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The Children of the Cuban Revolution in the Diaspora: From Internationalism to Transnational and Cosmopolitan Imaginaries

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THE CHILDREN OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION IN THE DIASPORA: FROM INTERNATIONALISM TO Transnational and COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINARIES

By

Marelys Valencia

A DISSERTATION

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THE CHILDREN OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION IN THE DIASPORA: FROM INTERNATIONALISM TO TRANSNATIONAL AND COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINARIES

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My dissertation investigates the intermingling of discourses of migration and aesthetics within global market dynamics in the cultural production of late Cuban émigrés in the U.S. and Europe, to whom I refer as “the children of the revolution” —following Mette Louise Berg. I argue that this understudied migratory generation has replaced the diasporic teleology of return of the exile community with other imaginaries. As such, my dissertation sheds light not only on the varying ways of being Cuban in today’s world, but also on the different routes of the children of the revolution in the diaspora. By engaging in a multidisciplinary perspective that involves concepts from diaspora and migration studies in tandem with cultural, literary, and performance studies, I demonstrate how internationalism as an ethical and political ideology predicated by the Cuban revolution evolved into different forms of “being in the world.” I study local migrant television in Miami, the works of writers José Manuel Prieto and Karla Suárez, and Carlos Martiel’s performances through the concept “nomadic cosmopolitanism.” This concept entails a tension with the notion of the world as one, by means of the tangential ways non-privileged migrant subjects engage in solidary practices simultaneously resisting and taking advantage of global capitalism, as much as it reflects on how contemporary migrants elude nation-state “technologies” of control within such a context of global fluxes. It also
involves the disjuncture between authors’ self-positioning against locational projects like national/regional literatures, and the fixation by diffused institutional networks in the market that re-capture such fugues by re-inscribing Cubanness as a commodity for cosmopolitan audiences/readers. Thus, this dissertation decents both Cuba and Miami, the traditional axis within Cuban diaspora research, and puts into perspective the tensional cords in which national identity and origin operate in the midst of global fluxes.
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I want to thank Pete, my nomad husband who showed me that we could defy the odds by living intensively beyond borders. Also to Dr. Lillian Manzor and Dr. Andrew Lynch for their guidance and intellectual support throughout my studies at the University of Miami. To my family on both sides of the Florida Straits for being the light of my life.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

My dissertation investigates the intermingling of discourses of migration and aesthetics within market dynamics, at the core of globalization in the cultural production of late Cuban émigrés in the U.S. and Europe, to whom I refer as “the children of the revolution” (Berg 2006). I argue that this understudied migratory generation has replaced the diasporic teleology of return of the exile community with other imaginaries. As such, my dissertation sheds light not only on the varying ways of being Cuban in today’s world, but also on the different routes of the children of the revolution in the diaspora. Since I investigate a generation raised under the paradigm of communist internationalism as key to the political and cultural education of the hombre nuevo (the “New Man”), my inquiry focuses on the transformation of such an ethical stance as this generation moves and creates other bonds with the world. I am both decentering Cuba and Miami, the traditional axis within Cuban diaspora research, and putting into perspective the tensional cords in which national identity and origin operate in the midst of global fluxes: media, migratory, financial, ideo-aesthetic, and technological (Appadurai 1996).

The questions which guide this study on transnational and cosmopolitan imaginaries include the following: What are the most salient cultural productions of the late Cuban migrants? What are the discursive dimensions of transnationalism and mobility in their cultural production? What narratives of identity and belonging do these productions display? How do authors and works relate to Cuba as a homeland/place or idea of belonging? How are these works shaped by issues of political economy? What strategies of authorial self-fashioning in particular markets might we identify? In order to identify and contrast symbolic expressions where the new imaginaries are displayed, key concepts
for my study are the *hombre nuevo* (the “New Man”), cosmpolitanism, nomadism, *polyglossia*, affects, and intersectionality. I approach these concepts through discourse analysis and the exploration of ideologies imbricated in language contact and multilingualism. Thus, I pay particular attention to the role of language in the creation of attachments, borders, and fugues in transnational and nomadic spaces, as I engage in a close reading of televvisual texts, novels, performances, press releases, authors’ blogs/websites, book-covers, and interviews with authors, artists, editors and producers.

Through the lens of transnationalism, I analyze televisual products made in Miami by the children of the revolution, and the televisual fluxes between the two extremes of the Florida Strait, intensified after the rapprochement between the U.S. and Cuba. I also use a theoretical framework that draws from cosmopolitanism and nomadism, to examine the works of writers José Manuel Prieto and Karla Suárez, and Carlos Martiel’s performances —mobile migrant and cosmopolitan subjects themselves. I propose the term “nomadic cosmopolitanism” to offer a critical perspective of cosmopolitanism. “Nomadic cosmopolitanism” entails a tension with the notion of the world as one, by means of the tangential ways non-privileged migrant subjects engage in solidary practices simultaneously resisting and taking advantage of global capitalism, as much as it reflects on how contemporary migrants elude nation-state “technologies” of control within such a context of global fluxes. Ultimately, “nomadic cosmopolitanism,” as I will approach it in the third, fourth and fifth chapters, not only casts light on the mobility and freedoms of subjects across territories (not exclusively geographical); it also reflects on the tensional relation between authors’ self-positioning against locational projects like national/regional
literatures, and the fixation of publishing houses, critics and the market that endow authors/artists with particular “exotic” enticement for cosmopolitan audiences/readers.

From the 1960s to the early 1990s, the inextricable paradox of Cuba’s geographical isolation and worldly imagination, by which I mean the work of an affective discourse of solidarity and identification with people and cultures beyond the island’s location, gave birth to the children of the revolution, a generation of Cubans who envisioned themselves within a “cosmopolitan” socialist community (Berg 2006). Cubans raised under the revolution entered in contact with countries under the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance for the Eastern Bloc (COMECOM), but the dimension of relations within that broad cosmos also involved civil cooperation in education, health, science, and economics. Nevertheless, the “cosmopolitanism” tackled by Mette Louise Berg, surrounding the children of the revolution in Spain, cannot be reduced to an elitist notion. According to her:

They attended Cuba’s new selective schools and many went on to study at universities in the Soviet Union and East European socialist countries. Theirs was a world of socialist cosmopolitanism, which nonetheless simultaneously was infused with commitment to a national, territorially-based political project: an independent, socialist Cuba. (304)

Indeed, the children of the revolution enjoyed the privileges of a free and high-quality education, which in many cases included university studies or technical training in other socialist countries. But they also bore witness and directly participated in other activities not precisely “elitist:” many of them still carry the trauma of armed conflicts and other military endeavors that resulted in the strategic presence of Cubans on all continents. Thousands of young Cubans experienced in their own flesh (and, in many cases, paid with their own lives) the cost of such State sponsored solidarity. Additionally, they included in
both personal and collective memory their parents’ accounts of the collective construction of that international imaginary: by the late 1960s and 1970s, their parents comprised the frontline soldiers of every Cuban State initiative in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Being part of such transnational movements of cooperation gave way to the centrality of Cuba in world politics beyond the Caribbean and Latin America. On more than one occasion, Cubans felt as if their country was crucial to human history and destiny.

The artists and writers included in my study share a life experience under the international vocation embodied in the political project of the *hombre nuevo* or the “New Man”—the self-abdicating paradigm for citizenship during the first three decades of the Cuban revolution and a glocalized experiment within the Soviet orbit. Furthermore, these artists and writers witnessed first-hand the collapse of this ideological stance, expedited by the “Special Period During Peace Time”—euphemism for the economic and social debacle that followed the fall of the Eastern European Bloc in 1989, and of the Soviet Union a year later, which I experienced first hand at the age of 18.

By the 1990s, after the fall of communism, another kind of transnational orientation emerged among Cubans. On the one hand, contingents of public health workers and educators started traveling to Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, including countries which, in the past, had broken diplomatic relations with the island as a result of Cuba’s support for guerrilla movements and political subversion in the region. On the other, in addition to State sponsored collaboration, the opening to international tourism

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1 ‘Native’ seal linked to Che Guevara’s vision of the ‘verdadero’ revolutionary man. For more on this topic I recommend *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971* by Lillian Guerra (2012). From a gender perspective Abel Sierra Madero has deconstructed the project of the “New Man” as a form of social control; it entailed the exlusion of individuals who did not fit in the parameters of revolutionary masculinity. See also his book *Del otro lado del espejo: la sexualidad en la construcción de la nación cubana*, 2006.
along with travel and emigration reforms allowed Cubans to engage in direct contact with foreign citizens as well as to recuperate bonds with relatives, friends and acquaintances abroad. Worldliness, as Jacqueline Loss (2005) explains in her reading of the 1990s, pointed toward a “more individualistic imperative” in a context of “global capitalism within an environment of gasping socialism” (44). Cubans of all ages, but mainly those raised under the promise of a better future under the socialist revolution, who swore youthful commitments of “Seremos como el Che” (“We will be like Che Guevara”), devoted themselves to migration and/or errancy, not precisely the revolutionary quest of Guevara’s path. Many “escaped” without looking back; others simply searched for economic opportunity and maintained regular contact with families and friends, and/or have visited the island.

Cosmopolitanism enthroned the cultural sphere through a relationship with the global market in the context of a society closer to the dynamics of a schizophrenic neoliberal system. Literature and art were aimed at a cosmopolitan consumer interested in the representations of postmodern decay, including the utopian bankruptcy and dirty realism of its “cultural other” (Birkenmaier 2001). Thus, we witnessed a different phenomenon: a cry for a worldly connection entangled in the proliferation of new local stories of men and women outside the norm and the enchanted literary gloriousness of the “New Man.” At such a crossroads for economic survival, defiant art and literature were fueled not only by the imperious need to give testimony to a reality concealed by

2 Before, Cuban authors like Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima, Nicolás Guillén, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Severo Sarduy, whose works continue to circulate beyond the Hispanic world, imagined themselves in dialogue with and part of an extended world community inscribed within and by the Western canon. Such work of legitimation vis-a-vis the world did not disappear in the context of the Cuban revolution, as Roberto Fernández Retamar claims in his remarkable Calibán (1970). But in the literature of the late 1960s, 1970s and even the 1980s there was still a romanticized subject, more tempered to the attributes and ethical stance of the “New Man.”
government controlled mass media, but to voice the internal turmoil of a generation left in suspense and suspension (and, needless to say, despaired to elude the isolationism of Cuban society from the now “unipolar” capitalist world, exclusion exacerbated by both the U.S. embargo and the harsh socioeconomic measures of the Cuban state). As Sujatha Fernandes (2006) poses: “The Cuban state has clung to certain principles and values in order to ensure the support of the population, while an increasing orientation to global economy pulled in opposite directions” (37).

If the moral appeal of the “New Man” was either abolished, discredited, or negated by the ironies of history, what substituted it? Furthermore, what is the imprint of the exodus on the children of the revolution and in today’s Cuban diaspora? According to the Cuban National Bureau of Statistics (ONEI), 659,973 people have emigrated since 1994 from Cuba, a number considered discrete by other sources, like Armando Portela, one of the creators of the new digital magazine *CubaGeographic*, who affirms that the actual figures could reach one million, that is to say, almost 10 percent of the current Cuban population (Gámez 2016). Besides the U.S., 137 countries have embraced people of Cuban origin; in Spain alone, more than 1000 children of Cuban descent were born in 2013 (2012 Cuban National Census).

As Cubans multiply around the world, the latest Cuban generation of migrants displays multileveled and multifarious practices of belonging that differentiate them from previous generations’ ways of “being in the diaspora” (Duany 2011 and 2014; Eckstein 2013). Precisely, the children of the revolution in Miami constitute a differentiated segment of the Cuban community, almost silent in the corpus of diaspora and Cuban studies (Portes and Purhmann). This generation in Miami does not lend itself to discourses of loss and pain
traditionally embedded in diaspora imaginarie s. For instance, Eliana Rivero (2007), a Cuban scholar in exile since her youth in the 1960s, notices in the so called historical exile “a cultivated suffering” expressed in “nostalgic discourses” that recreate “endemic beginnings/mythical places” —what she has termed “Cubangst” (199). Nevertheless, she positions herself from a marginal site of the exile community: away from Florida and self- considered a Cuban-and-Other, an “isleño-fronteriza” in a fluid border between two (dis)places (199). From her margin, she recognizes the existence of Cuban “diasporic communities” which have “an active role in (re)defining the borders and problematizing the geographical, cultural, and political locations… of that imaginary country comprised by the Cuban nation today, wherever it might be (trans)situated” (196). Diasporas entail traces and processes: continuous transformations.

