Edición 356, Jueves, 02 mayo 2002, http://www.cubaencuentro.com/rawtext/entrevista/2002/05/02/7691.html
[48] Cited in 'Encuentro en la red – Diario independiente de asuntos cubanos'.
[49] I would suggest that Pedro Juan Gutierrez's discussion of *Trilogía* in interviews, and the actual *Trilogía* also create a certain doubling since he goes in some considerable detail to explain a number of the stories and how he had to tone their content down to be able to publish. The versions consequently bounce off each other to create the same doubling effect.
[50] See Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 178-183.

As such, we have competing drives in the focus on the body; Pedro Juan's focus on his own and other bodies (often as voyeur) is often led by his sexual desire making him the signifying object. On the other hand, we cannot discount the possibility that the narrative's overt sexual content converts *Trilogía* into an object of 'a' reader's desire. The blurb on *Trilogía's* sleeve demonstrated this duality; '*A golpe de ron, música y sexo, nos deja títere con cabeza*' (Tiempo). The blurb on the English language translation cites the *Guardian's* review:

> This Havana is one of the sleaziest cities you are ever likely to explore...There is so much itchy sex and general loose behaviour in these pages that you can be forgiven, for a moment, for thinking that *Dirty Havana Trilogy* belongs on the top shelf of some desperate departure lounge bookstore...you can read these scenes, distilled through the always slightly drunken eyes of the earthy Pedro Juan... (*The Guardian*)

Both reviews focus on the alcohol, sex and the exhilaration such a text brings, although it must be noted that the blurb in the Spanish original seems to be suggesting a subversion of order in the world turned upside down. These reviews, however, draw attention to the tantalising effect the narrative has for an outside audience. The point of signification changes when the events being experienced and written by our narrator/author are read and desired by someone else. Questions in turn are raised about whether the sexual tropes leave the trilogy's narrative open to a representation that undermines its mode of transgression when it is being signified as the object of another's desire. Whilst, as mentioned earlier, the changing bodies denote and expose the black economy, this does not prevent them from being sexualised by Gutiérrez or from being viewed as sexual signifiers.

Pedro Juan locates himself in '*el mejor sitio posible del mundo: un apartmento en la azotea de un viejo edificio de ocho pisos en Centro Habana*':[51] an invaluable vantage position from which to view the city as writer/participant observer. The view is equally introspective when he describes an out of body experience; '*Me gusta sobrevolarme, observar de lejos a Pedro Juan*',[52] demonstrating that he intends to examine to understanding himself as much as he is on observing what surrounds him. From this position, he views through binoculars the bloodied, murdered body of a woman on the pavement below as if watching a movie, '*en primera fila, tan morboso*

[51] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 15.
[52] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 15.

y vampiresco como todos los demás, con visión privilegiada'.[53] The woman's body is presented as a spectacle, as entertainment, with the vampire metaphor suggesting a thirst for this type of scenario, which, at a most elementary level underpins a voyeur trope, but a thin line exists between this and the activity of a spectator at a peepshow/freak show.

The story 'Aplastado por la mierda' underlines the duality that exists between transgression and spectatorship through the explicit account of an old man's life story. When younger this now wheel chair bound octogenarian had travelled the world in a cabaret/carnival act as '*Un fenómeno de la naturaleza...Supermán...trienta centímetros, doce pulgadas, un pie de superpinga...con ustedes, ¡Supermán!*'.[54]As the *Supermán* recounts his story both Pedro Juan, and us readers, are captive audiences for his act:

> *Salia envuelto en una capa de ceda roja y azul. En el medio del escenario me paraba frente al público, abría la capa de un golpe y me quedaba en cueros, conla pinga caída. Me sentaba en una silla y al parecer miraba al público. En realidad estaba mirando a una blanca, rubia que me ponían entre bambalinas, sobre una cama. Esa mujer me tenía loco. Se hacía una paja y cuando ya estaba caliente se le unía un blanco y comenzaba a hacer de todo. De todo. Aquello era tremendo. Pero nadie les veía. Era śolo para mí. Mirando eso se me paraba la pinga a reventar y, sin tocarla en ningún momento, me venía.*[55]

At one level this account enacts one tantalising peep-show feeding off another, but even as we consider the dynamic between *Supermán* and the other couple, we realise that we are not dealing with another couple but with a woman being viewed as she masturbates (for her own pleasure?) for two men to awaken their desire. She is the subject within the discourse of their desire, from Pedro Juan's discursive position and perhaps even readers. This is by no means where the dynamic ends, since there are multiple audiences here, including that of the paying audience in the carnival. Who is looking at whom, and what is the relationship between each audience? Who is the ultimate spectator? Where do we locate readers when to all extent and purpose we are invisible but very present in this setting? But then, can we have a generic reader, or is there an ideal subject-position implied in this scene, especially if we consider Pedro Juan the artist, who stands between the subject(s) of desire, the *Supermán*, the woman

[53] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 86.
[54] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 61.
[55] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 61.

and the other man, and the telling of the story. The paying audience is not privy to the events taking place literally behind their backs, only being aware of a partial picture of this show. The rest of the show is rendered invisible to them but it is also signified by the fact that the *Supermán* can perform before them. Although the *Supermán* can espy (literally as peep-show) the other sex act, he cannot view himself (since directly in front of him we have the audience and then the peep-show), making him both spectator and spectacle, both object of desire and desiring object. Even as we ascribe an infinite equation to this spectatorship/spectacle dynamic, the temporal and spatial distance between the event and its present day telling further destabilises the scene.

Rather ironically, and to preserve his livelihood, the *Supermán* had led a celibate marriage, but a transformation occurs when the old man allows Pedro Juan to peek beneath the blanket that covers his legs as he sits on the wheelchair. In this act the *Supermán* replicates the drawing back of his red and blue silk cape to reveal his naked self, and that is what we expect too, since we are tantalised by the expectations of a super 'dick'. In this instance however, the old man reveals multiple amputations of legs, penis and testicles. In their place Pedro Juan discovers a (double) replacement member: '*Una mangerita de goma salía del sitio donde estuvo la pinga y dejaba caer una gota continua de orina en una bolsa plástica que llevaba atada a la cintura*'.[56] Although a transformation that extends the terms of spectatorship as the *Supermán's* body transgresses in a different version of itself, this is not what Pedro Juan or we expect to see. It is also precisely at this point that the narrative stops, if only for an instant, becoming top shelf material but something else since what we see is not what we desire. We cannot desire the carnival act because it is no longer sexual but defined by the absence of sexuality, with this becoming a powerful moment in the narrative as it disengages itself from a sexualised discourse and reflects, in an almost Conradian moment, upon the horror of it all. In the drawing back of the final curtain the sexual economy is revealed, and whilst tantalising and attracting sex tourists to Cuba, this exposé is perhaps less about sex and more about the economic realities as they impinge on the body. Whilst the image is that of a man who has lost his genital organs and with this the procreative principle, his 'profession' ensured that no procreating took place. Although the tubes become the grotesque symbol for the phallus and the old man's body, and like the grotesque body, his is continually in the act of becoming,

[56] Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana,* p. 63.

the old man's reconstituted body parts also repeats the decay that surrounds him, as well as invading his body. The mechanics of his body represent the scaffolding that prop up many of the derelict looking baroque buildings in Havana, and of course, the State, which at an official level sustains itself through a revolutionary rhetoric and mythic heroes such as Che Guevara, whose ever youthful and heroic figure jars with that of the ageing heroic *Supermán*.[57]

This episode transgresses more than the body in raising questions about representation and the spectatorship of the carnival show. The body challenges any one point of view imposed by a new bodily canon, resisting containment, but it also underlines the limits of representation and of spectacle. Whilst the public performance of a transgressive act complicates official concepts of cultural identity, in creating such a spectacle *Trilogía* becomes exposed to an authority of representation and desire that locates the narrative within a discourse of power and desire. Consequently, whilst *Trilogía* resists closure or censure, it cannot escape the contradictions and conflicting desires inherent in its carnivalesque performance and the author/narrator's split self.

Although enabling the self-representation of cultural identity outside the canon and beyond the government's ideological reach Gutiérrez's transgressive narrative invariably creates a perception of Cuban cultural identity that is visualised as tantalising. This is an issue raised through my discussion of Carpentier's *¡Ecue-Yamba-O!* where the prioritisation of Afro-Cuban religious rituals breaches the boundaries Carpentier hoped to maintain so that black world could be maintained as a space outside the reach of the US. Although Gutiérrez intentions are revelatory, the sexual politics informing the spectacle he creates undermine his aim. His narrative is therefore re-anchored within a sexualised discourse, and one that the Revolution had hoped to create distance from: the perception and reality of Cuba as a sex destination

[57] The economic crisis and the subsequent massive diasporas certainly shook the state but they also brought about a serious reassessment, by the Cuban government, of the policies and ideologies that upheld the State. These involved a reinvigoration of the Revolution's ideological thrust in an attempt to appease the disgruntled youth who now perceived the Cuban Government's outdated and out of touch with the challenges of the nineties. Whilst driven by a mood of modernisation and renewal, the Cuban Government desperately needed to re-establish the legitimacy of the 1959 Revolution and this was done by placing a new emphasis on Che Guevara, his ideas and his image. Guevara's early death meant that his revolutionary stance had remained intact and untainted by the loss of confidence in the Castro government. To this end, Che Guevara's ever youthful image was used by the State as a means to rejuvenate the regime and to encourage a return to Revolutionary 'origins', origins that would take the island back to a 'purer' and less 'degraded' moment in time. Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams*, pp. 209-10.

is, however, a fact. Pedro Juan's trajectory is such that he remains in *Trilogía's* hellish Havana, engaged in gratifying the same basis needs. Gutiérrez also seems condemned in some way to repeatedly write the same story since his subsequent publications deal with the same, or similar subject matters. As a consequence, any sense of regeneration is frustrated, and we leave Pedro Juan's Havana with a pessimistic view of the present. At the same time, in avoiding the trappings of nostalgia as those encountered in Ana Menéndez's collection, one could well ask whether this other degraded vision is more authentic in its defence of the 'naked reality', the suggestion being that a 'genuine' cultural identity can only be found in the margins where it is out of reach of the hegemonic and ideological need for panoply and control. Liminal and marginal spaces are indeed recognised postcolonial sites which generate hybrid identities and provide positions of contestations, and *Trilogía* certainly offers such as space although Gutiérrez's challenge is not contained with a colonial binary but directed against the pervasive Cuban State. The apparent marginalisation of the group of people he writes about, and that of his own life, form part of the narrative's creative drive; we are also presented with an extremely challenging site that, although marginal to the national ideology, is powerfully heard. Nevertheless, in resisting the official premise under which official representations of cultural identity are produced, and exposing the official discourse, Gutiérrez also embarks on a mission that deconstructs the very premise on which his own cultural identity is based.

Still, questions are raised about *Trilogía's* deconstructive narrative. In writing such an account Gutierrez aims to expose the economic realities brought about by the crisis, but he is also aware that the premise on which Cuban cultural identity on the island finds expression is crumbling before his very eyes. His narrative assists in the destruction of the myth as much as it discloses his anxiety over the loss of control, and the terms under which cultural and nationalist identity has been determined. Gutiérrez finds expression within this dynamic, but his continual 'shit-stirring' keeps his narrative in a place where regeneration is fuelled through this sense of deconstruction. Ideological unity is therefore continually challenged. Because Gutiérrez functions outside of the official discourse, and, as he blatantly argues, is actively rewriting the story, warts and all, we feel that we are actually being given the truth. In reality, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* gave yet another aspect of cultural identity, and perhaps one that that left us little hope of rising above the quagmire of dirt, depravation and disunity.

In the following chapter, my last, I aim to tie together the diverse representation of cultural identity discussed in previous chapters which, as my discussion of Gutiérrez's *Trilogía* suggests, are driven by an activity that is simultaneously constructive and deconstructive. The notion of a site or a model under constant reformulations brings me back to the proposition made by Louis A Pérez Jr, and discussed in my Introduction/Chapter One, of Cuban cultural identity not as a fixed and immutable construct but rather as cultural artefact; one that is contested and contesting and formed from representations often filled with contradictions and incoherence, almost always in flux.[58] This dynamic brings to mind the work of the Cuban ceramist, Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, who forms ceramic sculptures of baroque houses so typical of La Habana, and brings together diverse signifiers of Cuban culture in large murals that create tableaux where each individual part is in dialogue with the other. As a medium, and as an artistic process I will be suggesting that Marín Rodríguez 's work offers a composite approach that engages with change, diversity and the potential for reformulations by presenting works that appear as sites that are constantly under construction as they respond to change.