In effect, I use the concept of generation within the corpus of Cuban diaspora as both a descriptive and a theoretical tool to categorize in historical terms the differentiated histories connected to migration, while acknowledging the contingent and processual nature. There emerges the “push and pull” at the core of the process of globalization —as in the linguistic Bakhtinian sense— bringing to the fore the impossibility of a unitary or homogeneous Cuban imaginary in the context of displacement. The (de) and (re)territorialized multiplicity of diasporas is not only a threat to the homogenous nature of the Cuban State’s nationalist agenda, but also to that of a unified political Cuban exile community.4

3 At the same time, she recognizes that Cuban transnational identity has become a place for “unbounded” individuals who claim cultural citizenship in a variegated deterritorialized nation” (196). As Stuart Hall posits, it is not only about “where you were born” but rather “where you are at” (the junction of roots and routes); furthermore, diasporas are “the product of several interlocking histories and cultures” (Hall 310).
4 Portes and Purhmann (2015) have diagnosed the economic and political causes of the transnational affiliation of late Cuban immigrants in the U.S. in a comparative study that includes the exile community. As Rojas (Encuentro, 1999) argues with regard to the Cuban case, the dispersion and expansion of migration
In the same manner that globalization challenges and/or reformulates traditional understandings of national identity, it defies the conceptualization of diasporas.\textsuperscript{5} In the first issue of the journal *Diasporas*, Tölölyan (1996) asserts that “the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (4-5). Diaspora has become a buzz word: diasporic groups, diasporic discourses, diaspora studies, and so on.\textsuperscript{6} My use of the term diaspora entails a notion of multiplicity, which permits us to conceptualize senses of belonging by means of contingent factors and conditions beyond identification and centers. Multiplicity resounds in tandem with the scattered nature of diasporas; it entails differentiation as a site of agency by which I mean recognition of differences among each of its dispersed elements.

From a sociological perspective, Jorge Duany refers to the late Cuban migrants as “transnational” in a comparative study on Hispanic Caribbean transnationalism with regard to the U.S. (2011), focused on economic, and social practices like monetary remittances, frequent trips to the island, and regular communication. His research might be inscribed within the scarce gestures that minimize Cuban diaspora exceptionalism, a feature thus far preponderant in academic studies.\textsuperscript{7} Albert S. Laguna (2017) recently published a relevant...
work that also moves beyond exceptionalism, through what he calls “diversión,” the playful narratives of adaptation and imagination of different migratory waves. Using a transnational lens, he offers insight into how popular culture has participated in the shifting notions of *Cubanness* within the Cuban diaspora in the U.S.

In this dissertation, my use of transnationalism follows what Nina Glick-Schiller *et al.* (1992) and other theorists like Roger Rouse (1991) have identified as practices within a community that refer to a way of being both “here and there,” creating a heterogeneous transnational social space. In the second chapter, I expand upon Laguna’s perspective by focusing on televisual products made in Miami by the children of the revolution, an understudied cultural field within Cuban studies. I turn to the unexplored televisual bidirectional flux that shapes the ways Cubans in Miami envision a transnational *cubania* (*Cubanness*), and Cubans on the island imagine themselves as mobile subjects in globalized times. Migrant television is a genre that caters to representational politics by reinforcing identities, social practices and senses of belonging; hence, it constitutes a vantage point to inquire on diasporic dynamics, continuities and detachments with regard to the island and the host society, as well as to look at the commodification of *Cubannes* in this context by TV stations.

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multidimensional and even cosmopolitan orientation of Cuban popular music. In her account, cosmopolitanism entails an orientation towards fusion with “foreign” musical genres, a transnational cultural movement that infuses Cuban music with different trends on the global scene. She also makes reference to the lyrics of bands like Moneda Dura, which inserts phraseologies from foreign Spanish variants, or the use of “culturally distant instruments” (209) by X Alfonso’s band.

8 Such scholars invest in transnational migration instead of diasporas, as to shed light on processes and practices that “forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Glick-Schiller *et al.* 1995). According to these authors, transnational practices create a heterogeneous social space where different forms of belonging are produced, and not necessarily framed within notions of identity of the societies involved in the circuit (Rouse 1991). It is in this sense that I approach the Cuba-Miami phenomenon, examined through the analysis of bidirectional televisual fluxes.
The remaining three chapters of my project decenter the Miami-Cuba axis to undertake an analysis of other forms of community and alliances by the children of the revolution around the world, beyond national origin. This generation engages in an array of connections generally disregarded by Cuban studies, including cosmopolitanism and nomadism.

Cosmopolitanism has been defined by different disciplines and ideological projects, which makes it an umbrella term to shed light on diverse phenomena related to mobile and de-centered cultures. In their introduction to *Whose Cosmopolitanism?*, Glick-Schiller and Irving observe that the first reference to cosmopolitanism was envisioned by a displaced and disempowered person, a slave. Yet, the concept has been traditionally raised as a privileged condition of elites involving their global mobility and contact with different cultures. An array of ideological positions and methodological/disciplinary approaches have attempted to decipher the diverse and overlapping ways in which today’s citizens engage in practices that connect them to other cultures: from conceptualizations like “inclusionary and exclusionary cosmopolitanism” (Anderson); “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (Bhabha); “cultural cosmopolitanism” (Held); “visceral cosmopolitanism” (Nava); “cosmopolitanism from below” (Kurasawa); “discrepant

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9 Mette Louise Berg has studied, from a sociological perspective, the cosmopolitan orientation of the children of the revolution.

10 Some authors have already decentered Miami as a Cuban enclave, turning to the diversity of the exile community in the U.S. (like Rivero); or to the exploration of other zones of the diaspora, like Mexico and Spain, or even to recent authors, including Cuban-Americans, in tune with global and post-national imaginaries (Rivero 2014; Manzor 2012; Behar and Suárez 2008; Weimer 2008; O’Reilly Herrera 2001; Méndez Rodenas 2000; Rojas 1999).

11 It is first registered in Western history in Diogenes’ famous answer to the global emperor of his time (Alexander the Magnus) when a slave was asked about his origin: ‘kosmopolitas.’ But it is also relevant that a worldly sense of belonging, a non-place as origin, was the answer to a global enterprise of slavery in the name of ‘civilization,’ which constitutes one of the perils ‘cosmopolitanism’ entails in today’s debate on the reach of the term.
cosmopolitanism” (Clifford), and so on. To discontinue a parallel trend in the social sciences that portrays cosmopolitanism as opposed to national identities and loyalties, critics also advance the possibility of perceiving such phenomena as non-exclusionary (Appiah 2006; Tarrow 2005; Jeffrey and McFarlane 2008).

As Hallemeier observes, “cosmopolitan scholarship is arguably united in its commitment to envisioning a common humanity without eliding its constructive multiplicity” (4). That implies an ethical standpoint which attempts to capture cosmopolitanism not as universal, but as a situated openness to others, or as Appiah claims, a “conversation.” Yet, in that conversation, what should be noticed by scholars are the “unresolved dialogues” derived from the “often violent histories of economic, political, and cultural interaction” (Clifford 1992, 108).

Shedding light on such asymmetric framings in which scholarly research has also been trapped by reproducing the appropriation of the “other” through their very cosmopolitan discourses/approaches, Jacqueline Loss (2005) has assessed the cosmopolitan debate in and about Latin American as far back as the late 19th century, putting into dialogue the sociopolitical national contexts and the global scenes throughout her critical itinerary.12 She brings up Clifford’s “discrepant cosmopolitanism” to analyze Cuban Reinaldo Arenas’ and Chilean Diamela Eltit’s literary trajectories, both viewed as “eccentric and conflictive” in their restrictive national contexts (39), but also “discrepant”

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12 Miguel Rojas-Sotelo (2011) has made visible in an article about the Havana Biennale “an alternative cosmopolitanism,” part and parcel of Cuban state political and cultural endeavors aimed at the internationalization of art from the global south. He qualifies this “alternative” cosmopolitan scene “as a decolonial move… embraced by a group of local cultural agents, critics, philosophers, and art historians, and supported by a network of peers around the world” (153). Besides the Havana Biennale, I would add the Latino American International Cinema Festival (hold every year in December in Havana), and Casa de las Américas (included in Loss’ book). I will make reference to the Havana Biennale in the last chapter of this dissertation, within the analysis of the cosmopolitan vocation of Cuban art.
—through their actions in life and literary strategies (including topics)— with regard to the multiple accounts/perceptions of others on them. Reinaldo Arenas, for example, as a migrant writer and an outcast within the Cuban republic of letters (as prescribed and institutionalized by the Cuban revolution), develops a “guajiro cosmos” (Loss 38), a complex vision of “a possible union of global and local symbols” that challenges the urban connotations of cosmopolitanism (38). From there, Loss develops a “rural cosmopolitanism” in her analysis of a migrant writer who, from a simultaneous interplay of parody and nostalgia, brings to light the values of the rural world of his Cuban childhood to an ethically lacking urban cosmopolitan scene. I have brought Loss’ study here since hers is the only thorough research on cosmopolitanism that includes the Cuban case, and more importantly, through the figure of a migrant, tackling the interconnection between national contexts and worldly scenes/debates.

Like Loss, my research addresses worldly affiliations and imaginations of migrant writers and artists; yet, different Loss’ reading of Arenas’ work, my approach to José Manuel Prieto’s Livadia in Chapter Three and Karla Suárez’s La Viajera in Chapter Four tackles the disjunction between the nomadism of these novels and the writers, and the locational obsession of the market towards the origin of artists/authors. I read this nomadism as a form of ethical and lived cosmopolitanism that embraces horizontal connections and effaces any form of power relation, as well as a form of authorial detachment from previous national and regional fixations—aesthetical, political,
thematic.\textsuperscript{14} It is not that the authors do not aspire to reach a global audience. As Gustavo Guerrero (2014) asserts in his appraisal of the writers Roberto Bolaño and Rodrigo Rey Sosa (Chilean and Guatemalan respectively), that nomadism is a choice with which they have come to terms:

In a similar fashion, nomadism (either linguistically through polyglossia as well as aesthetically, like in Prieto’s \textit{Livadia}, or more anchored in the woman’s body in \textit{La Viajera}) corresponds to Prieto’s and Suárez’s ideological project of separation from the nation, presenting multileveled forms of being a Cuban around the world. Moreover, these novels perform a fugue from any grand-narrative, including national citizenship or national literature. Nomadism in the cases I study also points to the transformation of the “New Man,” either as a transnational contrabandist in search of capital accumulation that

\textsuperscript{14} Thus, they are similar to the Crack and McOndo literary generations.
ultimately gravitates toward the playful resonant non-place of écriture as in Livadia, or as a nomadic woman that celebrates the freedom of breaking with a patriarchal literary heritage as well as with the politics of masculinity embedded in the “New Man” as in La Viajera. Such transformation does not mean erasure: there emerge the traces of history, as each of the characters’ errant paths invest in situational forms of solidarities and horizontal relations with others.

In fact, with “nomadic cosmopolitanism” I expand the concept of “diasporic cosmopolitanism” (Glick-Schiller et al. 2011), whereby “bonds of sociability” based on “shared practices, outlooks, aspirations and sensibilities” are established by diverse migrants and non-migrants who do not fit easily within a specific group identity. I add to this inclusive and situational understanding of cosmopolitanism related to everyday practices, a nomadic dimension characterized by the transiency, the fleeting materiality of the nomad’s bonds in a space free of negotiation: what matters is the sensorial capacity of the body to produce lines of flight with respect to power dynamics. In so doing, there emerge intensities and transient assemblages among bodies (human, non-human, artificial and so on) that efface the power of stratified structures.

Exclusions and different forms of solidarity in host societies appear in La Viajera and Martiel’s performances as catalysts for alternative affiliations among migrants beyond national origin/identities. In Chapter 5, I stress the intersection of race and ethnicity in

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15 This concept, rather than expressing a “tolerance for cultural difference or a universalist morality” which “celebrates” multiculturalism, refers to how people of “diverse cultural or religious backgrounds build relationships and identities of openness” (401). The authors in the volume edited by Glick-Schiller try to overcome the idea of origin: the notion of “migrants as living within ‘transnational communities’ or ‘transnational spaces’ bounded within national, ethnic or ethno-religious categorization” (405). The cosmopolitanism at stake here touches upon other forms of association and community building among displaced people and non-immigrants as well, in the midst of global human fluxes, beyond questions of preconceived notions of group identities and representation.
relation to histories of displacement while Chapter Four emphasizes the intersection of
gender and ethnicity. In effect, I use intersectionality following Kimberle Crenshaw’s
conceptualization (1991) that points to those conflating or simultaneous subject positions
that oppress or sub-alternate particular groups or individuals in any society. I put in
dialogue intersectionality and affects, as delineated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari
(1983), as the ability of bodies (human or otherwise) to affect and be affected. As such,
affects are prepersonal intensities corresponding to the movement from one experiential
state of the body to another; they enable the emergence of transient assemblages that efface
the power of stratified structures, like states, institutions, language, and so forth (sub-
alternating social forms). Performance art and the fictional literary texts I have chosen, put
the body at the core of political transversal connections that dismantle structures of control
and normativization —inside and outside the realms of art and literature— including
readers/audiences’ expectations.

This sort of analysis is absent from Cuban studies, particularly in the realm of
literature and performance art and, more importantly, in the ways in which the artist’s body
resists, denounces and strategically uses transnational capitalism, to which I turn to in the
final chapter, offering an outlook of mobile artists from the latest migrant generation and
their cultural products. Finally, by putting together the transnational dimension of

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16 I coincide with Clifford that the emphatic opposition of the local/global or cosmopolitan produces a
“native” culture and, on the other hand, a cosmopolitan privileged traveling culture: “(…) the excessive
localism of particularist cultural relativism, as well as the overly global vision of a capitalist or technocratic
monoculture” (108).

17 Lillian Manzor brought together the transnational interplay of production, circulation, and reception in a
study published in *Latin American Theater Review* in 2012, on the *mise-en-scène* of *Chamaco* in Spain, La
Habana and Miami, a play written by Abel González Melo, a child of the revolution who resides in Spain.
Her study is the first one in the realm of Cuban studies to connect Cuban performance art to a triangular
circuit of production and consumption. Other expressions like popular music or cinema have been prioritized
with regard to the interplay of culture and the market in times of globalization.
televisual products between Miami and Cuba, and the predicaments as well as the celebration of mobility/nomadism of writers and performance art beyond Miami, I differentiate this research project from previous works undertaken on post-Soviet imaginaries that follow an inclusive approach of bringing together the artistic creation of migrants and non-migrants (Loss 2014; Casamayor 2013; Loss and Prieto 2012; Cuesta 2012; Puñales-Alpízar 2010). Additionally, Cuban studies have not adequately tackled the disjuncture between the nomadism of fictional narratives within global spaces and the inverse operation by the market that “localizes” creators in order to appeal to cosmopolitan readers. My dissertation fills this void by analyzing how the allure of such interplay between the nomadic dimension of art/literature and the cosmopolitan orientation of the market by appraising what comes from “the other” with the promise to consume cultural difference, informs of the very tensions between the local and the global in our times (Guerrero).

Chapter Delineation

The second chapter of my dissertation studies how the children of the revolution in Miami envision and construct a transnational imagined community through televisual narratives. Local Spanish TV stations like América TV taps an ideal audience that is both “here” and “there,” considering the ties of recent émigrés with the island, the continuous back and forth of persons, ideas, images, and cultural goods. Consequently, this transnational phenomenon serves as a vantage point to reflect on issues related to the political economy of local television, the work of language in transnational televisual spatialities, and the affective orientations of recent émigrés toward the city and their place of origin.
I show how television constitutes a space for self-reinvention as recent Cuban émigrés deal with the anxieties of displacement and the tensions of everyday life in Miami. As writers, actors and journalists who used to give shape to state-run Cuban television arrive in Miami, the sense of *Cubanness* produced by TV programs where this professional group participates speaks of an imaginary of continuity; yet, there is a simultaneous awareness of the limits, the bounds of such cultural and identity imaginary. I argue that the language of the dominant culture in the U.S. (English) is a site of subversion but also self-derision within the community, and it is a space for the construction of “locality.” I analyze how the politics of emotion works in these televisual imaginaries (*a la* Sarah Ahmed), in this sense, creating a feeling of simultaneity with respect to the island, and separation from previous migratory waves in the U.S.

In addition, the recent policies of *rapprochement* implemented by former president Barack Obama and his Cuban counterpart, Raúl Castro, have elicited new forms of cultural collaboration (though still limited) that obliged me to change the course of my research on different occasions, for example, when speaking of the absence of Cuban national television in the U.S. as opposed to the situation of other national groups like Mexicans or Venezuelans. In 2016, the cable channel Cubamax appeared with programming made by Cuban State-run television, to which I also turn in this chapter.

Finally, I move to the circulation of Miami televisual products in Cuba through “el paquete semanal,” an underground spatiality in that it provides an alternative framework for a collective consciousness separated from State hegemony. Flows of media products like “el paquete” re-configure the affective landscape infused of patriotic nationalism constructed by Cuban official media. That is, it both accentuates and makes visible the
crisis of representation in the Cuban context, the displacement of the nation-state discourse and power as it is occupied by everyday practices beyond its reach. Consequently, “el paquete” expands the aforementioned transnational media spatiality as daily frustrations and the struggle for survival “here” and “there” intensify, giving way to an affective connectivity between Cuba and Miami.

The rest of the dissertation moves away from Miami and its centrality in the mapping of the Cuban diaspora and focuses on other ways of being in the world by the children of the revolution, forms of community and alliance forged beyond national origin and traditional notions of homeland. Chapter Three studies José Manuel Prieto’s Livadia. I demonstrate how mobility, as multilingualism and écriture, foreshadows a nomadic subjectivity released from a traditional understanding of the socially regulated subject of the nation-state, like the “New Man” project. In fact, J, Livadia’s protagonist and narrator, silences his national origin. Such secrecy runs parallel to the very construction of the novel through a fragmented recall of memories, encounters and events that also dismantle a sense of linear narrative (like that of national identity). J stayed in Russia after concluding engineering studies in the former USSR, and like many of the students and professors who escaped the order of return to Cuba, not only dwells in Russian lands: he is a transnational smuggler of Russian merchandise, a nomadic activity that takes him to such diverse places as the West and the East, from Scandinavia to Turkey. In effect, Livadia brings to the fore the decentered socioeconomic dynamics that followed the fall of the Communist Bloc, and the human/economic fluxes that this phenomenon brought about.

I first define the concept of intermezzo as the non-place of resonances of the nomad, that I connect to polyglossia (as decentered-multilingualism or leaving fluidly among
languages without a linguistic center). Whereas language/discourse usually territorializes/localizes fictional character experiences, in *Livadia* the only space for temporary anchorage is *écriture*. Yet, *écriture* also constitutes the space of non-closure and fugue by which the subject affirms him/herself as “an inventory of traces” (Braidotti *a la* Deleuze). Consequently, I argue that the nomad as polyglot does not live in translation. Translation ultimately implies a violence, like that in J’s world, surrounded by predators produced by global capitalism. Languages in *Livadia* sometimes become a sort of machine, menacing the very borders that fix them. In the very space of *écriture* in the novel, translation appears as an impossible enterprise. The nomad as polyglot takes resources from its own multiple languages and affective repertoires; he moves fluently across them according to situated experiences/contexts, and might as well infuse one language with the trace of another, as is the case between Spanish and Russian, through which Prieto tears away the allure of the “normality” of the monolingual subject and the monolingual agenda of nation-states. I also analyze the self-positioning of the writer within an “exquisite” circuit of readers through marketing material and a personal interview with Prieto. In contrast to that unfixity of the narrator/character and to the nomad as polyglot, I demonstrate how publishing houses and their network for marketing authors and certain topics as commodities exploit *Cubanness* as a commodity that sells in spite of the character’s silencing of national origin and Prieto’s own self-positioning.

Chapter Four explores how the women of the children revolution live in the world as nomads. Through a close reading of Karla Suárez’s novel *La Viajera*, I analyze how the former socialist solidarity characteristic of the “New Man” transforms into an intimate solidarity in the private sphere. I study the various and tangential connections of the
protagonist Circe, her propensity to create transitional assemblages (alliances) as she moves across continents and global cities. I verify the potential of Circe, in the space of her *bitácora* (travel diary), to reconstruct the classical myth and to convey a “repossession of the images and representations of Woman” (Braidotti 100). I extract from *La Viajera* those transient instances of vibrant intensities in the interaction of Circe with locals or with migrants of different ethnicities, social classes, genders and races; such categories of identity are effaced through the work of affects. As such, the novel advances the circulation of alternative intensities and emotions in the reader toward what is unlike the self, and hence, transforms the anxiety of closeness which creates the foundations for “otherness” as menacing. I then scrutinize the concept of the “New Man” that, as some scholars have noted, entails a politics of masculinity, a masculinity represented by the recurrent image of the “barbudos” (bearded men) who came down from the mountains in 1959, and would become a haunting political narrative of the revolution (Gronbeck-Tedesco 2015; Río Gabiola 2009). Posing the “New Man” as *estandarte*, the masculine/patriarchal nation project embarked the Cuban people along a series of military conflicts in Africa during the 1970s and 1980s (Angola, Ethiopia), in the Middle East (Syria 1973), as well as in “low intensity” warfare in Latin American and the Caribbean. 2000 Cubans lost their lives in Angola, according to conservative official numbers. I make a parenthesis with Karla Suárez’s most recent novel *Um lugar chamado Angola* (2017), a work in which the protagonist, the son of a hero, embarks upon a trip to Angola haunted by his father’s traces: again, the traces of a non-resolved history that speaks to a trauma for a generation educated to feel the pain of the world on the cheek, almost a biblical ethical stance since socialism displaced the cult of god with infallible compliance to the state project.
The body, in particular the female body, is at the core of this ethical stance. At every city she arrives, Circe creates a network of contacts who help her find a job and a place to stay for free at the margins of any involvement in economical transactions. The latter is particularly relevant, as she moves outside the spaces of economic relations among individuals: in Mexico, sleeping at the house of a Cuban friend, with people of diverse origins; in Rome, at Lucía’s apartment; and in Madrid, at a Spaniard’s place. It is as if Karla Suárez has made visible in Circe and her travels some values and features of the children of the revolution, raised in a “utopia” where money was not relevant for the pursuit of happiness. In any case, the reader is faced with a new type of utopia, not precisely that of socialism. Circe follows a flux of transnational solidarity that speaks to alternative forms of association in today’s globalized world.

In La Viajera, language does not appear as fundamental for communication and/or connection; instead, it is the flow of affective energy that leads to other ways of intimacy among groups of “strangers.” That intimate solidarity makes us think of alternative possibilities to borders of any kind: family is not necessarily a fixed structure that society has endowed with meaning, but a contingent bond that Circe creates in her mobility, as every city becomes a point of departure, not one of arrival. There are no closures, but intensities that foster new states and stations.

Finally, I link narrative strategies to the conditions of production and publication, commenting on the author’s negotiations to reach a circuit of readership that expands to the non-Spanish speaking world with the expectations of consuming the cultural other.18 I comment on Suárez’s French publishing house’s marketing “maneuvers” (interview with

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18 In fact, Karla Suárez not only attends book fairs in Europe and Cuba, but also in Miami where a diverse Cuban population coexists (exiles and migrants).
the author’s French editor and owner of the editorial) to “sell” Suárez in that country. I analyze the disjuncture between the ethical stance of the novel and the commodification of Cuba as an idea in the global artistic arena.

In Chapter Five, the body returns to the forefront of transnational mobility of migrants and cultural products. Martiel is the child of a socialist project in demise. Born when the world witnessed the falling apart of the communist paradigm, the decade of his childhood was a critical one for Cuban society in all dimensions. Economic survival took over the preponderance of the socialist values of the “New Man.” An apolitical Cuban art characterized by formal conceptualism with a local accent/content started to circulate in international spaces (Baily interview with Fusco, 2016; Valencia, “Interview with Tania Bruguera”). I analyze precisely the emergence of socially oriented projects aimed at the formation of young artists in a different approach, like Tania Bruguera’s Cátedra Arte de Conducta (Behavioral Art School), in 2002, as a reaction to a commercial art intended for the cosmopolitan market. Martiel’s formative years are connected to Cátedra, where he was one of the youngest members.