[58] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture* (New York: The Ecco Press, 1999), p. 5.

8. Urban Spaces, Cultural Artefact, and Cuban Cultural Identity

> What concerns me has to do with why cities took the shape they did. Which is to say that I am not engaged with form in the abstract, or with form studied for its behavioural possibilities, but with form as a receptacle of meaning. And archetypal meaning is ultimately lodged with history and cultural contexts.[1]

> The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects.[2]

8.1

This chapter takes a closer, albeit indirect look, at the city of Havana through the ceramics of the contemporary Cuban artist Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez. My interest is in exploring the urban space to examine how the city creates an identity for itself as much as it shapes identity. At the same time, the city constitutes a frame for human activities and functions as a setting where individuals leave 'traces' of their passing and markers, or clues, to their mode of existence. In this sense, the city becomes a 'secret' unwritten text, which needs to 'be read', and whose facades need to be penetrated to reveal the 'true' character of the city and its human element.[3] This sense of an imagined or officially constructed cultural identity versus the actuality has been a thematic in both Ana Menéndez and Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's narratives: as a diminutive imitation of La Habana the façades of the buildings of little Havana, and their parks were penetrated to reveal the exile's quest for the 'true' albeit diminished character of their migrant cultural identity. The dynamics inherent in the Domino Park certainly shaped the identities of the domino players for tourist consumption and in *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* Pedro Juan and his fellow inmates in his hellish Havana were certainly shaped by their environment, their degraded surroundings symptomatic

[1] Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings through History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 9.
[2] Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), p. 12.
[3] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet In The Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London, New York: Verso, 1983), p.169.

of the economic crisis of the nineties and the subsequent moral and ideological one. Gutiérrez nevertheless goes further in his attempt to penetrate the official façade of ideology and the break the confines of a streamlined body to represent a Cuban cultural identity free from the restraints of ideology. Of course, the implications here are that in breaking through officialdom's walls Gutiérrez uncovers the 'true' Cuban identity, or at least, the cultural identity that best represented *los tiempos desgarradores*. Then again, the terms under which both Menéndez and Gutiérrez have represented or reconstructed Cuban cultural identity have been informed by deconstruction and debunking strategies. We are therefore presented with a dynamic that is just as constructive as it is deconstructive. Indeed, we can recall such a pattern in the centripetal and centrifugal forces that impinge on and create Fernando Ortiz's transcultural model of cultural identity and so it seems that we are dealing with sites that are constantly being reformulated and reviewed. The ceramics of Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez's and his replica baroque buildings of Havana offer us the same possibilities. As sites under construction and constructed from a diversity of objects that range from toilets to bottles to symbols of Cuban santería, wine and water, these pieces interrogate a composite notion of cultural identity informed by multiple signs. It will be interesting to see how Marín Rodríguez's use of disparate objects and his interpretation of a composite hybrid cultural identity compare with Carpentier's separation of a hybridised 'white' cultural identity from the Afro-Cuban.
Marín Rodríguez's ceramics therefore offer us a hybrid concept of Cuban cultural identity as well as presenting us with a view of the city and its buildings, that, in this replicated form create micro theatres for the city's activities, as well as acting as receptacles of meaning.

Entitled *"Mensajes" del artista Roberto Loreto Marín y el Proyecto Old City*[4]), and exhibited in El Museo de Arte Colonial (March 2002), Marín Rodríguez's collection presents portable simulacrums of actual houses in the artist's neighbourhood in La Vieja Habana, the city's old quarter. These ceramic sculptures of apparently derelict houses, friezes, and murals depict brick- by- brick sites/walls in a

[4] The Old City Project is in fact the name he gives to what I would term both the actual subject matter, the old, dilapidated houses in La Habana Vieja, and also the enterprise of creating the ceramics, which essentially involves a number of family members working together to produce one piece. His studio/home, the organisation of both (in a 'small' way) recalled the dynamics of the Andy Warhol factory, but what most engaged me was the concept of taking something so familiar and iconic of every day life in Havana and making it into art which both approximates and distances itself from the 'original'.

process of construction, reconstruction, and, deconstruction. Trained as an architect, Marín Rodríguez's technical knowledge of construction and town planning shows in the meticulous details in his ceramics, which, although architecturally influenced, are also symbolically loaded with cultural and religious signifiers. This renders them both art objects and cultural receptacles. These ceramics are elaborated and constructed through a process in which diverse and often disparate components are brought together and subsequent analogies can be drawn between the construction of a house and the way in which diverse cultural and social elements come together in an expression of cultural identity. When contextualized within the framework of the city, and given that a number of Marín Rodríguez's ceramics borrow their shape and character from his environment, they come to represent the shape of the old city and its daily enterprise. His house, the street he lives in, and the surrounding houses are recognisable in the pieces Marín Rodríguez produces: because his art is based on actual structures that exist and have existed within a historical, colonial, and cultural context, these dynamics, just as in the eternal recurrence of the baroque, impact on the meanings created by the ceramics. In his essay on 'Baroque and the Marvelous Real' Carpentier engages with the concept of the recurrence, drawing analogies between these phenomenon and the baroque.

> There have been attempts to define the baroque as a style. There have been those who have tried to enclose it within the boundaries of a particular style. Eugenio d'Ors, who doesn't always convince me of his artistic theories but who certainly was extraordinarily insightful in some of his essays, tells us in a famous essay that what the baroque displays is, in fact, a kind of creative impulse that recurs cyclically throughout history in artistic forms, be they literary or visual, architectural or musical; and he gives us a very fitting image by saying that there is a baroque spirit, just as there is an imperial spirit. That spirit, arising through the centuries, can be equally attributed to Alexander, Charlemagne, or Napoleon. There is an eternal return to the imperial spirit, historically speaking, just as there is an eternal return to the baroque in art through the ages, and this baroque, far from signifying decadence, has at times represented the culmination, the maximum expression and the richest moment of a given civilization.[5]

[5]Alejo Carpentier, 'The Baroque and the Marvelous Real', *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, eds., Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, trans., Tanya Huntington and Lois Parkinson Zamora (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 90-91.

Given the difficulty in defining the baroque, Carpentier does not focus on a singular aesthetic value or feature, but that of the 'spirit' of the baroque as informed by an eternal recurrence throughout history. With every repetition the baroque may be different and may have changed in some of its features, but these changes and recurrences also become analogous to the dynamic of history repeating itself. In this instance, d'Ors suggests that the imperial spirit is cyclical as well; the recurring imperial spirit is certainly relevant in view of Cuba's ongoing engagements and disengagements with Spain, the United States and the subsequent affiliations of the Soviet Union. The baroque in Latin America was certainly a consequence of Spain's colonial occupation, and although hybridised, baroque architecture functioned as a monumental and visible expression of Spain's imperial power.

Given then the loaded significance of baroque architecture, and its emblematic and recurrent appeal, Marín Rodríguez's pieces embody these features, and as such, they constitute an echo of all of these loaded elements. By an echo I do not suggest a mere replica of what already exists in the 'original', since that would reduce his ceramics to mere copy; [6] because his ceramics are based on a source that is already loaded and intertextual, just as La Virgen de Cobre is, they simultaneously hark back to the source, whilst commenting on the present context of the houses in the city of Havana. My discussion of the echo in chapter six suggested that the notion of the echo or the replica, as a process of cultural translation underpins the enquiry into Cuban cultural identity in Miami, not because the translated form is 'unreal' or less authentic, but because it is displaced. As replicas these ceramics are neither unreal nor less authentic for they are authentic in their artistic form. They are nevertheless displaced from the original, yet their loaded significance harks back to the original as much as the original resurfaces in the art, thus creating a rebounding echo effect as opposed to mimicry. Indeed, the city of Havana is divided into several sectors, each further removed from the former; the 'historic' old quarter of the city, La Habana Vieja, the 'modern' sector known as El Vedado, and the 'new' sector, La Habana Nueva suggest outward expansion, and point towards a certain process of renewal

[6] This is a point that needs to be clarified because I am here dealing here with the collection that Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez exhibited in *El Museo de Arte Colonial* in La Habana Vieja during March 2002 and will be discussing this particular collection in this chapter. Marín Rodríguez also markets another version of ceramics which are smaller replicas of his larger exhibits. He sells these in craft fairs in Havana, the sales of which sustain his larger exhibitions and his family. At the same time, this suggests a never-ending process of repetitions and replicas, some more portable than others.

which creates a distancing effect in spatial (historical) terms, from old to new, from the antique to the modern.

Havana's architectural heritage follows the style of Art Nouveau and the baroque, and stems from a Spanish colonial past. The baroque beginnings in Europe took place during the late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century, and marked by the first modern age during which scientific discoveries and colonial expansion to the Americas took place. Still, baroque trends in art and architecture had many regional distinctions, and it is notable that the baroque was interpreted in so many varied ways that the term does not accurately define the meaning of the style. If we recall Alejo Carpentier's deployment of the 'marvellous baroque', its most appealing feature was its mutability. To this end, Carpentier's focus was on the recurring spirit of the baroque, with every baroque revival harking back at origins whilst also denoting difference with every cycle.

As a capital city, Havana's urban space is also determined by the State, and is caught up in a network of relations and intersecting temporal and spatial perspectives.[7] As a space therefore, the city operates within a local function, and as a 'world stage'; Havana is Cuba's main city, it is a focal point for culture, state visits, tourists and a metropolis. It is also a place defined by movements in and out of the country; in being a coastal city serviced by a major harbour from where imports and exports take place, water, as we shall see, also becomes a defining aspect of the city's dynamic.

The city is also the showcase for monuments that consolidate power and authority.[8] Spain's incursions in Latin America imported much cultural baggage, the installation of centralised cities, the laying out of grid plans, and the building of cathedrals and convents in a baroque style.[9] More exuberant in Latin America, and more similar to the Churrigueresque form rather than that of the Escorial, the baroque was manifested in a heightened, highly theatrical and flamboyant form. It is almost as if the move from the centre of power in Madrid to the colonies further alters its form; then again, the baroque is defined by the very essence of movement and

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[7]Giulio Carlo Argan, *The Baroque Age* (New York: Rizzolo, 1989), p. 33.

[8] Spain's baroque monument of imperial power was the Escorial Palace in Madrid, where Felipe II orchestrated his country's colonial expansion. Although El Escorial observes the baroque aesthetic of combining curves with classical lines, it is much more reserved in its exteriors, which are neither decorative nor theatrical, opting instead for an outward impression of sobriety and control. See John Rupert Martin, *Baroque* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

[9] Robert Harbison, *Reflections on Baroque* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), p. 164.

transformation in its manifest desire to escape (classical) restraint. To this end, and as Robert Harbison suggests, 'baroque buildings [...] strive after the impossible, aiming to suggest to viewers that they are watching an unfolding process rather than a fixed and finished composition'.[10] Given these theatrical qualities together with the process of viewing, as one would a building's façade, or an art object, the baroque as represented in Marín Rodríguez's ceramics suggests both a stage in the theatrical context as art, and also a multi-dimensional space whereby we can look at a façade that belongs to the external setting of a building, as well as its interior through the windows and the holes in the walls.

Many of Havana's buildings are in need of restoration to varying degrees, and a striking feature of Havana is its architecture and the often-derelict state of the city's buildings.[11] This dilapidation is a very significant aspect in Marín Rodríguez's ceramic buildings and sculptures, where, although finding expression through a process of artistic recreation, the buildings are not renovated through the artistic process, but are represented in their present ruinous state. Ironically, however, the theme of restoration functions as a running metaphor throughout his collection. Their derelict state also renders these baroque houses as a 'shadow' of their former state, a lack that is emphasised by the fact that Marín Rodríguez's houses give the impression that they are deserted, abandoned and falling in to ruins. To this end it would seem that we are presented with empty shells of buildings; still, these ceramics are not determined by an emptiness of meaning in their vacant state, but quite the opposite. Their façades, as the external settings for the buildings suggests the ruin, traditionally associated with romantic imaginings, and a device to express nostalgia about a golden age. The exterior also articulates a 'display value in the public eye',[12] albeit a degraded one in this case. But the baroque façade in the modern city is also a complex

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[10] Robert Harbison, *Reflections on Baroque*, p. 1.

[11] It seems apt that The Biennial International Architectural Conference was held in Havana during March 2002. There is a lengthy programme in place to restore the buildings, but another issue bears on the actual total restoration of the city. The process is a very slow one, and is hampered by economic factors, the actual vastness of the project, and the fact that there is a severe shortage of skilled labour. This is seen as a consequence of an educational system that has created a highly literate and qualified population of doctors and other professional but neglected to encourage apprenticeships into vocational areas leading to a severe shortage of skilled craftsmen to effect renovations. Without these resources a total renovation of the city's buildings will not be achieved and the extent of the project at hand could mean that by the time the final renovation is achieved, the whole process will have to recommence because the initial buildings would be in need of further intervention. In this sense, the city will always be caught up in a process of restoration/renovation but never fully restored.

[12] Giulio Carlo Argan, *The Baroque Age*, p. 103.

structure whereby two opposing thrusts, the 'outwards' and the 'inwards', balance each other. Furthermore, as Giulio Carlo Argan states:

> The urban space was [...] no longer confined to that of the streets and squares; the internal space of a church, or a corridor or a courtyard, of the great staircase of a *palazzo*, is not less of the urban complex for being closed off from the open street. It, too, is a place of social intercourse, for the life of the city goes on in this interior space. The façade is therefore not a barrier, it is a partition; it does not close in or isolate, but connects.[13]

This is a dynamic, as Argan argues, that mediates the space between buildings as much as it creates an interior setting between them, one that is conducive to an interaction between buildings, and the people that move in these urban spaces. City streets become interior spaces in providing corridors through which to move, meet other people and interact. Façades function as walls that contain, but also display and provide access to other interior spaces. In this sense, the metropolis becomes a frame or theatre for activity of accessibility, of viewing and of being viewed.[14] If we transfer this macro setting of the 'open' street to the interior of El Museo de Arte Colonial[15] we find a smaller and more theatrical view of the city of Havana. The exhibition room, just as the open street, becomes a place of social intercourse; the room's walls create inner façades within which a theatrical space is created for the display of each ceramic piece. Murals and ceramic friezes of other façades also hang on these walls, leading to a simultaneous sense of the interior and the exterior. Placed around the room's floor space are other ceramic pieces, which are strategically located across the room, thus ensuring that the audience walks between each item; in this sense, a corridor is created between each art object, as between the viewer and the objects themselves. In the exhibition hall the audience/viewer stands in the corridor created between one exhibit and the other, as between one house and the other, with each façade providing and enabling communication rather then a barrier. Such is the exhibition's layout that it leads the eye directly to a centrally located ceramic house which, upon further inspection through doors and windows, opens up the scope of the themes therein contained.

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[13] Giulio Carlo Argan, *The Baroque Age*, p. 103.
[14] See also Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet In The Era of High Capitalism*, p. 197.
[15] The fact that his contemporary art exhibition is contained within a museum of colonial art recalls the dynamic created in the containment of republican origins within the monumental El Capitolio in Havana. I asked Marín Rodriguez about his choice of venue and practical reasons regarding accessibility underpinned his decision.

This is a large two-story house set on a pedestal (see figure 4), and designed in what appears to be in keeping with the Baroque Churrigueresque style. If, however, the Churrigueresque was underpinned by a flamboyant and exaggerated style, Loreto Marín takes this expression to another level. The house is clearly derelict; it has no roof, the shutters are unhinged and its interior is gutted. All the houses presented are in varying states of dilapidation and abandonment, and resemble the generic haunted house of the type recognisable in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), in Robert Wise's 1963 film *The Haunting,* and its 1999 remake by Jan Le Bont. In the latter film a wildly extravagant baroque, rococo house sets the scene for the ghost story, leading to invariable associations between the generic haunted house deployed in these movies, and the grand house Marín Rodríguez directs us to. As a house that shows no, or little sign of human habitation, the *unheimlich,* (unhomely) is suggested: the 'German word '*unheimlich'* is obviously the opposite of *'heimlich'* ['homely'], *'heimisch'* ['native'] – the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar'.[16] These ceramics however are very similar to the actual houses in Havana, which also lie in extreme dilapidation, and not really frightening, so a sense of familiarity is generated in this ceramic house and not necessarily the opposite. At the same time, the notion of the haunted house has some currency here in that the ceramic houses are rendered uncanny because they function as doppelgangers that exist both inside and outside the expectation. Furthermore, something has to be added to render something uncanny;[17] firstly then, in the *unheimlich,* as in the haunted house, we can draw analogies between the generic representation of the haunted and that of the ceramic house in figure 5, with this recognition eliciting a particular response. Secondly, objects and other elements have been added to, and secreted within the ceramic house, rendering it as something more than haunted by spectres in the conventional sense, but informed by an order that is also revelatory in rendering visible historical, political and economic factors through the art.

The inherent dilapidation of the ceramic house acts as a deconstructive process, which bares open interiors and private spaces and denotes a certain release and escape from (geographical, ideological) containment. Architecturally, the ceramic

[16] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Volume XVII (1917-1919), trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd, 1978), p. 220-21.
[17] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), p. 220.

house conforms to the baroque style, displaying classic elements such as columns together with its concerns with symmetry and harmonious proportions. Combined with arches, this creates a new sense of dynamism and of space. Concerned with movement, energy, and tension, the baroque structure emphasises strong contrasts of light and shadows to enhance dramatic effect. This, together with the building's undulating walls and decorative surface, a heightened sense of drama and of the theatrical is created. Still, the pillars which provide vertical supports, the arches framing the lower windows, and the concave and convex lines of both doors and the roof create tensions between the floor of the house, between design and style, between how the house functions in its historical context, as art, and what this present representation evokes. I would suggest that although a surface appearance of familiarity exists, the closer we look, the staging of a drama becomes apparent. Set on a plinth, three steps surround the base of the house lead up into the very large front door; these doors function like the curtain of a stage, and behind them the drama of the house is played out.

The large doorway, which could easily be a gaping black hole (since this is what is visible from the picture), is framed by two large statues of naked women, which act as supports for the door's cornice, under which lion heads are attached. Above this is the top floor, designed in a different style altogether, with French windows complete with their dilapidated shutters hanging off their hinges, overlooking an intricate iron wrought balcony. A large arched door, ornately decorated with cherubs and what appear to be fourteen human busts, opens onto the balcony. This rather flamboyant form of adornment echoes back to another time and another genre even. Indeed, the use of cherubs or busts above the door recalls the specific use of rococo in both the 1963 and 1999 versions of *The Haunting*, where these cherubs came to signify the ghosts of dead children through their inscription in the rococo settings. The façade's décor is also loaded with the ostentatious endeavours of the colonial enterprise and a visible manifestation of power; indeed, an aspect of Baroque architecture was that it achieved the unification of the visual arts to create buildings with a heightened and cyclical sense of drama and power.[18] Just as El Escorial in Madrid represented the seat of Spanish colonial authority in a muted or even 'cloaked' form, perhaps to cover up the true endeavour of the colonial venture,

[18] See again Alejo Carpentier essay 'The Baroque and the Marvelous Real', in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, pp. 91-91.

the transformation of the baroque in the colonies takes on a more overt and decadent display of this very venture, through the display of power, and of the spoils that built it – at least in its original form. The state of the houses projects an echo of a past, but in its degraded form. Although once familiar colonial monumental signifiers, they could now be considered as signs of the degraded nature of the colonial venture. Nevertheless, the fact is that the baroque houses, just as the one deployed by Marín Rodríguez, were the homes of the Cuban bourgeoisie, and they became unhomely (notably to the émigrés) after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Once the owners left, their houses were essentially 'abandoned' and appropriated by the state to meet the country's housing demands, becoming multi-occupational dwellings of the type which Pedro Juan Gutíerrez describes in *Trilogía sucia de La Habana.*[19] Embargoes and the decline of Cuba's economy have been substantial factors contributing to the extreme state of disrepair of many of the buildings in La Habana Vieja. They are therefore unhomely in the literal sense because they have ceased to be homes to the bourgeoisie, but the dwellings are haunted by and signal the events that brought about these diasporas, with these houses also functioning as reminders of the Cuban exiled community if only through their 'ghostly' presence.[20]

If we return to the grand baroque house, and venture into its interior (figure 5) we find a space that is informed by a labyrinthine type set up that recalls Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri d'invenzione*. Piranesi's vision has influenced the genre of gothic and horror, whilst also signalling a reaction against the miniature scale of the

[19] See Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba Island of Dreams* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000), pp. 227-233 for an outline of housing reform in Cuba during the 1960s.

[20] The Cubans that left the island could be considered as historical spectres and notably, during the period of 'dialogue' between the Cuban government and Cuban exile groups in the 1970s, the exiles that went back to visit their families were named *la comunidad* returning home. In this sense, we could also think of a place without a community as unhomley. Many of the stories in Ana Menéndez's collection also deal with haunting memories of the island. We even have the apparition of a ghost when Máximo, who in the process of recalling his memories of his life in Cuba also recalls his wife's ghostly presence:

> It was the year after Rosa died and Máximo didn't want to tell how he'd began to see her at the kitchen table as she'd been at twenty-five. Watched one thick strand of her dark hair stuck to her morning face. [...] Some mornings he would awake and smell peanuts roasting and hear the faint call of the manicero pleading for someone to relieve his burden of white paper cones. Or it would be thundering, the long hard thunder of Miami that was so much like the thunder of home that each rumble shattered the morning of his other life. He would awake, caught fast in the damp sheets, and feel himself falling backwards.

Ana Menéndez, 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd', *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd*, Great Britain: Review, 1999, p.10. In this movement back in time and to Cuba both his wife's ghost and the spectre of the past become synonymous.

rococo.[21] In the inclusion of both scales, the intricate and minute detail of the exterior and the expansiveness in the interior, the spatial is further experimented with (much like a Tardis effect). Piranesi is the main source for the Eighteenth Century idea of the View, whereby a vast number of elements can be contained in one single image or artefact.[22] Although the ceramics are compact, in the merging and extension of space, they also articulate other levels of associations. Just as Piranesi teases and stimulates the imagination in his *Carceri d'invenzione*, Marín Rodríguez does not give many 'secrets' away, leaving much to the 'imagination' and thus widening the parameters of a work of art. Everything is open ended and needs to be figured out, an issue that became very evident when I posed this question about the meaning of some of the pieces, and the 'message' of the title, to the artist.[23] Of the items added to and secreted in this interiors we find a photograph of Fidel Castro; I use the term secreted because, as in the Piranesi, the eye can not see into every corner of the interior, access to which depends on perspective and walking around the ceramic to attempt another point of visual access. Because Marín Rodríguez does not say much about the items the house contains, their detection and interpretation is up to the viewer. Miniature (but counterfeit) U.S. dollars are plastered on the steps leading up to the front door, and inside the house is the straw hat of a *guarijo* (a Cuban peasant). The presence of the *guarijo*, if only through his straw hat, is important since this denotes some recent occupancy, although a straw hat is also out of context inside an urban dwelling.

Whilst a number of the houses are uninhabited in Havana, it is also surprising to see that others are packed to the brim with multi-dwelling occupancy. Whereas the ceramics are as derelict in appearances as many of the actual houses, Marín Rodríguez is also selective and aesthetically led as to what he includes and represents. In the multi-occupancy dwellings in Havana numerous laundry items hang from the balconies giving an outward projection of habitation. Music, conversations and arguments are heard coming from these houses and very often life is led on the balconies and rooftop terraces, where people enjoy the climate, look out onto the

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[21] Robert Harbison, *Reflections on Baroque*, p.115.
[22] Robert Harbison, *Reflection on Baroque*, p. 115.
[23] The fact that the individual pieces of the exhibition had no titles is rather at odds with an art collection that is thematically driven by the concept of messages. I asked Marín Rodríguez if there was some conceptual reason behind the absence of titles. He answered that each item was originally titled but on the day the exhibition was mounted he forgot to put the titles up and so left it for the next day, and the next, and the next after that, until it came to the stage that they were exhibited without titles. Although they initially had titles, the very lack of them now is suggestive of the message(s) and their interpretation by diverse audiences.

streets, and the sea. None of this social interaction is evident in the ceramics, and therefore, the signifiers Marín Rodríguez adds to the ceramic house are symbolic and selective. In an indirect manner however, the emptiness of the ceramic house pre-empts the basis under which the city's regeneration is taking place. There is indeed a housing problem in Havana (perhaps in other areas too), but at the same time the city's renovation does not always include the people who are presently living inside their crumbling baroque homes. These families are being moved out into flats (called micros) whilst the refurbishments take place; in a number of cases, the former tenants will not be moved back in and their former homes will remain empty. In other cases safety issues underpin this decision; some of the houses are structurally unsound and cannot be returned to residential use. Their façades are nonetheless totally refurbished, giving rise to an interesting dynamic whereby some of the city's buildings give the outward appearances of order and restoration whilst their interiors remain empty and derelict. The façade, as the building's 'display value' is deceptive, since it does not correspond with the interior's value or with the full notion of regeneration. If, however, we examine the interiors of some of these actual buildings (see figure 6), we find extensive scaffolding that criss-crosses the interior is holding the building up. Totally gutted, the definition of interior space is redefined, rendering the space empty and cavernous in the absence of our expectations of floors, walls and staircases. On the other hand, the scaffolding penetrates and creates another, far more expansive site that suggests Piranesi's *Carceri d'invenzione*. For the unsuspecting passer-by who looks at the building, the projection is that of a grand building, even a (selective) symbol of national heritage, which has been restored to its former glory. The interior, however, challenges the notion of cultural heritage, rendering it both empty and a space that opens the imagination to the structures that uphold the façade, and the outward appearance of the city.