Martiel’s performances engage in the visibility of the intersection of identities to denounce histories of oppression (State violence against individuals, discrimination based on race and ethnicity, and so on), and on the death-worlds of immigrants escaping violence or economic hardship. I connect Martiel’s performances to Puar’s reflection on the impossibility to elude “how societies of control, tweak and modulate bodies as matter, or statistical outliers” (63). Affects work in tension with the political and symbolic order: what to make of a body, and in particular a body that is marked by blackness more than by

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19 Bruguera’s project, among others, appeared in the national scene, committed to give continuity to the 1980s politically provocative and socially oriented art.
**Cubanness?** I analyze such a notion throughout Matiel’s transnational movements, in which performance speaks of and to diverse subject positions.

Furthermore, Martiel’s recent presentations in Italy play again with the imbrication of migration and black/foreign racialized bodies as statistical outliers. In *Mar sin orillas* (*Sea Without Shores*), the artist introduces himself in a glass box filled with blow flies, “an insect that feeds itself exclusively on decaying meat” (Martiel’s website). Martiel makes us think of the undesirable migrant in European societies as matter, “decaying meat,” disposed of its human condition in a contemporary world indifferent to the human tragedy of millions. Migration returned in his latest performance in Miami, last December. It was advertised as “a participatory performance by a Cuban-born artist where his body replaces the fourth leg of a table. A meal, prepared by an undocumented Haitian chef will be placed on the table for spectators to consume” (Myartguides website). At the entrance of the gallery of Martiel’s performance, a big screen continually reproduced images of an immigrant’s hands preparing the dishes, as a voiceover (the cook’s) commented on personal experiences as a Haitian immigrant in the U.S.

Much has been discussed in recent years about the nature of live performance art, documentation and digital performances. The imbrication of the live event and video (a performance in itself made intentionally for the video platform) brings to the discussion how new technologies participate in the situated, time-based experience. I analyze how the relation between Martiel’s body and the video-performance brings to the fore the anxiety over the disappearance of every lived moment. The event (the performance) leaves its trace in a non-mediated form, on the artist’s body, as well as in a mediated artistic platform (photography, video), to resist the very nature of performance art: disappearance.
Furthermore, documentation elicits the anticipation of affects as photography and video that monitor performances circulated online in galleries, museums, and media websites to promote artistic presentations by the artist.

Lastly, I attempt to connect Martiel’s performances with the way they have been “branded” on institutional and promotional websites. I argue in this dissertation that the relationship among art/literature, artists/writers, and the market emerges as an inescapable and complex one in today’s world. Despite Martiel’s intention to work with contexts everywhere he moves, which somehow erases his national identity, galleries and museums in Europe, like literary agents and publishing houses do for Prieto and Suárez, underscore Martiel’s national origin. Regardless of the content of the work or self-presentation as artists, Cuban origin functions as a hook in relation to audience interest and the market. In Martiel’s case, for example, art websites and pages of artistic institutions in Italy do not even mention Martiel’s current place of residency, the U.S. It is as if Cuba as a brand loses its enticement once it is connected to the U.S. Art from contemporary Cuba has been attracting worldwide attention since the late 1990s; it has become a hot commodity. This dissertation addresses precisely how the branding of Cuba as place reflects the dialogic relationship between globalization and locality, and how it caters to the “nativist” authentic seal (albeit “contaminated”) claimed by cosmopolitan audiences, art centers, and private collectors.
Chapter 2: Miami Local Television, “El Paquete” and CubaMax: Fostering a Transnational Citizenship Through Media Spatialities

In this chapter I engage in the analysis of discourse strategies concerning three TV shows aired by Spanish local stations, which convey a transnational orientation of Cubans in Miami. I argue that the “children of the revolution” have impacted the affective landscape of today’s Miami with a discourse regarding Cuba that deviates from hate and angry emotions characteristic of exile ideology and subjectivity. Such a phenomenon generates discursive tensions that are reflected in televisual narratives, in particular news-talk-shows like *El Espejo* (América TeVé), by aiming at the heterogeneity of the Cuban diaspora while safeguarding exile ideology. In contrast, variety night shows display narratives that build on a transnational affective landscape, fostering identification and synchronicity between Havana and Miami. This new subjectivity can be traced in language usage: English, Cuban vernacular and *cubaneo performances* place in dialogue previous understandings of *cubanía* with that of recent émigrés in the city. I argue that local television in Miami constitutes both a space for empowerment and self-reinvention for the “children of the revolution” and a source of revenue for media corporations that use them as a profitable niche. Finally, I turn to the analysis of what has been termed as “el paquete semanal” (the weekly package), a clandestine digital venue produced by a team of young entrepreneurs on the island, which is “produced” and distributed in Cuba through memory flash units and external disks. “El paquete” contains TV programs made in Miami by Cuban artists, as well as US sitcoms, and a variety of products that circulate globally. I conclude that that such a flux of televisual programs between Miami and Havana intervenes in the creation of a mediated transnational spatiality that both affects and connects Cuba
and Miami. Furthermore, such exchanges/fluxes foster a transnational cultural citizenship that is dismantling traditional understandings of citizenship in both extremes of the Florida Strait.

**A Balanced Approach? Reconciling Diasporic Heterogeneity**

In the US media migrant landscape, Hamid Naficy’s study on Iranian television in Los Angeles, California, *The Making of Exilic Cultures*, constitutes a point of reference from which to look at the Cuban community in Miami. Both the Iranian and the Cuban communities are marked by generational shifts linked to heterogeneous political, economic and life experiences. As Naficy points out: “Difference of origin entails difference in power relations in exile” (4). Such differences are revealed in the motives and origins of successive Iranian immigration waves to the U.S.: the first occurred one between 1950 and 1977, and the second one between 1979 and 1986. Iranian exiles arrived in the US after two main events, the first, the 1953 coup d’état orchestrated by the CIA after the oil nationalization, with the subsequent rise to power of the Shah as an absolute monarch for 26 years, and a pre-Islamic style of government that was pro-Western. The second relevant event is the militant Islamic anti-Western Iranian Revolution that overthrew the Shah in 1979. In Naficy’s account, the first wave comprised permanent economic or temporary immigrants and large numbers of students, while the second wave was compounded of political refugees and exiles. Such historical summary is necessary to understand not only the drastic shift in status, but also the humor or spirit of television products in the diaspora.20 Yet, despite the particularities of each immigrant wave, Iranian migrant

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20 Naficy observes two main manifestations of the exilic subjectivity as reflected in cultural production: dystopia as well as disphoria, derived from the evolution of exiles and immigrants in shifting categories, and their distinct relations with the states of affair in the homelands. Such alternate considerations shape the content and form of exile popular and television culture (28).
television imagined a community of viewers where internal divisions (class, religion, ethnicity, and political stands) were cast away:

Iranian exiles have created via their media and culture a symbolic and fetishized private hermetically sealed electronic communitas infused with home, past, memory, loss, nostalgia, longing for return, and the communal self; on the other hand, they have tried to get on with the process of living by incorporating themselves into the dominant culture of consumer capitalism by means of developing a new sense of the self and what can be called an “exilic economy.”

Such “economy” entails both the engagement of economic actors, whose advertisements aimed at the local community finance migrant TV production, and resourceful exilic aesthetics based on repetition and hesitation. Naficy puts into dialogue such dynamics, bringing to the fore a commodification of exilic cultures that impacts everyday life, as these cultures undergo a process of adaptation which, ultimately, leads to hybridity.

He brings up an example: a musical video in which Sattar, a famous Iranian singer, appears sitting in a comfortable room in the U.S. while turning the pages of a diary or book that reflects a bucolic, pastoral Iran, foreign to urban exiles in California. Naficy catalogs such visuality as “fetishized souvenirs of the past,” which is combined in this case with the hardship of the emigration journey, documented also in Sattar’s book-diary as a form of repetition. Such visual composition demonstrates that “the traces of what is disavowed are repressed through fetishization, nostalgic longing, and the constructions of an imaginary nation in exile” (168), whereas hesitation comes from the new consumer subjectivity that reflects itself in the lending of the immigrant journey as commercial entertainment.

The case might be connected to second generation Cuban exiles’ cultural reinventions, like in Gloria Estefan’s album Mi tierra. Released in 1993, Mi tierra was sung entirely in Spanish, differently from the previous Estefan discography; moreover, its lyrics conveyed a nostalgia for a lost Cuba she never personally knew. The very album cover
depicts her in a glamorous dress at a classy bar resembling 1950’s style Havana; the figure of an elegantly dressed black man appears in the backdrop. The imaginary at stake here portrays a racial diversity, an ideal inclusiveness missing in the socioeconomic landscape of the pre-revolutionary era. The lyrics of the album express the desire for return and highlight the artist’s Cuban roots also recognizable in the “boleros” and “sones,” rhythms that run throughout the entire album, definitely grounded in a past she heard of only by first generation exiles (in which her parents might be included). Thus, Estefan’s album rearranges and re-invents the exile’s memories, bringing up a new imaginary that signals an aesthetic of repetition through nostalgia, and a longing for what was not lived through the representation of an ideal past that becomes, hereby, a commercial object for migrant audience consumption.

Like the Iranians, Cuban exiles in the sixties and seventies devoted themselves to the translocation of their political-economic ideology within the new enclave, a process that necessarily involved translation: what Naficy qualifies as “repetitions” in a differentiated way (1968). Repetitions are necessary for the illusion of continuity, stability and order of the “old self.” In fact, Christine Lohmeier acknowledges the construction of a Cuban exilic subjectivity that connects Miami and pre-revolutionary Havana as space, place and memory in the local media (i.e., printed press, radio, and more recently on internet among Cuban-Americans).

In contrast to the Iranians in Los Angeles, Cuban-Americans did not own television stations, a phenomenon linked to various factors. When studying the origin and development of Hispanic national networks, various authors (Dávila 2001; Mora 2014; Dávila and Rivero 2014; Lohmeier 2014) have come to terms with the difficulties faced by
these conglomerates to establish themselves in the national televisual sphere, both in economic and legal terms. It was not until the late 1980s that Univision and Telemundo emerged as national conglomerates.

As Lohmeier affirms: “Because of the importance of markets, advertising budgets, and a national and often an international approach to audiences, Cuban-American influence in television is subtler than in radio and the press” (85). However, it is necessary to clarify that the exiles from the upper and the middle classes eventually found an opportunity in front of and behind the cameras as well as in decision-making positions. Their expertise had to do with the fact that Cuba was among the first countries in the Western Hemisphere to introduce television,\(^\text{21}\) which permitted an advanced broadcasting system by the end of the 1950s. Consequently, exiles ended up participating in the U.S. and Latin America in relevant administrative and professional positions. In this regard, Arleen Dávila (2014) recognizes that:

> We were surprised by the continued scarcity of analyses looking at Cubans in Miami, notwithstanding the key role that Cuban Americans have played in the development of transnational Spanish-language media and the rising role of Miami as a “Latin Hollywood.” (3)

The first wave of exiles has been able to shape public opinion on Cuba and US foreign policy toward the island as well (Eckstein, 2013 and 2009; Grenier 2010, 2008, 2006, and 2003; Grenier and Pérez 2003; Portes and Stepick 1996)\(^\text{22}\) being the most influential immigrant group from Latin America and the Caribbean in the political and economic structures of US society. Indeed, the first “cohorts” (as Eckstein calls them) of exiles have

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\(^{21}\) Cuban television was officially inaugurated in October 1950.