Although Marín Rodríguez omits elements that exist in the actual houses in Havana from his ceramics, it is also the case that other items that are secreted inside the ceramic building remain unknown. I was unable to see them all, partly because the angles and corners obscured the view inside, and because some of these symbols are codified. This raises questions about the sense of recognition these ceramics evoke whilst meaning remains elusive and unknown, at least to some audiences. The artist was reluctant to give simple answers about these and other aspect of his *"Mensajes"* exhibition beyond the technical elaboration of his ceramics, but then, as will be

discussed later, the technical methodology is also significant to the construction of the complete piece.

8.2

Whilst Marín Rodríguez mainly constructs ceramic houses and dwellings, water and glass bottles also have a significant place as receptacles of meaning or carriers of messages. Thus, an interesting syncretism begins to emerge of both materials and mediums through which to convey meaning; on the one level we have bricks and mortar and on the other glass; one medium less transparent than the other. Other mediums deployed are metal, individual bricks and money (U.S. dollars), forming a syncretism of influences and materials which equally (or unequally) contribute to the ceramics and the potential message(s). The question of the message or messages remains enigmatic, partly because Marín Rodríguez is not direct, even when questioned, about the 'message', but also because of the lack of titles beyond the collection's overall one. Any 'message' would also be dependant on the viewer and the audience; the viewing of these pieces is similarly underpinned by the politics of spectatorship and spectacle that informed the cultural interplay taking place in Domino Park in Ana Menéndez's short story collection, as well as those created by the sexual content in Gutiérrez's *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*. In this sense, questions are raised as to whom the message/messages are directed, and indeed, about the nature of the message itself, that is, if it also expects to transcend the local. A first impression of the exhibition, as of its title, is that the Old City Project was one of renovation, and one that mirrored the state's actual attempt at regeneration. This is particularly true of a mural (more of which further down), which is comprised of bricks and fragments that simultaneously depicts an act of demolition and construction. The regenerative aspects of Marín Rodríguez's collection are not straightforward and in some cases depend on local knowledge of Cuban *santería*; symbols are ciphered, and any message is enclosed within, and on walls. My chapter on Nicolás Guillén certainly drew attention to the duality informing Afro-Cuban religious practices and the accessibility of Guillén's *sones* was determined by certain insider knowledge. His use of *jitanjáfora* and phrases such as 'Sóngoro cosongo' suggested that we were dealing with either a neologism which had no translation, or with terminology that is enclosed by its own cultural parameters. It seems that Marín

Rodríguez is also, like Guillén, playing around with concepts of visibility and accessibility. As exhibited works of art (like Guillén's private secretary) his pieces certainly are visible, but many remain encoded, and even though we are presented with a 'writings on the wall' scenario (and quite literally in some of the exhibits), reading them is not a straightforward discursive practice.

Water plays a very prominent role in the process of renewal and purification, but water conveys a number of meanings, functioning as a religious agent and, in a more degraded form, as brackish water and sewage. One such example can be seen in the exhibit of a filthy toilet papered over with dollars, with sculptured ceramic hands holding on to and framing the toilet's rim. The money is being flushed down the toilet; an action that makes a certain value judgement on the dollar and degrades it as a monetary agent. The reality is, as Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's view of Havana suggests, that the dollar economy is both a life-giver in providing material goods and food, as well as an indicator of the crisis.[24] The hands that surround the toilet's rim are actually grasping down in the toilet to get the money before it is flushed away and suggestive of the extent to which Cubans go to get dollars. Whilst this piece stands as an indictment of the state of the economy, it seems to me that Marín Rodríguez is also presenting a critique of the Cubans themselves by showing their hands as sullied by

[24] U.S. dollars were illegal tender in Cuba up until 1993 and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The massive drop in foreign investment and currency greatly devalued the Cuban economy and its currency, the peso. The state consequently took the unprecedented move to legalise the U.S. dollar and in this way generate the much-needed foreign currency to boost the economy. This was an important step because a large number of Cuban families depend on cash sent to them by family members in the United States and all the cash remittances could be openly used to improve the standard of living. Prior to 1993 anyone caught with even one dollar would be arrested and sentenced to long prison sentences. In 1996 a U.N. report concluded that Cuban exiles had sent Cubans on the island more that $1Billion, channelling more hard currency into the Cuban economy than either sugar or tourism. This amount does not include the humanitarian aid of medicines and food. The sending of money to Cuba was also an illegal activity since Bill Clinton banned cash remittances to Cuba in 1996 after Cuban jet fighters shot down two civilian planes that were flying over Cuban air space, killing four members of the Miami based exile group Brothers to the Rescue. Still, because of the cash remittances these relatives have been renamed *gusanos verdes* (green worms), whereas they had previously been considered *gusanos* as traitors to the Revolution. The dollar is now the de facto currency of the island, and 'dollar-stores' have become the only place where Cubans can get basic food and necessities. However, the monetary situation is difficult since Cubans earn their salaries in pesos, the approximate equivalent of twenty-four U.S. dollars per month; this does not go far when the prices in the dollar stores are the equivalent to, or higher than the prices found in supermarkets in the United States or Great Britain. A single tomato can cost up to one dollar. As their state earnings are not enough to subsist on, Cubans have to be very 'inventive' to be able to 'find' dollars. The fact remains that whilst the dual economy somewhat stabilised the crisis, it remains a very difficult financial market in which to survive. See Ruth Behar, 'Introduction', *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba,* ed. Ruth Behar (Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), also see Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams* (Oxford,New York: Berg, 2000).

their activities and demonstrated in the act of sticking one's hand down a dirty toilet. In fact, although the flushing of water washes away, the toiled appears to have flushed brackish and rusting water, which, like Pedro Juan's activity as a refuse collector, only serves to make the act look all the more dirty.

Water continues to hold an ambiguous, if not enigmatic significance. In Mikhail Kalatozov's *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* water had a particular significance in the shooting down of Enrique. Functioning as an effect that diffused the image, creating a surreal and mythological moment, water also connected the film's initial vignettes, acting as a conduit (such as the swimming pool scene) into other events. Water however never really appeared to have a cleansing effect, although a resurrection is suggested in Enrique's death. For Marín Rodríguez, water is also a conduit, providing some thematic unity through the varied use of this motif. In another of the collection's pieces we find the re-enactment of the biblical story in which Jesus converts water in into wine (figure 7). Contained within a *tinaja*, a large earthen jar traditionally used to store amongst other things water and wine, is a house. We can see only its façade; there is nothing to indicate that this is a church since it has no spire of crucifix, but the figurehead of Christ is locatable above the windows. A tap is affixed at the base of this building through which water freely flows down through some rocks; on its way down the water becomes filtered and transformed into wine, pouring out at the other end and through a tap that is located in the plinth on which the *tinaja* rests. Whilst here we have the miracle of the wedding in Canaan where Jesus met the shortage of wine by turning water into wine, we also have a dilapidated building, presumably of a church and the miracle contained within a water jar that potentially cleanses, renews and reinvents both the miracle and the story. And all this time Christ is overlooking this event. Catholicism forms an intrinsic part of this piece, which also functions as an altar; the transferral of Catholic themes is, however, not straightforward: the absence of crucifixes is notable and the opening through which we view this altar is both a revelatory scene and deconstructive one. The revelation of an event, that by its very nature is miraculous because it is unexplainable, deconstructs the basis on which the church is built, that is, the blind faith on which the perpetuation of Catholicism depends, particularly since much of the Bible is based on parables and miracles and unexplainable events. The insertion of industrial equipment such as copper taps only serves to compound the absence of divine intervention, as does the crumbling white plinth.

Houses contained within receptacles recur and function as a running metaphor, as if the placing of a house/church in a different context conveys a certain meaning beyond that of the miracle. The containment within a water carrier signifies a cleansing purpose, but in being placed within a container, enclosure is denoted. Just as the baroque suggests tensions in movement in the combination of undulating walls and lines, tensions also exist between the flow of water, the houses and their containment in jars and bottles. This is articulated further in another two of Marín Rodríguez's pieces, where we have houses which appear to be deformed in their enclosure within glass bottles (see figures 8 and 9). Because glass provides visual accessibility as opposed to the *tinaja* (where the revelation is based on the breaking through and removal of a side of the earthenware jar), an impression of openness is given. Still, if we look closer at the bottle, ease and comfort are not suggested. The house in figure 8 appears more like the fragment of a house; its lateral brick work is laid bare as if this portion of the house had been wrenched from a larger site, to be squeezed into the bottle just as model sailing ships are squeezed into bottles. Whereas a technique exists in which ships are inserted into bottles, whereby the sails are collapsed thus enabling the ship to be is eased in, the same cannot be said for houses. Instead we have the impression of a forced entry. The house also appears to be rising from a craggy cliff top, as if a seismic rupture has taken place with the force of entry. The second bottle (see figure 9) shows what I would suggest is a deformed house born out of an egg; then again, this may not be a deformed birth, but more the case of a house deformed through growing within the confinements of the bottle. Both bottles are sealed with a stopper. These are not pleasing sights and are rather ugly in the way that *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* reveals the more sordid and unwelcome truths of subsistence during the economic crisis. Whereas Gutiérrez is intent on blatant exposé, and not concerned with issues of censorship, Marín Rodríguez deals with metaphorical and symbolic representation which veil even as they allude to realities within Cuban society. I also wonder the extent to which these are messages in bottles, and any meaning is dependant on the 'reading'. We, however, cannot take the message out of the bottle, as one would take a manuscript out of bottle, since these are sealed. Reading therefore is only viable through the glass and, as with any barrier, this can lead to distortion.[25] The ideological and geopolitical can certainly be read in these

[25] See also Edgar Allan Poe's 'Manuscript Found in a Bottle', where the message read out by the

pieces, with the sense of containment signalling the bonded state of Cuba, which, is quite hermetically sealed off unless rafters brave the seas and sharks to reach the United States. Issues of censorship are also raised here through containment within the apparent clarity of expression. Glass as a medium is less opaque than bricks and mortar, but glass is in fact a deceptively constrictive medium that gives an acute and unrelenting sense of containment. At the same time birth is suggested in the use of eggs and eggshells, which in *Santería* come to symbolise cleansing. The 'birth' or hatching of a house from an egg is quite surreal and any intended sense of renewal is muted by the deformed structure. *Santería* is also a religion that functions through devices of dissimulation, with its *orishas* finding expression hidden behind the identities of Catholic saints. The survival of *Santería* as a religion has therefore been dependant on containment within another religion since open practice was prohibited.

The theme of bottled containment is inverted in the next example (see figure 10). If we look around the bottle we find we are looking at a panoramic view of a street wrapped around the bulbous bottle. Interestingly, the houses on this occasion are on the exterior, and as such not confined; nevertheless, the bottle (see figure 11) is not empty. Inside are numerous scrolls of paper burned around the edges, the suggestion being that these are the implied messages, although no writing is visible on the scrolls, and the bottle is sealed. As such the concept of the 'message in a bottle' is loaded with meaning, but never spelled out. Just as the title of the exhibition is *mensajes* in the plural, thus widening the context in which meaning is found, tensions exist between what is being suggested, such as freedom, the socio-economic, censorship and civil liberties, and the inability to speak them out or write them down. Consequently, when we are offered a 'typical' rendition of the quintessential message in the bottle scenario (see figure 12), we soon realise that the bottles are empty as they float in the inviting, blue foaming water. It is also in the centre of this frieze that Marín Rodríguez chooses to attach a small scrap of paper burned around the edges with the title of the exhibition (figure 13), with this being the only piece of written paper in the whole exhibition.

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narrator is distorted by his own state of mind as it is by the presumption that the story being read is the actual manuscript that has been found after the event. This suggests a castaway, indicating that the person reading the message is not the person who wrote it, or that the manuscript has not been found at all but exists only in the mind of the narrator. In *The Fall of The House of Usher and Other Stories*, Penguin Classics, London: Penguin Books, 1986.

I would suggest that we take the myth of the message in a bottle and the castaway on a tropical island as a paradigm. The castaway, cut off from the outside world and with little resources at hand, except for the few bottles of rum that were washed ashore, knows that his priority is to send out messages in his now empty bottles, for someone/anyone to rescue him. I still have to figure out what my castaway uses for pen and paper but then again this is a myth, because eventually, his bottle containing the 'rescue me' message is picked up by a passing ship and the castaway is rescued. In Cuban reality however, movement cannot take place easily. Travel is restricted, and as discussed in earlier chapters, Cuba closed up like a clam following the Playa de Giron invasion and the threat of military incursions from the United States. Containment and the act of exclusion have informed Cuba's internal and foreign policy; travel to and from Cuba is not straightforward and, even as the sea becomes the only means by which the island can be left, and this is the route a castaway would take, the sea also encloses and entraps the castaway on the island. Furthermore, when one lives in a bonded environment with very limited economic resources, leaving is just as unlikely as waiting for a passing ship to pick up a message in a bottle. Subsequently, whereas the frieze in figure 12 creates an impression of movement with the bottles apparently floating about and away in the water, the bottles are empty and do not contain a message; the sea and the bottles are also defined by the parameters defined by the picture frame itself, which contains the movement within a confined and static location and we realise that there is no real point to including messages in each individual bottle when they are not really going anywhere. Water as a giver of life, a miracle carrier, sewage, and a cleansing agent can also be a substance that isolates; the suggestion is that Cuba is cut off from the rest of the world by water; this aspect defines the country as an island and contains it with its parameters since no other country or land mass is attached to Cuba. These works evoke a sense of cynicism; on the other hand, the messages, although never leaving the island inside a bottle, permeate the exhibition and are carried away by the viewer.

8.3

The focus on houses by Marín Rodríguez has involved a series of transformations, although questions of regeneration or cultural renewal have been muted by the evocation of restrictions and containment. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of a

historical past and a present is articulated through a medium that integrates origins and a hybrid present. Néstor García Canclini suggests that artists like Marín Rodríguez are liminal artists 'who live at the limit or in the intersection of several trends, [and are] artists of ubiquity. They take images from the fine arts, Latin American history, handicrafts, the electronic media, and the chromatic variety of the city'.[26] The intersection of history and space has been evident in the ceramics discussed thus far; indeed, exteriors and interiors have merged to the extent that this spatial concept has been inverted, with buildings and façade's rendered interior in their containment within other receptacles. As art objects they also bring together a fragmentary and composite cultural experience, and this aspect is all the more evident in one of the larger murals Marín Rodríguez presents. Constructed out of individual bricks, it draws on the fragmentary experiences of culture as it reaches the everyday, *lo cotidiano*, rather than creating a nationalistic panoply (although the nationalistic is inherently included), and whilst the accumulative measure of these bricks is a wall, we do not get the impression that Marín Rodrígurez is seeking a compact totality. The mural (see figure 14) is constructed from bricks, with each individual brick representing a sector or an aspect of life on the island. The mural could be described in fragmentary terms because it appears to be a section of a larger wall that has been pulled apart. The hands that frame the corners of this mural span out towards the fringes of the wall and the exposed brickwork, but these are hands that could equally be attempting to pull the wall apart as well as reconstructing it. We therefore have a simultaneously constructive and deconstructive act, which draws attention to a composite whole, comprised of fragments that coexist within an unstable site. Although unstable at a structural level, a closer look at the individual bricks reveal them to be inscribed or embedded with objects and artefacts that, when brought together, constitute a syncretic dynamic of cultural, racial, historical and modern aspects of Cuban identity (see figures 15, 16, 17). In a form that harks back to Fernando Ortiz's transcultural model of cultural identity, the composite nature of this mural signifies the composite nature of Cuban cultural identity; whilst Fernando Ortiz aimed to smooth away tensions by rendering racial differences invisible, Marín Rodríguez, in the compelling and contradictory action of the framing hands, does not

[26] Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures, Strategies for entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 85.

suggest a smooth syncretism but rather one that is rightly fraught with tensions. Like Ortiz's model, however, Marín Rodríguez displays a mural that could equally be considered as a site under constant construction, just as his ceramic houses and constructs change with every refurbishment and habitation.

When I spoke to Marín Rodríguez about the mural he was adamant that he would never sell this particular mural, and there are other pieces that are not for sale. He let me know of his intention to construct another such mural, which he would sell, but rather interestingly, only one brick at a time instead of as a complete work of art. The cultural implications behind this concept extend the parameters of containment experienced in his collection. In suggesting the sale of one brick at a time a gradual act of demolition is suggested; if we consider the difficulty in getting messages out of the island and of bottles never leaving the shore, then, in the selling of each brick Marín Rodríguez moves beyond the boundaries to spread the message in rendering it portable. Walter Benjamin's notion of miniaturising to make portable resonates here, with the miniature being the ideal form for the exile to take away a piece of cultural and national belonging.[27] This becomes a way in which messages can be physically disseminated and carried out of the island; the fragmentary experience is also an endemic aspect of modernity and diasporas as they impact on Cuba.

Each individual brick is also self-contained, and tells a particular story of the island's cultural history. Although they stand in isolation as fragments, they also become symptomatic of the context, very much like the 'splintering frame',[28] underpinning Ana Menéndez's short stories, in which unity of expression is achieved only through the fading relationship her protagonists have with Cuba, and a debunking strategy that reaffirms a Cuban cultural identity. Similar generic strategies were evident in the snapshot reportage style informing Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, where the economic, geographical and personal isolation was expressed through the transient, fractured and disembodied essence of the snapshot. As discussed in earlier chapters, the presence of such fracturing (a constant one that determined Guillén's split cultural identity), one that expressed the rifts between the concept of *el mestizaje* and the actual location of black Cubans in society. Therefore, even as Marín Rodríguez presents a composite, syncretic site of

[27] See Walter Benjamin, *One-way street and other writings,* trans., Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979).
[28] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 228.

units that interact and are in dialogue with each other, each piece is informed by its fractured state as an individual brick. Elements of the syncretic Afro-Cuban religion are represented on the mural; on one of the bricks we see the reappearance of eggs (is there a worm coming out of one of them?), and on another sea shells and coral come to represent Yemayá, the *orisha* of universal motherhood who resides in the sea; Oggún, the principle god of iron and war is typically represented by nails hammered into another brick.[29] Wooden crucifixes adorn another, whereas on other bricks we find grenades, a rose, the rubber stamps of officialdom, messages in bottles and broken plumbing, with each representing aspects of life in Havana, Cuba's revolutionary history and, individually and collectively, these bricks represent Cuban cultural identity. Marín Rodríguez's extensive use of materials such as wires, light bulbs, electronic gadgets, and household appliances demonstrates the assimilation of everyday objects in a work of art. To this end questions are raised about the function or purpose of these ceramic pieces. Although on a practical level and given the scarcity of 'art' materials, Marín Rodríguez employs and recycles any and every item he finds out of necessity, once integrated into his ceramics these items are converted into art. In the incorporation of such diverse elements and everyday objects into the ceramics creates an appeal to a popular audience and in this sense the work enters the mainstream, but in consequence, one wonders whether the appeal to a wider audience renders the pieces as popular and mass-based rather than 'high art'. Whether or not Marín Rodríguez's collection is considered as such, and whether or not the ceramics are undervalued by the inclusion of popular symbols is not an issue I can really expand on, but in creating a mainstream appeal, particularly in this mural, the transferral of messages is rendered accessible. And since his pieces resonate with the surrounding edifices, with the historical past and the present, and the composite, fractured and procedural dynamic informing Cuban cultural identity surely then the place for them is within a popular forum. Whilst analogies can be drawn between this last aspect of Marín Rodríguez's ceramics and Ortis'z transculturation as a model of cultural identity that is all inclusive and continually in flux, a difference exists if we consider the ceramics as popular and mass-based and Ortiz's theory as hegemonic. Although Ortiz's theory of transculturation offered an incredibly appealing model of

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[29] See Miguel Barnet, *Cultos Afrocubanos: La Regla de Ocha, La Regla de Palo Monte* (El Vedado, Cuidad de La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1995), and Natalia Bolívar, 'The orishas in Cuba', pp. 137-145, in *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writings on Race, Politics and Culture,* eds. Pedro Perez Sarduy, Jean Stubbs (Melbourne, New York: Ocean Press, 1993).

Cuban cultural identity, one that offered the appearance of racial unity, equity and a post-colonial position of contestation, it was also hegemonic and located within nineteenth century racial models. Each of my previous chapters have proposed different theories and positions (some less hegemonic than others), in an attempt to interrogate the terms under which racial and cultural hybridity and the syncretic inform representations of Cuban cultural identity and this has, as discussed, revealed splits rather than smooth syncretism. It also seems that we have, throughout this dissertation, been moving away from the hegemonic towards a more popular forum (in the case of Gutiérrez, subversive and popular in his focus on the lower bodily stratum), leading to the impression that Cuban cultural identity is far more 'genuine', or at least, genuinely represented outside hegemonic and ideological control. This however sounds too much like Carpenteir's assertion of Afro-Cuban cultural identity as 'unspoilt' because it was seemingly out of the reach of the US. The actuality was that the Afro-Cuban could be represented as such a separate world because it was marginalised and outside the mainstream and this, in his mind, he equated with the archaic and mythic and not with racial segregation. To this end, even as we consider Marín Rodríguez's ceramics as popular based, they echo and signify the past and as much as his mural offers a less prescriptive and firmly held (together) notion of cultural identity, the tableaux it presents recalls the syncretism, tensions and splits discussed in all my previous chapters. As such, his work forms part of the composite and referential process informing constructs of Cuban cultural identity and not a separate 'natural' version.

Marín Rodríguez's ceramics have offered an outlook on Cuban cultural identity in the making that recalls many of the themes discussed throughout this dissertation. His ceramics are rather telling of the multifaceted aspects that inform representations of Cuban cultural identity and the process by which these shards of cultural experience can find expression. Each chapter has offered a discussion of a particular period and the nationalistic drive to project a unified notion of cultural identity, one that was often at odds with the inherent diversity of society. In intersecting the historical, racial, religious and cultural (and much more) Marín Rodríguez is concerned with the question of accessibility and cultural cohesion even as he makes no claims for unity. His ceramic buildings and façade's provide a point of entry into, and are actively sites under which all these elements coexist and contribute to, the island's cultural composition. This is not a case of returning to origins as a

means to escape the bind of history, but rather a deployment of the intertextuality of the present society and the geopolitical reality as it impacts on Cuba, through a variety of materials that denote a cultural identity defined as much through its fragmented dynamic as it is by the individual and varied 'bricks' that aspire to the whole.