\(^{22}\) These authors have observed that exiles have shaped editorial policy as gatekeepers of the information transmitted by local media. The latter includes TV channels that emerged as part of the development of the national Hispanic networks by the 1980s.
shaped editorial policy as gatekeepers of the information transmitted by the local media. The latter also includes TV channels that emerged as part of the development of the national Hispanic networks by the 1980s. Media outlets were (and still are) by far “the strongest forces in safeguarding and fortifying an exile mentality” (Lohmeier 20), since later migration waves have not been able to produce changes in the way the media landscape is run. Therefore, different standings have been concealed or made inaudible in the public sphere even today, almost 15 years after the Institute for Public Opinion Research (Florida International University) conducted a public a survey that showed different political standings within the Cuban community. The issues considered by FIU in that survey revolve around the US embargo, sending or selling medicines and food to Cuba, the normalization of diplomatic relations, and travel to the Island (http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/por/cubapoll).

The Cuban exile ideological landscape has been associated with the narrative of loss and distress, enabling the circulation of a bilateral menacing discourse between the US and Cuba throughout the last five decades that has created the surfaces and boundaries of both societies. In fact, Cuban society has defined itself in terms of national identity during a half century in terms of its uneasy relation with the US, as the American political culture has been shaped in the last century in opposition to the socio-economic and political systems implemented by the former Soviet Union as well as the European social-democracies.

The USA and Cuba became “the objects” of uneasy feelings for people on both sides of the Florida Strait, as the circulation of affective discourses fixed emotions, like anger, hate, and uneasiness. Sarah Ahmed’s reflections on “what emotions can do” as they
move are more than applicable to the US-Cuba half century history of lacerations (discursive and factual). Her argument on how emotions are central to the relationship of the subject with his/her “others,” on how they enter the social space as effect of contact and encounters permits us to understand the role of emotions in shaping their own objects.

Since emotions are “mediated and contained by signification,” it becomes necessary to grasp how “objects” of emotion have been “fixed” by the circulation of televisual narratives. Exile media discourse, for example, has equated the Cuban system with evil; at the same time, such an emotional and compelling narrative grounded the exile community in a geographical place (Miami), in a particular imaginary (loss and political struggle) (Grenier). As such, the emotions in circulation by and within the exile community have frozen the perception, and orientation towards Cuba, shaping an idea of the island as the menacing and un-rightful neighbor; and vice-versa, where Cuban media on the island constructs its northern neighbor as invasive imperialism, and Cubans in Miami as forming “the Cuban mafia.” Paradoxically, the very capacity of emotions to “move,” in this case grounds subjects and objects of emotions.

Consequently, topics like the end of the embargo or the normalization of bilateral relations remain highly controversial within local media spaces as their news agendas attempt to spread and maintain exile ideology, the political contour of the communal body, mirroring the biased nature and unilateral positions of the Island’s official media. Newcomers are simultaneously the “others” —the economic migrants who do not deserve

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23 Grenier affirms that “the sustainability of anti-Castro ideology is greatly enhanced by the institutional matrix provided by the enclave in South Florida” (Lecture given at University of Notre Dame, March 29, 2010).

24 Eckstein thinks that the old exile may influence more recent arrivals through its hegemonic media control (34).
the special refugee status of their predecessors — and the convenient victim — the rafter — of Cuba’s flawed socio-economic system, which make them part and parcel of the “community.”

In this section, through discourse analysis and interviews, I will tackle the question of how agenda setting in a popular station known as the “rafter’s station,” América TeVé, manages to convey the exile ideology, eliciting emotions that shape community political standings toward Cuba. The anxiety of “fixation” of a hostile emotional orientation toward any shift in Cuba-US relations is visible in the agenda setting and framing of news talk shows. Furthermore, this analysis will permit us to question the “stickiness” of emotions in diasporic formations, their homogeneity and durability.

Combining theories like agenda setting with the politics of emotion allows us to tackle the participation of media outlets such as television in the construction of community “surfaces” (as if bodies), its emotional attachments and detachments. These boundaries and bonds inform us how objects of emotion (the homeland, the host society, the city, other immigrants, etc.) are not sources per se of emotions. Rather, emotions are the result of histories of contact, and their processes of signification, involving the subjects, as well as social and personal histories of “reading” affected by experience.

Indeed, the exiles (which I situate in the 1960’s and 1970’s, along with the “Marielitos” in 1980) broke with the island system — a topic that has generated multiple studies and stimulated scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. Cultural productions became a means through which a specific imaginary of cubanía (Cubanness)

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25 Rafters is the name given to the Cuban migrants who have arrived to the U.S. (or have died in the attempt) by crossing in precarious boats the Florida Strait. But the term became notorious during the 1994 Cuban Rafter Crisis that ended with Bill Clinton’s 1995 Cuban Migration Agreement known as the “wet foot, dry foot” policy.
was conveyed generally in opposition to the archetype produced by the communist island’s government. For example, when analyzing “choteo” among the community of exiles, Albert S. Laguna posits it as “pleasant exilic narrative experience” (2010, 514). In Miami, the humor of Álvarez Guedes and other comedians like Tres Patines, who were aired by different radio stations, “provided a means for the articulation of political critiques and for the consolidation of a Cuban exile identity through the mobilization of a familiar cultural practice” (511-12). Before fleshing out the concept of “choteo” and its use for a more bearable adaptation in conditions of displacement, Laguna reflects on the negative affects in circulation among the exile community. He mentions affects like anger, bitterness, sadness, and guilt which “are just a few of the conditions typically invoked to describe the emotional states of those subjects marked by exile” (512). In fact,

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\text{to narrate the experience of exile is to stoke the painful memory of the loss of Cuba and its effects. This has been the dominant paradigm for describing how the community has negotiated its relationship to the present state of life on the island (both political and quotidian) and the challenges of living in a new exilic space. (512)}
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Yet, Laguna searches for unexplored waters, as a sailor that learns to identify the different shades of blue from the depth of the sea (to paraphrase José Manuel Prieto’s narrator in *Encyclopedia of a Life in Russia*, to which I make reference in Chapter Two). Laguna turns to the positive affects enabled by the artistry of Álvarez Guedes’ humor in the midst of the community’s dislocated experience, demonstrating that “narrative strategies grounded in negative affect are certainly not the only ways to frame the Cuban exile experience” (512). He brings up examples of how Álvarez Guedes’ humor helped to distend and transform awkward situations during the Mariel crisis among the exile audiences. This is not the

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26 He terms the display of “choteo” in exile as “choteo de adaptación”.
case with TV news narratives where we still bear witness to a highly embittered rhetoric, as I will show in the following section through a discourse analysis of *El Espejo*.

**El Espejo: Agenda and Emotions of the “Exile Community”**

The basic agenda setting hypothesis assumes that news coverage patterns influence public perception of the important issues of the day, yet there are contingent conditions that may enhance or reduce news media’s agenda influence (McCombs and Shaw 1997). Such contingencies are attributed to an array of reasons that intervene in individual decision to use a specific media outlet. This aggregate approach situates the audience as an active participant in the mass communication process, adjudicating their needs in relation to orientation.

*El Espejo* (The Mirror) is a news talk show that started in April 2013. It is aired from 10:30 to 11:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The host, Juan Manuel Cao, a veteran Cuban journalist based in Miami, affirmed that the program would pursue “a mirror” approach, where all Miamians could see themselves: “No quiero que sea mi programa, sino el de la audiencia (...) que refleje no mis aspiraciones sino las de los que vivimos en esta ciudad” (Cao 2013) [I don’t want *El Espejo* to be my program, but rather the audience’s program (...) reflecting not my aspirations but those of the people who live in Miami].27 Yet, in the editions of November and December 2014, just before President Obama announced the normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba after over half a century of isolation, one topic remained in either the core or the backdrop of discussion: a series of editorials in *The New York Times* oriented to question the aforementioned policy. In so

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27 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.
doing, *El Espejo*’s agenda excluded any other relevant topics in the multicultural enclave of Miami.

Yet, by going against any alternative voice regarding the Cuba question, *El Espejo*’s agenda ironically mirrors the unilateral vocation of the totalitarian Cuban press. *El Espejo* is intended for an ideal audience that is supposed to have opinions of high “cultural standing.” I use the concept of “cultural standing” here as “a continuum, ranging from the highly controversial to what is so widely accepted that it is not even acknowledged as a proposition about which one could have alternative opinions” (Strauss 169). Alternative opinions in the Miami context would be considered highly controversial as will be demonstrated in the following content and discourse analysis of some programs aired during the eve of Obama’s historical proclamation.

First, it is necessary to present the context in which the discussion ensued. On October 11 of 2014, *The New York Times* published the first of a series of five editorials proposing an end to the US embargo and the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba. The saga, considered by *El Espejo*’s edition of November 11 as “the Cuban obsession,” elicited a compulsive critique in a series aired throughout October and November, where, among other hypotheses, they actually suggested the possibility of communist Cuban infiltration in *The New York Times* (Cao).

Analysis by *The New York Times* emphasized the inefficacy and absurdity of the embargo in its purpose to debilitate the Cuban regime along with the shifting politics within the Cuban community:
There was a time, not too long ago, when any mainstream politician running for statewide or national office in Florida had to rattle off fiery rhetoric against the Cuban government and declare unquestioning faith that the embargo on the island would one day force the Castros from power. ("The Shifting Politics of Cuba Policy," October 25, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, I analyzed the editions from the first week of December, 2014. Topics include: 1) the embargo; 2) embargo as “smoke and mirrors,” 3) Alan Gross’ release and return to the U.S., 4) Havana Film Festival and the censorship suffered by filmmakers on the island, and 5) interview with Cuban-American business man Hugo Cancio about his atypical relation with the Cuban government.

During that week, El Espejo deescalates the impact of the economic embargo on the Cuban population at the same time that its symbolic power was implicit in the very framing of the topic. The “attention to some aspects of reality (…), which might lead audiences to have a different reaction” constitutes framing in the field of media research as conceptualized by Entman (1993, 55). McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997), suggests that not only are agenda setting and framing effects related, but that framing is, in fact, an extension of agenda setting. They describe it as the impact of the salience of characteristics of media coverage on audience interpretation of events. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) defined a media frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (143). Hence, the frame defines the crux of the issue.

In framing the coverage on the anti-embargo campaign of The New York Times as a relevant and dangerous issue for the Cuban community, El Espejo continued to divert attention from the failure of US policy regarding Cuba. The way the program frames the salience of the “object” is not failure, but rather the political significance of the 54 year-old US policy: lifting the embargo would be recognizing a dictatorship as a “normal
country.” For example, on October 27 it affirmed that “reestablishing diplomatic relations would benefit Castrismo;” on December 3rd, one of the guests expressed that the embargo is a “decorative” policy, and actually does not harm the Cuban people. Subsequently, the December 3rd edition began with a barrage of images on the variety of material goods sent to Cuba by émigrés in Miami, from furniture to “rocks” (bricks, wood, and other construction materials). Therefore, a “fictitious” embargo seems to be suggested after such detailed camera inventory. In fact, what is highlighted by Juan Manuel Cao and his guests throughout different editions of El Espejo is the fictional construction of the embargo as harmful politics on everyday life of ordinary people:

Yo llegué aquí desde 1988 y he visto docenas de encuestas que dicen que todo ha cambiado; si eso es verdad (...), por qué entonces eligen permanentemente a congresistas que están claramente a favor del mantenimiento del embargo, incluido Joe García (...) o sea, por qué la realidad contradice la teoría?

[I came here in 1988 and have seen dozens of surveys that say that everything has changed (in Florida); if that were true (...), why then permanently elect congressmen who are clearly in favor of maintaining the embargo, including Joe Garcia (...) I mean, why does reality contradict theory?]

The question itself is intended to discredit the surveys done by the Cuban Research Institute at FIU. Nevertheless, the division within the Cuban diaspora would ultimately render ineffective the power of the exiles of the 1960s and 1970s as they age and the recent émigrés surpass them in number. In the introduction to the 2014 poll, Grenier and Gladwin assert:

This survey shows that members of the Cuban diaspora in Miami-Dade County have diverse views of how they would like the U.S. government to deal with the Cuban government (...). Those who came to the United States immediately after the revolution are an increasingly smaller percentage of the population, but their influence remains strong even as their ideas are transformed and reinterpreted by newer migrants from the island. (5)
The negation of the change/shift within the Cuban community regarding US policy towards Cuba becomes viable after the results of the 2014 US Congressional elections, where the Republican Party “swept the board” nationally. The confluence of time between the elections and the article from *The New York Times* legitimizes the media agenda of América TeVé; to the audience, it gives the illusion that both media and public agenda coincide. But what is not asserted or explored by *El Espejo* is the fact that almost half (45%) of Cuban immigrants in U.S. do not vote, in part because many have yet to attain US citizenship (Brown and Patten 2013).