Figure 4. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

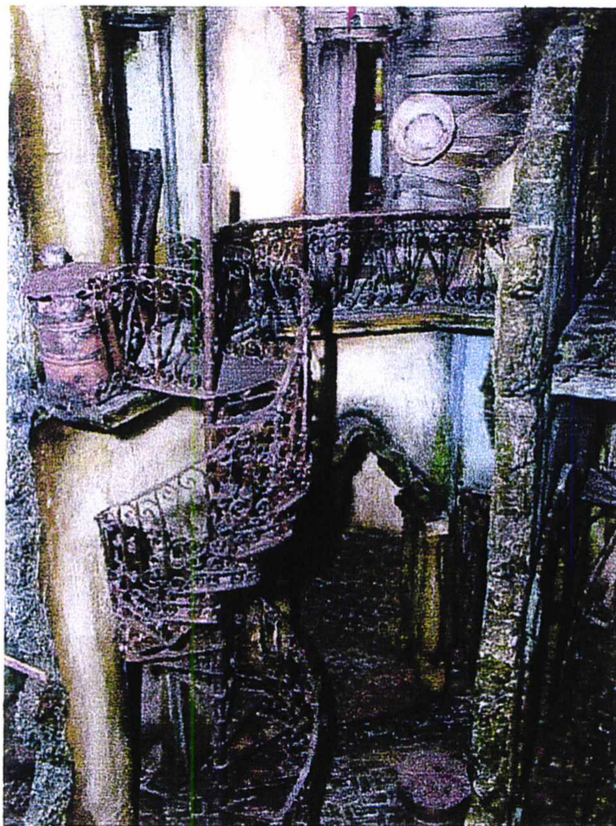


Figure 5. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez. Interior view of figure 4. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

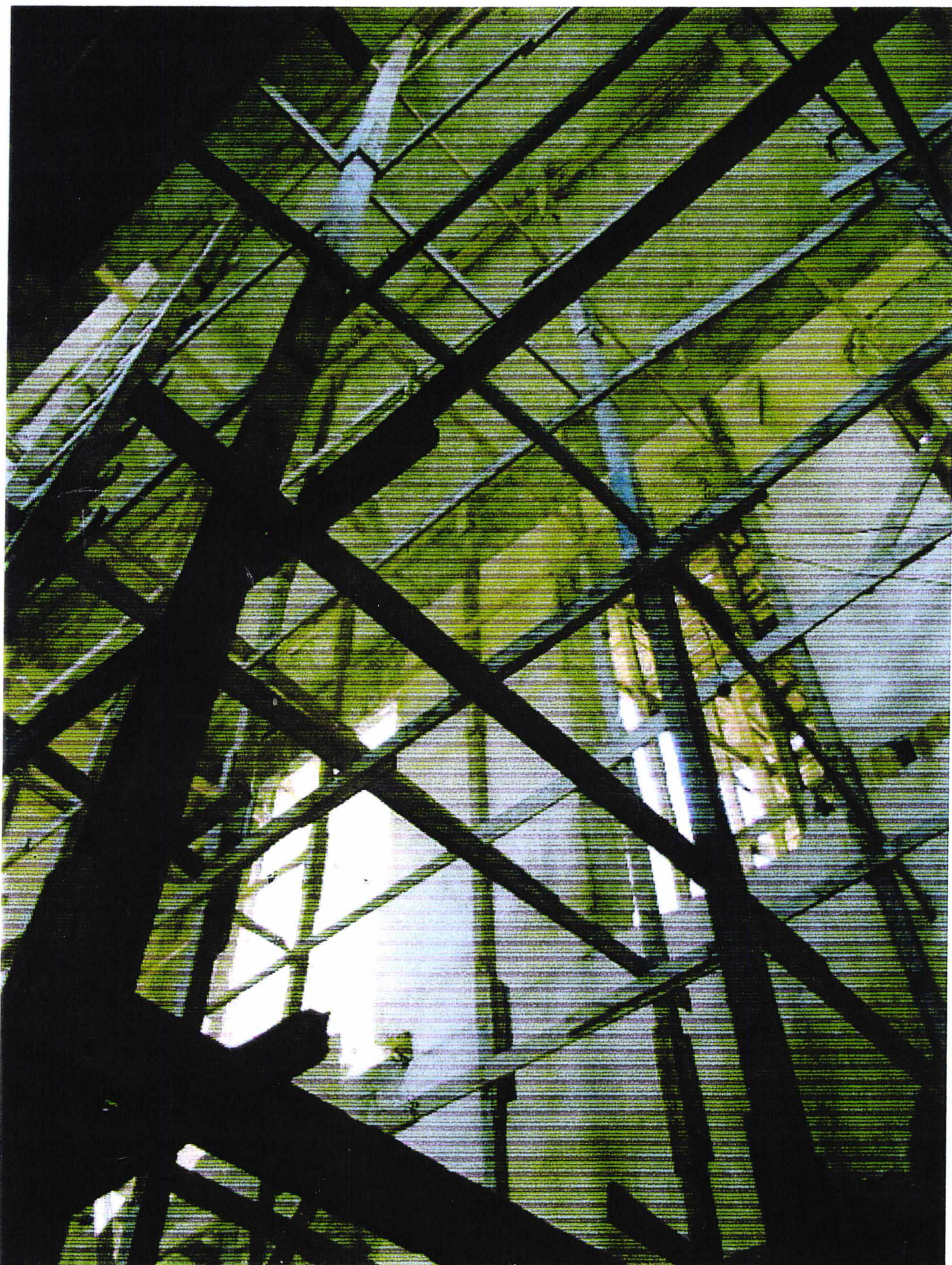


Figure 6. Gutted interior of building under renovation, Havana (2002). Photograph by Richard Perera.

Figure 7. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

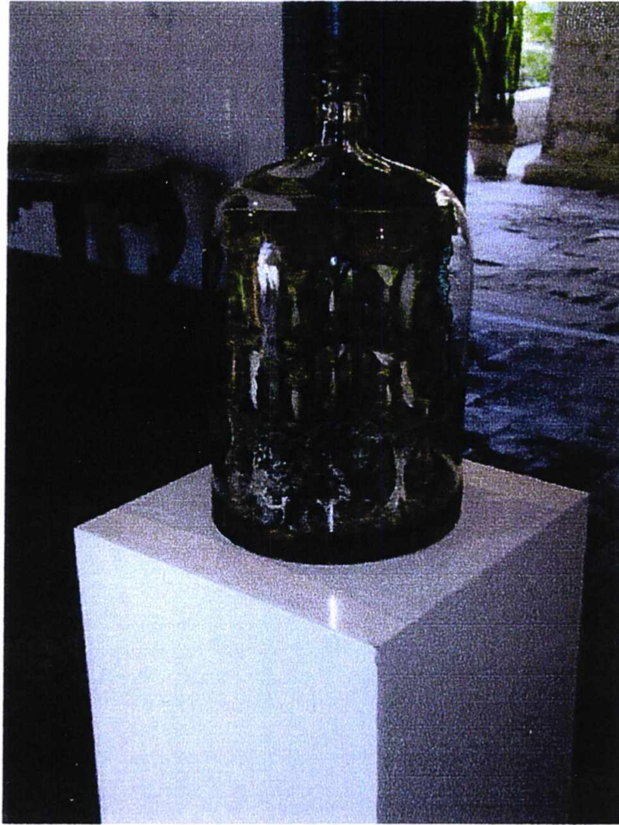


Figure 8. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Figure 9. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

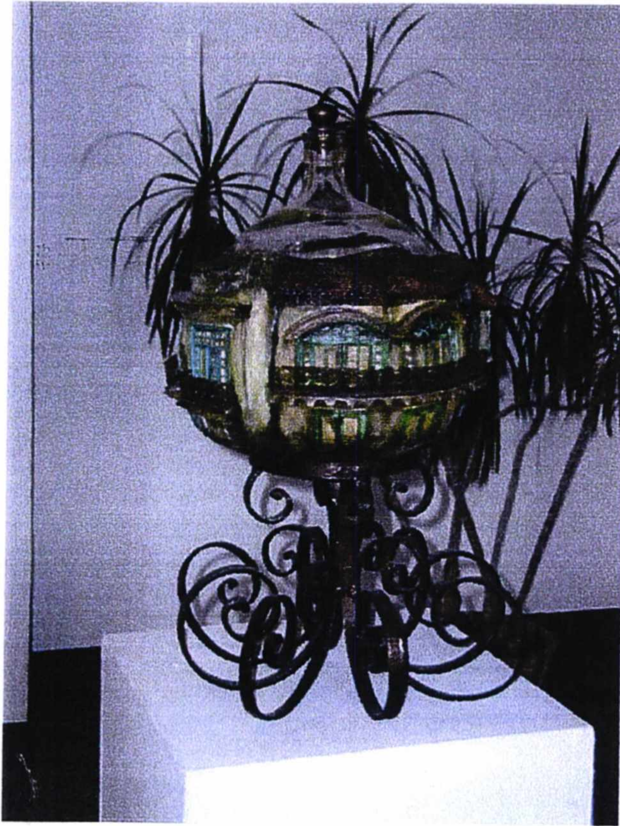


Figure 10. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

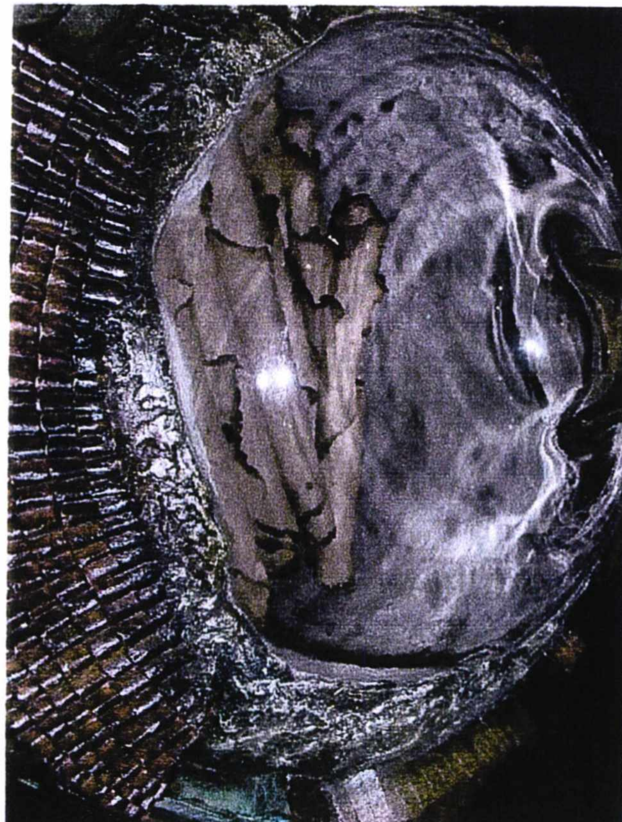


Figure 11. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez. Interior view of figure 10. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

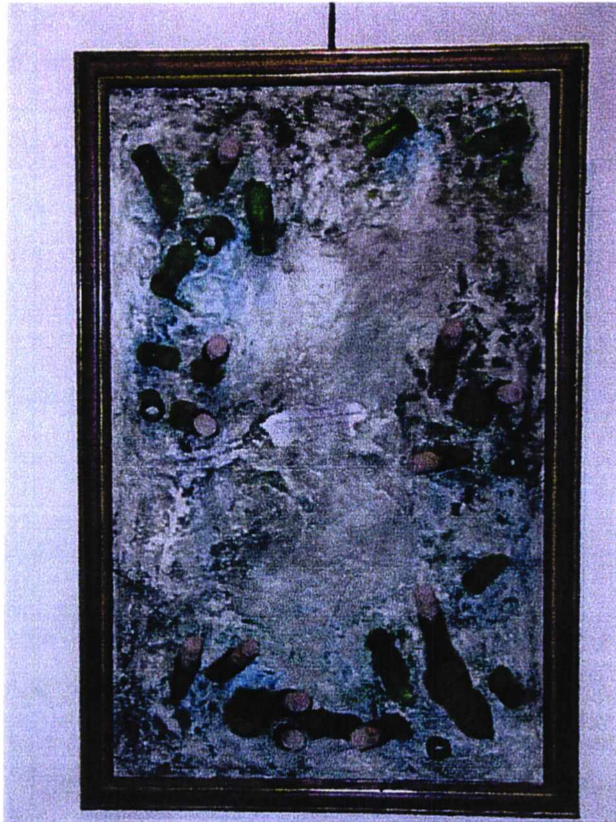


Figure 12. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

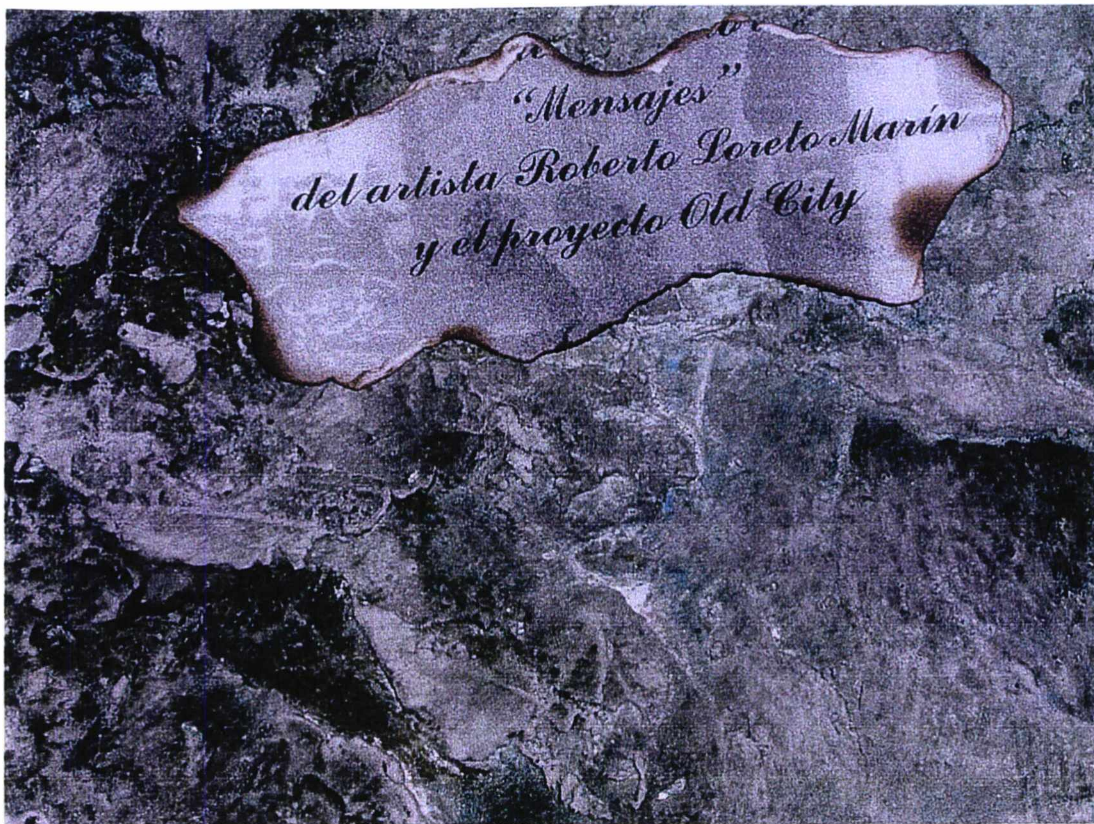


Figure 13. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez. Close-up of figure 12. Photograph by Richard Perera.