Showcasing economic inefficiency and political repression in Cuba, *El Espejo* advocates for the continuation of the embargo, as a policy that legitimizes the Cuban exile struggle for liberty and capitalism on the island over the last five decades. By the same token, any person, and by extension, any government that negotiates with the regime is mired in suspicion. This happened, for instance, during an interview with Hugo Cancio, the Cuban-American owner of the Havana-based *On Cuba Magazine*, who was invited to the December 8 edition.

*El Espejo* engages in a discourse framed in the schema of interrogation as if the guest were the one to be condemned for his “obscure” engagement in business with the Cuban government. At the same time, the interviewee has the opportunity to talk about his success as an entrepreneur, which is questioned by the interviewer. The exceptional case of this Cuban American engaged in business with Cuba is presented to the audience to make them feel as if they were a judge or part of a jury. But the very presence of Cancio on the program allows the viewer to become familiarized with an alternative perspective that anticipates the possibility of a different future for Cuba, where Americans, including
Cuban-Americans, can actively participate, precisely one of the arguments of The New York Times. Such tensions shed light on the fissures of discourse in exile ideology, despite the effort to underscore homogeneity or univocality.

*El Espejo*’s inclusion of a liberal voice, useful as it supposedly endows the program with a sense of respect for different opinions, anticipates the possibility of transformation or reinterpretation of the exiles’ hard line position. Yet, by the end of the program, those opinions are deemed as absurd or suspicious. In the very act of inclusion, alternative voices are rendered powerless as they are overwhelmingly questioned by an apparent “superior entity.” Consequently, what is projected to recent émigrés in the virtual space of the media is the very “supremacy” of historical exile ideology recent émigrés experience in the everyday life of the city where historical exiles hold and flaunt a superior economic and political status. At the same time, the inclusion of alternative voices on the program sheds light on the heterogeneous dimension of discourse, the impossibility of a homogenous social fabric within the diaspora. A belief or set of ideas that used to be considered part of the community’s *doxa*, posited in the realm of the undebatable, increasingly is becoming a myth, an unsustainable position.

The tensions between the news agenda of The New York Times and that of América TeVé as reflected in the analysis of *El Espejo* has elicited yet another confrontation between the national perception on the issue of bilateral relations, and the supposed local “feeling” of the Miami community. What is apparent, is that in the very process of

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28 Naficy and Georgiou have extensively studied the dynamics of Diasporic communities and their multiple positionalities toward the homeland, host country and local spaces.

29 I would argue that *doxa* is a concept whereby underlying ideologically-based positions are internalized by members of communities as “natural” (see Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony or linguistic approaches on anonymity and authenticity). Thus, *doxa* becomes *sensus communis*. 
attempting to be a serious talk-show, the doxa of the exile community, voiced by *El Espejo*, is dismantled.\(^{30}\)

**A Different Kind of Cuban**

Recent émigrés do not hold the same economic power of their predecessors. Alejandro Portes and Aaron Puhrmann have emphasized the downward economic averages of the recent arrivals. According to these authors, the children of the revolution in Miami show inferior rates of income and of education in clear disparity with the old Cuban exiles and their children; thus, the former show a closer linkage to the rest of Latin American immigrants. P and P affirm that recent Cuban immigration waves have entered the labor market at a disadvantage in relation to their previous countrymen, competing for low-paying jobs in a multicultural Hispanic Miami that the exiles did not encounter. The new generation of immigrants is perceived by the old established Cuban community as an unfamiliar group that “lacks their work ethic and anti-communist stance” (126). They lack ethnic support networks and governmental financial stimulus to engage in economic enterprises as their countrymen enjoyed in the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, they enter the job market under the same conditions as those of other Latino minorities in the city, with whom they also share the non-prestigious label of “economic immigrants.”

The current Cuba is still in sight among the children of the revolution in Miami (Valencia and Lynch 2017), hence the permissibility to identify a transnational imaginary. Equally as important, the Cuba that preceded the 1959 revolution is considered the authentic fabric for the exiles, despite US control over the Cuban body politic and its

\(^{30}\) An important future reception study should be carried out in order to measure empirically the levels of confluence or mismatch between the agendas of the media and the public, their mutual effects and ultimate interplay.
economy during the first half of 20th century. For the exiles, the new émigrés do not resemble “authentic” Cubans, which could also be extended to the humoristic performances under scrutiny here. According to Andrea O’Reilly Herrera (2007)

For many of the first-generation exiles whom I interviewed, any claim to an authentic Cuban identity must be based upon longevity. In other words, only those who possess a “longer” memory of life during the republic—the “real” Cuba, as one person put it—qualify as being Cuban. Others take a step further and insist that those who remained on the island following the revolution altogether have ceased to be Cuban. “Then what are they?” I ask. “I do not know,” one woman told me, “but they’re not Cuban. They’re something else. (182)

Like the exile community, recent immigrants also resort to humor and “choteo” but they put into circulation artistic and social forms originated in current Cuba, as opposed to Republican Cuba, and adapted to the new scenario in order to negotiate their own space in a more multicultural Miami than the one found by the exiles around fifty years ago. Furthermore, the translocation of forms (cultural, linguistic, etc.) in Miami is a phenomenon highly criticized by historical exiles who separate themselves from the “newcomers” not only in terms of political identity, but also in economic, racial and cultural terms (Portes and Puhrmann). The transnational circulation of money, persons, objects, and also media products has modified traditional stances among Cuba émigrés in Miami, as previously stated. New émigrés display an affective exchange and continuity with the island, which is visible in the dynamics of the TV programs in my study. As Ramón Fernández Larrea, a well-known Cuban-born TV and Radio script writer and one of the interviewees for my research, affirms:
Esta ciudad (Miami), este conglomerado, me pareció una cosa muy rara —un pastiche de todos los barrios de La Habana. Repleto de cubanos, guetos y gente que quieren ser más cubanos que antes. Por eso te digo, si te llegas a Hialeah, entra a una tienda de videos: están todos los documentales cubanos, las películas, los programas de la televisión cubana, los muñequitos (animados) rusos, porque son señas de la nostalgia y de la identidad de una generación o de un par de generaciones.

[This city (Miami), this cluster, seemed to me a very rare thing—a pastiche of all Havana neighborhoods: packed with Cubans, ghettos and people who want to be more Cuban than before. That’s why I’m telling you, if you get to Hialeah, go in a video store: you’ll find all Cuban documentaries, movies, and Cuban television programs, including Russian cartoons, because they are signs of nostalgia and of the identity of a generation or a few generations].

Indeed, Fernández-Larrea’s invocation of Cuban made soap-operas in Hialeah prefigures a phenomenon of a different sort. In the following section, I argue that beyond nostalgia, local television that taps into recent Cuban émigrés creates a space of belonging and cultural synchronicity that enacts identification as a transnational affect. I will study such synchronicity through the discursive analysis of two programs.

Affective Vacuum

In light of the vacuum in the national media landscape regarding the Cuban market (Dávila 2014; Laguna 2014), local Miami stations are targeting this audience through different strategies. Ambitious market perspectives by the pan-Hispanic US stations have ignored local and regional identities. What Davila (2001) calls the “corporatization of Latinidad” has created an imagined Hispanic community losing sight of the affective and cultural needs of the immigrants in different US cities. As Henry Puente’s study on the potential of NuvoTV as a Hispanic-English speaking oriented station demonstrates:

31 U.S. Hispanic Media, such as Univision or Telemundo, have forged an imaginary of “latinidad” that at the same time serves to satisfy the urges for transnational markets (Dávila 2001).

32 Puente’s research points out the linguistic heterogeneity of Hispanics in the U.S.: “The Pew Hispanic Center reported in 2013 that 85 percent of Latinos between the ages of five and seventeen, and nearly 60 percent over the age of eighteen, either speak English only at home or speak English very well (Motel and Patten 2013). This language shift has left traditional Spanish-language networks like Univision ill-prepared.
The US Latino market is not as cohesive as the mainstream market, but rather consists of several submarkets, like the Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American markets. Within these various submarkets, viewers have different immigration experiences and are at different stages of acculturation. This viewership consequently is attracted to different content. (77)

Miami station América TeVé has taken advantage of the “vacuum” in the US-Hispanic media landscape created by the intended homogenization of Spanish-speaking peoples in the era of globalized corporate media hegemony. In effect, Lohmeier argues in her ethnography of Cuban-Americans and the media, that national dimension is still important for the unfolding of identity and affects. She addresses a situation beyond (or probably because of) the Cubans in the city: aside from the difficulty of measuring and predicting Hispanic television audience figures, her study asserts that appealing to Hispanics as a whole is very challenging:

During field work it became apparent that the individual communities, such as Mexicans, Venezuelans, Cubans, and particularly though not exclusively first generation migrants, predominantly think of themselves in terms of their origin nationality and not in terms of being Hispanic or Latino. (96)

In fact, in an interview with Alejandro Alvarado, the former Univisión journalist and communications advisor for different media companies explains that not only television but all mass communication media search for their own niches within the market: “los canales de televisión (hispanos) obviamente… se alimentan de los inmigrantes. Si a Univisión le cortan la migración en diez años desaparece porque su contenido es en español” (Valencia, “Interview with Alejandro Alvarado”). In Miami, several television stations compete for the Hispanic Market in Spanish: América TeVé, Gentv, MegaTV, and Mira TV. As Alvarado notes,

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to target the growing market segment of English-speaking Latinos. The shift from Spanish to English, however, was precisely what NuvoTV (formerly Sí TV) anticipated (62).
están compitiendo por un mercado pequeño, reducido, … buscando crecer a través de las repetidoras en Orlando, Tampa, Nueva York, donde se encuentran caribeños o cubanos. . . La costa este es de preponderancia caribeña: la segunda comunidad más importante de dominicanos está en Nueva York y en la medida en que tú les des contenido en su idioma con sus modismos se van a sentir mucho más identificados.

[They are competing for a small market ... looking to grow through the repeaters in Orlando, Tampa, New York, where folks are Caribbean or Cuban. . . The east coast is of Caribbean preponderance: the second most important community of Dominicans is in New York and to the extent that you give them content in their language with their idioms, they will feel a greater sense of identity].

Such stations, according to Alvarado, have an advantage with respect to Univisión or Telemundo, due to the variety of their offers:

Por ejemplo, MegaTV, Mira TV (y América TeVé) están ofreciendo noticieros en horarios que Univisión no ofrece. ¿Quién llega hoy en día a su casa a las 6:00? No a todo el mundo le gustan las telenovelas (strong content in Univisión and Telemundo), sin embargo, sí quieres estar enterado de lo que ocurre en tu país (de origen).

[For example, Mega TV, Mira TV (and América TeVé) are offering newscasts at hours when Univisión is not. Who today comes home at 6:00? Not everyone likes soap operas, however, one does want to be aware of what is happening in your country (of origin)].

In effect, Iván Camejo, writer for El Happy Hour and another interviewee for this study, asserts that “gran parte del público que tiene este canal específico (América TeVé) es cubano, creo que más de un 90 por ciento” [the main audience for this specific channel is Cuban, I think more than 90 percent] (Valencia, “Personal Interview with Iván Camejo”).

Precisely, the discourse analysis of América Tevé’s El Happy Hour reveals understandings of cubania which imply a trajectory seasoned with life experiences both “here” and “there.” Such expressions of cubaneo can be grasped in linguistic gestures that tap the recent generation of Cuban migrants to the city. As Georgiou (2004) affirms, migrant television can become powerful spokespeople for the community it represents; in addition, it can
create powerful images of self-representation (11), which in the case of Miami local television displays an array of discursive tensions.

The performativity of language in the construction of imaginaries and in local power negotiations lends itself to key concepts in our case study: speech acts, cubanía, and cubaneo. I define “speech act” as actions carried out by means of speech (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), i.e., acts performed through speakers’ utterances. Discourses that circulate within communities and others, connected to emotions, should be considered speech acts. Sarah Ahmed (2006) states that emotions circulate discursively; they stick to bodies creating attachments and borders. With this in mind, I argue that notions of cubania depend on cognitive and social experiences; hence, we cannot talk about the same understanding of cubania between the so-called Cuban historical exile and recent émigrés.

Pérez-Firmat, drawing from Fernando Ortiz, claims that cubania (Cubanness) does not depend on a place of residence or country of citizenship; it is nationality without a nation, “a spiritual and volitional criteria” —Ortiz defines cubanía as “cubanidad plena, sentida, consciente y deseada” (Pérez-Firmat). There is a constituent ineffability in the term as it relates to the dynamic fluxes of culture. In fact, according to Ortiz, cubanía has to be understood “no sólo en los planos de la vida actual, sino en los de su advenimiento histórico y en los de su devenimiento previsible” (Ortiz quoted by Pérez-Firmatt) [Not only on the planes of present life, but on those of its historical advent and those of its foreseeable future]. On the other hand, traditionally, cubaneo has been perceived as a negative social practice (Marinello 1924; Ortiz [1949] 2002). Yet, Pérez-Firmat attributes to it a “therapeutic” quality in the exile community, since cubaneo “may be the next best thing to Cuba, a buffer against loneliness and alienation (6).” He posits cubaneo as pre-political in
comparison with the concept of cubanidad, which incorporates a political essence enacted in language by the State. Cubaneo is summarized as follows:

That effusive cordiality that characterizes our dealings with each other—I think of it as “the oye, tú syndrome”—a community-building enterprise, “Oye, tú”—listen to me: at the bottom of the paradigmatic Cuban apostrophe is nothing other than a plea for communication, glue for Cuban bonding. “Oye, tú” reaches out and grabs someone. "Oye, tú": cubaneo pries open prepolitical space outside the reach of political closures (online).

Therefore, we can understand the performance of cubaneo in relation to the power of a speech act, as it “isn’t a power move but a homing device; it doesn't aim at conquest but at communion” (6). I argue that the “oye, tú syndrome,” “a glue for Cuban bonding,” is not only intended to bond; it also aims to negotiate meaning, identity and power, as any act of communication ultimately entails.

Pérez-Firmat localizes cubaneo in social interaction, in the “loose repertoire of gestures, customs, and vocabulary,” and in “the informality, the humor, the exuberance, the docility” (4). Body and verbal language of recent émigrés are distinctive from Cuban exiles, who tag the former as “otra cosa,” not precisely Cuban. Considering cubanía and cubaneo as socio-historically rooted constructs that are affectively laden permits us to re-conceptualize modern concepts like nationhood and homeland for diasporic cultures. In tandem with this idea, cubanía and cubaneo are not only affective devices but also commodities, resources oriented to target viewers in a city with a dominant Cuban population. As we will explore, a sense of cubanía (desire for belonging to a nationality beyond/without a nation) is commodified through a hyperbolic cubaneo, which I ultimately define as a performance of such desire in the public space.

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33 Post-national imaginaries are reshaping the way diasporas conceive themselves not necessarily attached to the notion of return to a mystic homeland, but to specific common imaginaries that defy the logic of geographical territory.
A re-territorialized cubania is exploited by the format, conception, and content of *El Happy Hour* and *Esta noche tu night* that tap the generations of recent émigrés who want to have Havana in Miami. It is, again, the power of emotions, and its use by cultural products to build an imagined community that ultimately makes a community of consumers in need for grounding and representation in a multicultural Miami.

This distinctiveness is conveyed in the words of Leo García, director of a salsa band who emigrated to Miami in the early 2000s. His band performs *timba*, a Cuban salsa variation that constitutes an important part of the routine of *El Happy Hour* and *Seguro que Yes* (América TeVé), and of *Esta noche tu night* (Mega TV), which relies on a live orchestra of Cuban musicians and singers. When I asked Leo if he uses non-Cuban singers for the chorus, he gives me a resounding “No.” His radical negation is followed by an: “Es imposible. *Ahí sí va el cubaneo*” (Valencia, “Interview with Leo García). Even though his response attempts to be explicative on its own, and to simplify semantics (we are supposed to grasp what he means by *cubaneo*), Leo’s explanation defies Pérez-Firmatt’s “universal” understanding:

*Guapería* as lack of finesse, usually linked to marginality by the exiles, became a natural mode of “being in the world” for Cubans raised under the egalitarian claims of the revolutionary government. Equality translated into the erasure of finesse, linked to bourgeois values, while sentimentality was a synonym for *blandenguería* (softness),
definitely not something to be proud of according to the citizen paradigm of “el hombre nuevo” (the New Man). At a horizontal level of societal power relations, “el guapo” (the tough guy) imposed over kindness and civility; at the level of international relations, the Cuban government also performed the same attitude: the symbolic marginal island always defying and confronting international political hurricanes and superpowers.34 This subjectivity has been emphasized in *timba* music, and other cultural products in Cuba as the revolutionary model of citizenship was ironically subverted in the very making of a society for “the people.” 35

Such notions of *cubania* as emphatic/hyperbolized *cubaneo a lo* low social strata, permeates at times the characters’ humoristic sketches of *El Happy Hour*, broadcast from 6:00-7:00 pm, right after the news. The staff of this show (and others mentioned in this chapter) used to give shape to the entertainment endeavors of Cuban state television in Havana. Those entertainment TV programs in Havana were (and are) characterized by the same format here —except for the commercials, which are banned by the Communist government: a live orchestra (*a la* David Letterman), interviews with local celebrities, a guest musician or band, humoristic sketches, and a playful introduction-monologue by the anchor about current events. Humor works as the main ingredient of these programs since the early 1990s, when the Cuban state followed a policy of *panem et circenses* to compensate for the hardships of a critical decade after the fall of Eastern European socialism. A time known euphemistically by Cubans as “the special period” gave rise to political and existential disenchantment, as well as to an ethical crisis (Amaro Cano 2014).

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34 For further information see García.

With the decadence of the Cuban sociopolitical project came the collapse of values professed by the revolution.

In fact, Leo’s understanding of cubaneo enters in dialogue with some of the humoristic sketches of El Happy Hour. Typically, the program includes an initial satirical monologue performed by Carlucho (the anchor) on recent island events as well as humoristic sketches, interviews with Cuban celebrities, and musical contests. Language, gestures, the tone and loud voices of the speakers, cannot be separated from the holistic performance of cubaneo.

As the queen of cubaneo, we might identify “Lala la kemá” (Lala the nut job). Lala is an occasional guest to El Happy Hour, a fan of reggaeton music who usually wears a miniskirt with an accentuated low cut blouse, a baseball cap, boots and a big golden necklace. The epithet “la kemá” accentuates her absurd dialogue usually in contrast with the “well tempered” male anchor, who, unlike Bach’s clavier, eventually loses his poise. In this context, the “oye, tú” syndrome might be considered a minimalist speech act, as Lala becomes the “act,” projecting herself toward the camera (audience) spouting at the rhythm of her convulsing hips, a “Mira Carlitón, no te voy a decir mentira, pa’ que te voy a engañal, tú eres mi yunta.” “Yunta” (oxen) refers to the Cuban slang for friend, a term more common among the children of the revolution. The mixing of polka and “perreria” (from the “perreo” dance, known as “booty dancing” or “grinding” in the U.S.), which is also very popular in Cuba, makes up polquería, Lala’s invention with a name similar to “porquería” in Spanish (filth) (Lala 2015). Her literal attachment to surfaces, making of the body core and place of enunciation, is not out of tune in comparison to other representations of women on Hispanic channels in the U.S. I will not go into depth about gendered humor.
with respect to television, or the sexualized *cubaneo* deployed by Lala, which might be connected to that equally gendered envisioning of the Caribbean by Antonio Benítez Rojo. He claims a “cierta manera” (a certain way) in the representation of the Caribbean that is linked to an anecdote involving black women’s swagger in the middle of a man’s doomsday speculation on the eve of a hurricane. Beyond Lala’s sexualized representation in *El Happy Hour*, what interests me here is how the question of “empty space” in the televisual program is filled with the spectacle of voices and bodies to distill a *cubaneo* out of Cuba that, perhaps because of the effort, projects certain insufficiency. We can delineate such feelings by thinking of humor as the inadequacy par excellence, an improperness akin to any act of desecration, a defense mechanism in the midst of contingencies, and so on. After all, the very idea of displacement conveys a significant charge of improperness, which has to do with an insufficiency of the self facing a reality that is the “other.” It is from this vintage point, combined with that other revolutionary inadequacy of the “New Man/woman”—a socialist doctrine transformed into a travesty—that we might understand Lala’s and *El Happy Hour*’s excess of *cubaneo* as an attempt at continuity through the reinforcement of corporality, to compensate for the transient deficiency of the self faced with a new social reality. Lala’s *cubaneo*, her propensity to ground herself in the body, is a ritual, a performance of continuity that emphasizes a subjectivity anchored in repetition and in a musical rhythm.

In contrast with the degraded humor of the sketches of *El Happy Hour*, which build on *guapería* and scream therapy *a lo barriobajero* (slum-dweller), *Andar Miami* presents a more “elaborated” derision of Cuban’s reality in the US. This show responds in a parodist style to the Cuban program *Andar La Habana*, led by the capital’s historian Eusebio Leal.
Since the latter began by the end of the ‘80s, it is not possible for a parody in Miami to exert the same affective appeal over the exiles. Therefore, I can discern both the ideal audience of El Happy Hour and the depiction of a transnational imaginary as a fluid sway between Havana and Miami.

The lyric of the video-clip that introduces the program “here” (in Miami) is a parody of the video-clip that became the brand name of the program “there” (in Havana) by 1993, with a troubadour poetic by Gerardo Alfonso. That “Habana, mi bella Habana,” becomes a burlesque chant to Miami, visually captured with certain “choteo” intentionalilty. As the images show Hialeah streets, and the iconic “Calle 8” seasoned by cigar parlors, Cuban restaurants, and rumba street percussionists, the parodic lyric goes: “La sagüecera y Hialeah para gozar, barrios balseros llenos de tradiciones y emociones” [La Sagüecera and Hialeah to enjoy, neighborhoods of rafters full of traditions and emotions]. The traditions embedded in the Havana neighborhoods to which Alfonso sings, replete of colonial and art-deco architecture, are replaced by the low-cost, pragmatic, expendable infrastructure typical of late American urbanity. While the economic immigrants maintain memories of an Old Havana included in the World Patrimony listed by UNESCO, Miami appears as an improvised city appropriated by Cubans, a caricaturesque and reductionist remake of Havana.

The very Calle 8, related to exilic memory of the 1960s and 1970s, becomes the site for the “balseros” imaginary (rafters). By claiming such a “balsero” preponderance, “rafter neighborhoods full of traditions and emotions,” the lyric erases the diverse immigrant fabric of Hialeah, and South Miami. In so doing, the past is diluted into the present, appropriated and transformed by recent émigrés.
Moreover, the (dis)placement of Havana historian’s name into Arsenio Real, points to the claim for authenticity: “the real” Cubans as opposed to Eusebio Leal’s ceremonial discourse framed in a grandiloquent style antithetical to cubaneo. It is a playful gesture toward the authority of Leal’s speech, anchored in a classical rhetoric: the ultimate derision of authority. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as a claim for authenticity in a city where “the children of the revolution” are deemed as the “other” in the eyes of the exiles. Arsenio is “Real” as far as he does not break with rafters’ perception and images of Cuba.

If Andar La Habana performs a back-up copy of the city, as if to save it from its ruinous state, Andar Miami becomes a memorializing pastiche. Andar Miami expresses a caustic gesture to a generation of Cubans for whom Havana is being devoured by the passage of time, ultimately triggering a prop for a remake of a program, of a city, of a particular sense of cubaneo. Its parodic gesture makes Miami the site of homage to Cuban authenticity: the “real” Arsenio, the real perspective imbedded in the rafter’s “para gozar” (to have fun).36

Andar Miami becomes a public exercise of recollection of exile memories of the city as well as of contestation of collective memory among Cubans, with the imprint of artists of recent arrival to the U.S., who still demonstrate an attachment to the events and people from the island. This is palpable in the frequent presence of comedians from Havana visiting Miami, who were already popular in the 1990s, and hence, familiar to recent émigrés.