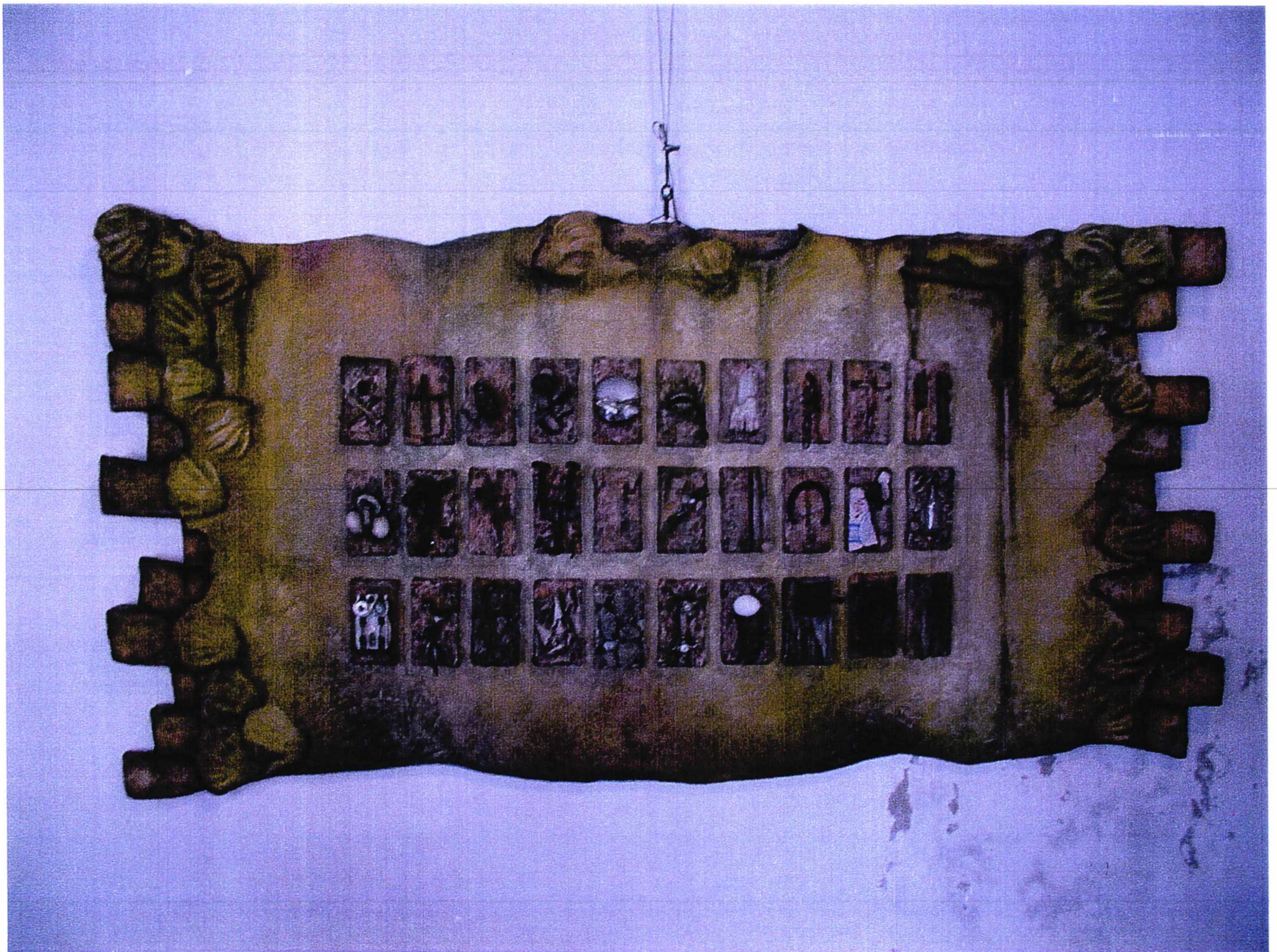
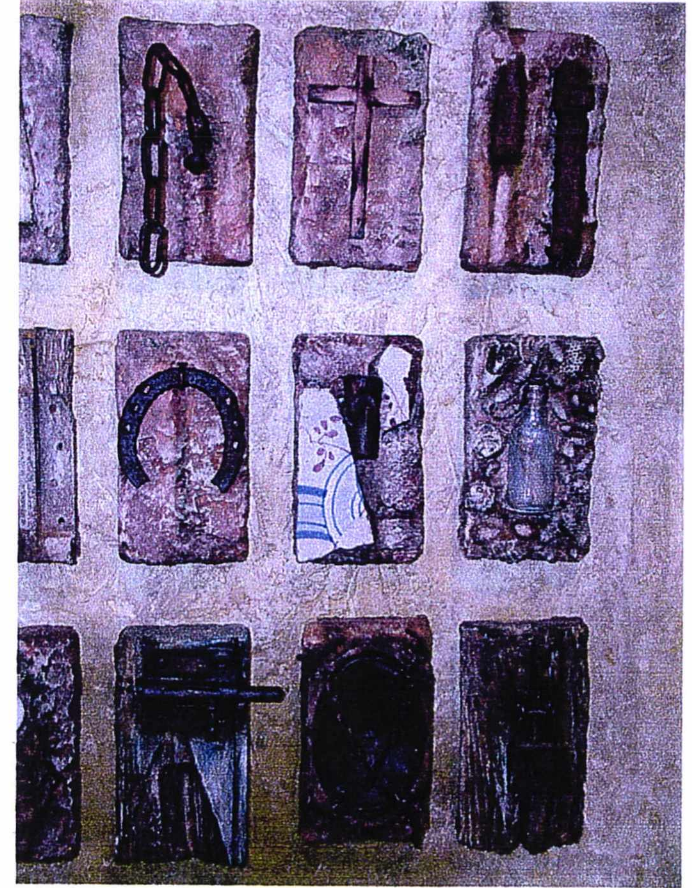


Figure 14. Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, untitled. Photograph by Jennifer



Figures 15, 16, 17, Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez, close-ups of figure 14.
Photograph by Jennifer Ballantine Perera.

Conclusion

This dissertation set out to interrogate the location of Cuban writings, film and art within postcolonial studies. In my introduction I discussed the gaps that exist in this area of study, one which has mainly been concentrated within the geographical and historical parameters of British Imperial expansion, or, to a lesser degree, that of the French. The inclusion or incorporation of Cuban (and by extension Latin American) writings into this field of study is nevertheless a retrospective one, and this retrospective approach is at the root of the debate that surrounds the validity, even applicability, of what is perceived by a number of Latin American intellectuals and academics as a theory that is not historically relevant or sensitive to the differences between the colonial experiences in Latin America and those of India and Africa.[1] As such, questions of relevance and of the homogenising (and colonising) potential of postcolonial theory have led to polarised positions over the applicability of postcolonial strategies and analytical tools that were developed for another continent and colonial experience altogether. These points of contention raise fundamental questions about different colonial experience, but rather than limit the enquiry, they have served to open up a site of interrogation that offers the possibility to expand the scope of postcolonial studies. As Peter Hulme has observed, these issues have helped reawaken interest in different forms of colonialism and imperialism, as well as addressing the fact that Latin America barely figures in the map of postcolonial theory, and by referring to colonialism as a syndrome rather than a 'state' or 'condition', fluidity comes to replace stasis, and this sense of movement opens up a site in which to examine Cuban writings.[2] I have located my discussion on representations of Cuban cultural identity within this context, the aim being to examine these representations as products of an ongoing process of engagements and disengagements with colonialism and as part of a syndrome. I have also selected a variety of genres and media that unveil postcolonial themes of displacement, cultural syncretism, cultural maroonage, double lives and borderline conditions, hegemonic

[1] See Jorge Klor de Alva, 'Colonialism and Postcolonialism as (Latin) American Mirages', *Colonial Latin American Review*, Volume 1, Number 1-2, 1992, pp. 3-23; Walter D. Mignolo, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse: Cultural Critique or Academic Colonialism', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 28, Number 3, 1993, pp. 120-134; Hernán Vidal, 'The Concept of Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse: A perspective from Literary Criticism', *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 28, Number 3, 1993, pp. 113-119.

[2] Peter, Hulme, 'Including America' *ARIEL*, Volume 26, Number I, January 1995, pp. 117-23.

resistance and the articulation of hybrid identities so that I could investigate how the Cuban examples discussed in this dissertation revise or extend such concepts and, indeed, the relevance of postcolonial studies to Cuba.

As this dissertation's point of departure, Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturation presented a syncretric model of hybrid cultural identity that celebrated racial democracy and hybridity. Fernando Ortiz's theory of the transculturation of Cuban cultural identity gave the impression of unity, although Nicolás Guillén's split performance was symptomatic of the rift between transculturation and demographic and socio-historical realities. Nevertheless, Ortiz's theoretical focus on the potential afforded by the transcultural was truly innovative, particularly during a period when theories such as 'acculturation' were perceived as leading ethnographic tools. Rather than adopting a colonising mode of investigation, Ortiz engaged in the study of the centripetal and centrifugal forces that underpin the basis on which Cuban cultural identity comes into being. Within this far more complex symbiotic and dialectical relationship, one which accounts for the invariable and inevitable hybridisation of Cuban cultural and racial identity, a space is created in which Ortiz can make a number of statements about Cuban cultural identity. One such statement is based on the uniqueness Ortiz endows the transcultural with, and as unique, transculturation provided Cuban society with a contestatory and challenging stance from where Cubans could demonstrate their post-colonial difference to the neo-colonial force that was threatening to take them over. Such a dynamic offers a very appealing model of cultural identity and one that resonates with postcolonial theories of hybrid identities and postcolonial transformations. Nevertheless, my interrogation of Ortiz's valorisation of a hybrid cultural identity raised questions as to how the concept of hybridity, a loaded definition that embodies a contestatory identity as well an unsettling presence because of its otherness, can come to be projected (even sustained) as a prime signifier of national identity.

Questions were raised over the valorisation of models of racial hybridity such as *el mestizaje* as forms of resistance and this led me to question the validity of terms such as *el mestizaje* and transculturation because they imply notions of racial hybridity, and this locates them within the field of postcolonial studies, but they nevertheless appear to function within different parameters as signifiers of Cuban cultural identity. And indeed the appeal of theories such as transculturation for postcolonial studies is clear in the suggestion of hybridity and syncretism, which give

the impression of, as Rushdie states, the 'leaking into one another'.[3] This however does not appear to occur in the Cuban example, and racially hybrid identities although present in concepts such as *el mestizaje* and transculturation, do not always function in the same way as Bhabha's concepts of colonial hybridity and mimicry, or Rushdie's notion of mongrelization or *mélange*.

My dissertation has demonstrated that the historical demand for unity in Cuban society has impacted greatly on concepts of racial and cultural hybridity. In Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry the hybrid is simultaneously the same and different because the reformation of his identity is necessarily partial. Ambivalence always exists in Bhabha's construct of colonial hybridity and mimicry whereas for Rushdie, the hybrid is less defined by a sense colonial mimicry but through the celebration of diversity and the often willing incorporation of a plethora of items and attitudes. This almost avid consumption of cultural diversity brings about a sense of individuality and empowerment. The Cuban context nevertheless demonstrated that the demand for unity presents hybridity under prescriptive terms and *el mestizaje* is contained within such prescription. In *el mestizaje* therefore, we are not dealing with a racial hybridity that celebrates difference but with an ideological construct that masks racial inequalities, particularly during the first half of the twentieth century.

Guillén's performance before the Lyceum provided an interesting revision of the underling binary of Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry. Bhabha's dialectical structure describing the terms under which colonial authority constructs and disavows the difference inherent in his colonial subject could be applicable to the Cuban context, except we are here dealing with a Cuban elite as a hegemonic power, and as much as the reforming zeal of both Martí and Ortiz depends on Afro-Cubans, this is a presence they ultimately disavow because their presence challenges their authority. Guillén's cultural identity is therefore foregrounded by a double inscription and is not a direct consequence of colonial reform: he is *mestizo* within the hegemonic construct of Cuban cultural identity, but also *mulatto* and racially Other within a racially tiered Cuban society. His *mestizo* cultural identity locates him within a racially democratic representation and one of post-colonial contestation, with this position being based on the binaries of coloniser and coloniser. *El mestizaje* is nevertheless not a construct of imitation or colonial mimicry but a representation of cultural identity that has been

[3] Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London and New York, Granta, 1991), p. 394.

constructed from within Cuba and which represents itself as this contestatory post-colonial Other. Internally another set of structures informs the race question, with black identity represented in marginalised and stereotypical form and as a construct of the Creole elite. To this end, my dissertation has identified the presence of multiple external and internal forces that impact on these representations of racial hybridity. These show a far more complex set of structures in the construction of a colonial/postcolonial hybrid cultural identity. They complicate the simple binaries of coloniser and colonised which underlie so much postcolonial theory, including Bhabha's, to reveal a society that is developing constructs of cultural identity for both internal and external audiences. Because Cuban concepts of racial hybridity, *el mestizaje* and syncretic models such as transculturation are so implicated in the perpetuation of racial inequality and in creating Other forms of knowledge about blackness, they appear to adhere to colonial concepts of race rather than postcolonial ones. Challenging questions are therefore raised about the terms under which these concepts of hybrid identities expand on notions of the postcolonial. Then again, and as Hulme suggests, the postcolonial does not represent some kind of badge of merit as a reward for having purged one's writing of the evils of colonialism.[4] The very presence of these racially implicated discourses do not make Fernando Ortiz or Alejo Carpentier (or even José Martí) less worthy or their writings less relevant to postcolonial studies, but rather expand the terms under which we have come to understand the postcolonial in societies that were indeed engaged in defining their own post-colonial cultural identities during periods when most of Africa and India were still colonies. The terms under which they represent Cuban cultural identity are informed by received racial attitudes of the first half of the twentieth century and as such, these Cuban examples give us an indication of the development of postcolonial strategies and concepts of identity from these positions to the present engagements with race.

Even if we consider cultural hybridity, my chapter on Alejo Carpentier demonstrated his ambivalence when dealing with the culturally hybrid fabric of Cuban society, and this was symptomatic of the willing absorption by Cubans of US culture into theirs. Moreover, US forms had so thoroughly penetrated the structure of daily life that it had become increasingly difficult to clearly distinguish between

[4] Peter Hulme, 'Including America', p. 120.

Cuban and US culture.[5] These circumstances make it difficult to either embrace or critique cultural hybridity since complicity is revealed in every move and the only resolution Carpentier can find is to marginalise the Afro-Cuban world as the final bastion of resistance. As Chapter Four determined, Carpentier's illustration of Havana's cosmopolitan texture is analogous to Rushdie's 'transformations that come of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs',[6] but his treatment of such hybridity is not. As such the postcolonial term of cultural hybridity applies but the analysis, in this example, does not entirely fit although it does expand on the terms under which cultural hybridity is experienced, and the ambivalent reactions it can create within a neo-colonial context. The Carpentier example demonstrates that hybridity can function as a signifier of cultural identity, but the issue of the complicit absorption of US and other values, and the need to disavow them, create an ambivalence that challenges Cuban cultural identity and autonomy.

Although the renaissance brought about by the 1959 Cuban Revolution, together with the ideological paradigm shift, announced the final decolonisation of Cuba, I also noted surprising continuities. The most notable was the re-articulation of *el mestizaje* as a signifier of cultural identity, and the adherence to binaries as the basis on which identity is constructed. I discussed Roberto Fernández Retamar's essay 'Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America' in my Introduction/Chapter One, and although the figure of Caliban is revised to fit the post-revolutionary era, he remains caught within the binaries of coloniser/colonised, bourgeois/proletariat, and as a product of nineteenth century concepts of *el mestizaje*. Although Fernández Retamar's Caliban can be located within the postcolonial as a hybrid contestatory identity, Fernández Retamar fails to deal with the multiples external and internal factors that continued to impact on Cuban representation of cultural identity, and that define Cuba's complex, even subtle, neo-colonial engagements with the Soviet Union and the ideological ruptures taking place, opting instead to represent Cuban cultural identity though ideologically informed binaries. My discussion of *Memorias del subdesarollo* and *Soy Cuba/Ja Kuba* revealed that ideology, rather than containing society within the intended binaries of the

[5] Louis A. Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban, Identity, Nationality and Culture*, (The Ecco Press: New York, 1999), p. 12.
[6] Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, p. 394.

class/colonial struggle drew our attention to, and created, further fragmentations. Theories (such as Fernández Retamar's and indeed Homi Bhabha's), based on such binaries also appear to remain within a single postcolonial event and do not really deal with the postcolonial as an ongoing process that, by implication, is constantly changing the terms under which the postcolonial takes place. The Cuban examples interrogated in this dissertation have demonstrated that the postcolonial as an ongoing process better defines the Cuban context, for, as each chapter has demonstrated, the procedural reformulations of cultural identity take place in the light of, and as a consequence of the continual post-colonial/neo-colonial engagements with US forces, the Soviet Union, and the internal fissures and fractures that resist adherence to prescription. These are engagements that undergo continual reassessments and bring about paradigm shifts. This would indicate that colonial/postcolonial binaries such as those developed by Bhabha are not flexible or complex enough to engage with Cuba's post-colonial situation, where representations of identity continue to be a product of multiple and diverse forces that change over time. As such, points of signification are not clearly defined and neither do they fall within a set binary. It may even be the case that the Cuban example demonstrates the limitations of such binaries not only within a Cuban context, but also within the countries from where these theories originated.

My enquiry into representations of migrant cultural identities raised interesting conclusions about the reconstruction of Cuban cultural identity across historical events and geographical locations. Whereas Bhabha deals with the spaces between the colonised and the coloniser and the imitation that takes place at the same time, I interrogated the Cuban diasporas through my own conceptual framework of the echo to examine the pattern of imitation and repetition as it informs representations of identity through time, different geographic locations and generations. As a displaced representation, Cuban cultural identity in the US has not presented itself within a pattern of mimicry or mere imitation because it is not the case of one representation reforming another, but of two representations of cultural identity, and each, independently and together, come to signify Cuban cultural identity. One is more distant than the other from the point of origin, and this renders it an echo of the former, but this distance does not makes the representation of migrant cultural identity less authentic or an incomplete copy of the original, as Bhabha's theory of mimicry suggests. My discussion of Roberto Loreto Marín Rodríguez's ceramics further interrogated the echo as a conceptual framework. By suggesting that the echo

signifies more than a mere replica of what already exists in the 'original', I was able to interrogate the intertextualities and resonances that exist within and between the source material and his ceramics.

All my chapters discuss issues of dual, hybrid and split identities and although the very essence of duality, or splits denote difference, this dissertation raised questions about whether dual, hybrid or split identities are the same or similar concepts. My example of the echo demonstrates that difference is created in the resonance. The Cuban exiles in Ana Menéndez's collection certainly lead a hyphenated existence split between Cuba and Miami, and the terms under which they construct their cultural identity is rendered hybrid by this hyphenated experience, although they are no less authentic as Cubans. The example provided by Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's underground self and the divisions between hell and, well, a lesser hell, functions differently. His subversive representation of Cuban cultural identity is not rendered hybrid by the rupture he describes but degraded, whereas Guillén's split cultural identity is hybrid both within *el mestizaje* and outside it as a *mulatto* and a product of miscegenation. Despite Carpentier's wish to keep the black and white worlds apart, both worlds together and separately demonstrate a high level of cultural and racial hybridity and the avid consumption of popular US culture. The marvellous reality revealed by Kalatozov's camera is informed by his desire for Cuba as an Other, exotic location, and Ortiz's theory of transculturation is inherently rendered hybrid through the inclusion of individual components that, upon closer inspection, draw our attention to the racial splits in Cuban society. These diverse conclusions and the modes in which concepts of hybridity, duality and split identities appear throughout this dissertation indicate that these concepts are also different, although they are interrelated and sometimes one will consequentially lead to the other. The presence of such varying positions also led to the conclusion that Cuban cultural identity is neither a fixed or immutable construct but rather as one that often forms part of contesting representations, full of contradictions, and almost always in flux.

The different forms and genres and modes of articulation analysed in this dissertation have allowed me to extend my discussion on cultural identity and the means by which hybridity or conditions informed by rupture can be expressed. It is clear that Ortiz challenges orthodox forms in the containment of his theory of transculturation within a 'genre busting' text that morphs from one genre to another, resisting fixity throughout. This is important given Ortiz's drive to demonstrate the

distinctiveness of Cuban cultural identity to a colonising force in an appropriate form; one contained within a Western tradition would stifle, contain or re-colonise the uniqueness of Cuban culture. Ortiz's move was certainly a self-conscious one that can be linked to the search for an independent literary/scientific identity.[7] Ortiz dissolves the space between genres to create a vibrant one that is symptomatic of the theme he discusses, but it is also clear that the contrapuntal positioning and postulations between sugar and tobacco, and his syncretic concept of cultural and racial hybridty belongs in a discursive space; although transculturation locates the process by which cultural identity is formed, it does not account for subjectivity, and the terms under which racial and cultural difference are, or can be, accommodated within Cuban society. Shifting the frame of interrogation to that of a performance permitted me to engage with the issues that were absent from Ortiz model, that is, questions of subjectivity and the process of negotiations that take place within postcolonial transformations of hybridity. Each genre and form discussed in this dissertation has led me to interrogate the diverse locations of culture and the multiple articulations that take place within and between them. My dissertation has demonstrated that Cuban cultural identity is not a static formulation and therefore, how can the forms and genres by which cultural identity find expression be fixed? To have interrogated representations of Cuban cultural identity though one medium, genre or writer or artist would have generated a narrower perspective.

A number of the examples discussed in this dissertation expand on Bhabha's theories of colonial hybridity and mimicry, and move away from a theoretical framework based on binaries, but it is also the case that Bhabha's theories provided me with the analytical tools for my initial investigation into these areas. As I mentioned in my introduction, it is certainly the case that I can only apply postcolonial theory to Cuba writings retrospectively, and with the critical tools afforded to me by established colonial and postcolonial theories. I have nevertheless aimed throughout this dissertation to interrogate the Cuban context alongside these theories to determine their relevance to my analysis on Cuban cultural identity and the engagement with Cuban writings within a postcolonial context. Postcolonialism as an ongoing process resonates with the Cuban example because such a dynamic provides for the open ended nature of colonialism and postcolonialism rather than suggesting

[7] Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), pp. 8-9.

distinct phases and cut-off points. Locating my discussion of Cuban cultural identity within this postcolonial context has indeed expanded the terms under which concepts of racial and cultural hybridity function within the postcolonial. Although some of my examples have revealed racially informed discourses, the very presence of these factors further extend and challenge the perceived cut-off points between the colonial and postcolonial, and the discourses that should, theoretically, be produced within each, to reveal that such conceptual or historical binaries do not exist in the Cuban context and neither may they in others. To this end, whilst postcolonial theories have provided a necessary framework to this dissertation, it has nevertheless also been the case that the Cuban example has in turn interrogated postcolonial theories of hybridity to revise and extend these concepts.

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