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36 In a more recent study (2017), Laguna explores the intensification of current transnational practices through the analysis of “diversion:” he speaks of a “ludic popular culture” that is “placed alongside analyses of broader political and economic shifts in the United States and Cuba in the 21st century to articulate the role of diversión in the production and mediation of this relationship” (3).
In fact, Nielsen’s Hispanic survey results show that WJAN Channel 41 (América TeVé) has consolidated itself in the third ranking position among the leading Spanish TV stations in Miami. WJAN registers 40% more total TV Household ratings/viewership than Telefutura’s WAMI (UniMas since 2013) and 94% more than Mega TV WSBS. Targeting Cuban viewers has shown to be a smart move by América TeVé in comparison with Mega TV, a local channel with more PanUSA pretensions that have gained it a decline in ratings among recent Cuban arrivals (Valencia, “Interview with El Pible”). Variety shows like *El Happy Hour* speak of the success of local stations when tapping a particular niche, considering that national networks maintain their reign over a Spanish speaking market dominated by the Mexicans.

My reading of *Andar Miami* sheds light on how televisual narratives invest in the grounding of the displaced immigrant subject, in particular by creating an affective landscape that shapes the continuous fluxes, of all kinds, between Miami and Cuba, “hasta que se seque el malecón,” like the chorus of a recent reggaeton written and performed by a Cuban on the island, and whose lyric seduced Lala, la quemá, *El Happy Hour* as well as Miami streets during 2016.

Yet, there is a simultaneous awareness of the limits, the bounds of the cultural imaginary América TeVé portrays; there exists a consciousness that there is still an ocean between Miami and the island, which is not only geographical but social, economic and, ultimately, political. Consequently, I will tackle in the next section the cultural investment in the production of locality through the analysis of discourse in two programs where language contact offers a vantage point for the exploration of liminality, detachment and attachment of diasporas to the host society and the homeland.
English and the Cuban Vernacular

Seguro que Yes (on América TeVé) was one of the first titles on the Miami television landscape to combine English and Spanish languages.\textsuperscript{37} It came out in 2005, when Cuban actor Alexis Valdés –by then living in Spain— decided to try his luck with a project in Miami, utilizing actors that had arrived at the turn of 2000.\textsuperscript{38} He did so by putting together a crew already known to an audience of recent Cuban immigrants. The writers used in this project were Fernández Larrea and El Pible. The first one was familiar to Havana radio audiences in the 1980s and early 1990s for his humoristic live emissions of El programa de Ramón, a program that broke with the concept of radio talk shows in Cuba. At the peak of his career, he left Cuba for Europe to continue working in the media sector. El Pible spent eight years in Chile, where he published several books on graffiti humor, and appeared regularly on television and radio. In Cuba he was part of an iconic humoristic group of the 1980s: La leña del humor, known by its clever word plays, and incorporation of musical parodies into their projects. According to Fernández Larrea, they chose the title Seguro que Yes

con toda intención incluso se ha repetido el patrón del esanglish.... Entonces, llegar de España y presentarse (en Miami), tienes que decir: yo también soy de aquí y yo también soy capaz de burlarme del idioma. De esta cosa que hablamos, que llegamos a un lugar y decimos: voy al Home pipo (por Home Depot), el Flora Gardel (por Fort Lauderdale), el tronpique (por ‘turnpike’) —o muchos le dicen el compay: “voy por el compay hasta el Flora Gardel”. La gente lleva el idioma a lo suyo, ya desde el manejo de esto estamos dando el tono del programa. ¡Seguro que yes! O sea que, no es lo mismo “Sure que sí”.

\textsuperscript{37} I should mention the sitcom Qué pasa USA?, the first bilingual situation comedy in the U.S., but it was produced by PBS, not by a local Hispanic station.

\textsuperscript{38} The program went on hiatus on 2007. Since early 2008, Valdés transferred his show to Mega TV Channel 22 and later renamed it Esta Noche Tu Night.
With all intention. Even the pattern of Spanglish has been repeated.... Then, arriving from Spain and introducing yourself (in Miami), you have to say: I am also from here, and I am also capable of mocking the language. From this thing we talk about, we come to a place and say: I go to “Home Depot,” “Flora Gardel” (for Fort Lauderdale), the “trunk” (for turnpike)- or as many say compay: I am on the compay, on my way to Flora Gardel. People take the language to their own, and from there we are giving the tone of the program. Surely yes! That is, it is not the same “Sure yes”]

With *Seguro que Yes*, Alexis Valdés sought to convey a local color that starts primarily through language. Once in Miami, a marker was necessary to build a media presence according to the new cultural and linguistic reality. Being able to “make fun of the language,” as pointed out by Fernández Larrea, is one of the survival strategies of Cubans in Miami against the contingency of contact with different languages, because most come to the US without prior knowledge of English.

After a short hiatus in América TeVé in 2007, Valdés transferred his show to Mega TV Channel 22 and renamed it *Esta noche tu night*. Here, Valdés is also the host who interviews Latin artists and introduces all the sections of the hour-long program. It resembles a night talk-show *a la* David Letterman, but with more guests and different comedy sketches. Like with *Seguro que Yes*, Valdés opted for a bilingual title for the new show, where the interplay of both codes elicits a pun: “tu night, for “your night” as the Spanish “tu” indicates possession, while the phonetic of “tu night” in English rolls back to the first meaning of the phrase in Spanish: “Esta noche.” Such playful attitude towards the linguistic structure as well as its array of meanings informs of the un-fixity of the code in the subjectivity of the immigrant. The title performs a socio-culturally “natural” fluidity as in the case of bilinguals who code-switch. Yet, only the titles of these programs and occasional insertions of English terms suggest a bilingual audience. Despite the high

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39 MegaTV, known for more PanU.S. goals, has replicators in the West Coast and New York.
visibility of both languages in quotidian life from the arts, media, advertisement, politics, education, and economy to the marketplace which makes Miami a bilingual city⁴⁰ (Lynch 2000), the shows are produced entirely in Spanish with an emphatic presence of the Cuban variant. As Lynch also notes the “continuous influx of Spanish monolingual immigrants” is quite significant in the city (279). In fact, he reminds us, “Miami in the 1990s as the capital of world-wide Spanish language mass communication and popular entertainment will additionally secure the viability of the language” (279). Indeed, Spanish constitutes the matrix language of local stations like Mega TV, América TeVé, GenTV, and Mira TV.

The symbolic use of bilingual phrases is visible in the musical chorus that introduces recurrent characters and sections of Esta noche tu night. We looked at the edition of January 17th (2012), where the intermingle of English and Spanish capitalizes on the female chorus at the time to introduce Cristinito, a character Valdés made popular in Cuba in the 1980s, responsible for much of the humor in many programs. Cristinito has interpreted an array of disastrous experts throughout the life of the program, from a lawyer, an immigration attorney, a marriage counselor of multicultural families to a linguist. By using puns and misunderstandings, Valdés has put language at the core of self-reinvention in the diasporic space, resulting in the re-imagination of a diasporic identity that crosses local cultural references with those of current life on the island. In the aforementioned edition, the musical chorus presents Cristinito as “Él es the best; él es el one.” The interplay of the two languages reminds the viewer of the place of enunciation: a program produced

⁴⁰ According to Lynch “Spanish and English in Miami are in close competition on a number of levels: number of speakers, visibility, institutional and commercial supports, and economic viability (273).” This phenomenon permits the continuous contact with the mother tongue of those who emigrated in the early 1960s and 1970s as well as their offspring as the Spanish language is necessary to communicate in an array of situations and societal spheres (279).
in the U.S., not Cuba, where it would be absurd to introduce the character in English (Valdés 2012).

After the chorus, it is Cristinito’s turn; he plays a song dedicated to world peace: “You take it easy, and sing a son.” The insertion of English plays with the Spanish pronunciation of the verb indicating intercourse (“singar”) in the Cuban vernacular (and parts of Venezuela as well as in Dominican Republic). The relationship between Spanish and English enters the realm of mockery, as Cristinito reflects about the war in different parts of the world, or by invoking “Jose Martin Luther King” (an equivocal combination of the names of two great figures in the history of Cuba and the US). Cristinito’s call for peace is a satirical one anchored in equivocal language play that brings lightness over the images of everyday insurmountable world conflicts. Interestingly, Cuban and US historical, cultural and linguistic referents tinge his performance of a transnational imaginary aware of the immediacy of the world in our daily lives by means of televisual images.

In another section of Esta noche tu night entitled “Lechón de lengua,” Cristinito embodies a linguist from the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE). His subversive and irreverent use of the mother tongue virtually transforms him into an “assassin” of the language itself. He undoes Spanish through misspellings and arbitrary deconstructions that bring to the fore not only laughter but a reflection on how grammar and syntactic alterations enter in dialogue with the very alteration of immigrant reality. Through syllabic division, the linguist Cristinito confronts the Spanish dictionary published by the RAE with his own “knowledge” of the language in the context of diasporic integration with the host society. In the edition of June 18, 2014, Cristinito shows his “expertise” when
explaining the formation of the Spanish noun *sucedáneo* (surrogate). According to him, the word is formed by the combination of two: “*su*” and “*sedáneo*”; the first one, he attributes it to the English verb “to sue”, while “*sedáneo*” is not divided; instead, he connects it to a local Miami supermarket, *Sedanos*. The absurd confluence of both languages moves forward the display of his local “wisdom”: “algo habrá hecho (*Sedanos*) pa’ que le metan un “sue” (*Sedanos* must have done something to get sued). In other words, Cristinito winks at the audience with everyday hearsays like the sale of products that have expired by Miamian stores and supermarkets, which might cause the “sue.” This insertion of an English term in the phrase “meter un ‘sue’” is an “adapted loan” that displaces the Spanish word “demanda.” The context imposes itself as any legal/institutional claim portends English as the main language in the city. This construction of identity with the backdrop of language contact imagines a community of Spanish speakers with a Cuban accent, in particular the Havana variant (that of Cristinito’s), which deals with an English world of specific nature and function. Furthermore, when establishing an arbitrary linkage between *Sedanos* and “sucedáneo,” Cristinito also brings up the question of public responsibility which is part of local everyday concerns in the city. Every section of “Lechón de lengua” becomes a pretext to put together language and locality (Valdés 2014).

Cristinito’s discourse makes us reflect on the urge to tap into recent émigrés. In fact, in several of his monologues, Cristinito brings up allusions that can only be grasped by the generation of Cubans raised under the revolution. Sometimes, he would throw phrases that are transmitted today on Cuban television. For example, in “Cristinito meets Cristina,” he recovers phrases like “ahora se formó la recholata” (indicating a messy party or a chaotic situation but fun). This displacement of phrases from current Cuba to Miami
targets a transnational immigrant audience, a generation that “wants the best of both worlds” (Cuba and the US, according to Fernández Larrea). The children of the revolution’s daily practices report the existence of a transnational social space that we can identify as “strongly influenced by their continuing ties to the home country or by social networks that stretch across national borders” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Cristinito’s performance enacts the displacement from Havana to Miami. In so doing, its performance becomes a transnational gesture that vindicates a new social spatiality and sense of belonging in which the re-territorialization of the culture shows language at its very core. However, that play on words derives from the nineteenth-century vernacular theater, also characteristic of the “bufo” theater of the historical exile, and of comedians like Tres Patines and Álvarez Guedes. Although Cristinito’s allusions can only be captured by the children of the revolution, the form is characteristic of a longer trajectory.

Despite the bilingual titles of Seguro que Yes and Esta noche tu night, they wink affectively at a community that seems to not envision itself yet as speaker of a second language. If we consider that the entire verbal part of human existence cannot be associated with a unique subject but rather to his/her social environment (Volosinov 1976), then we can assert that the relationship of the imagined community created by these media products is one of perennial negotiation of linguistic identity. The English language is both a site of self-derision and one of symbolic integration into the host society, albeit its limits or bounds. As Naficy observes, television production plays a key role in the process of “becoming” in relation to exilic cultures, by providing a signifying system through which communities can articulate their experiences of separation, liminality, and incorporation (6).
Havana Programing “Here”

Miami never had access to the Cuban international channel from Havana or any other TV station from the island, a situation that also differentiates this migrant population from other national groups: Turks in Germany and in England, or Arabs in England (Georgiou 2008, 2006, 2005, and 2004; Aksoy and Robins) who receive in their languages homeland cross-border signals directed at migrant populations in Europe. Closer regional referents like Mexicans, Colombians, and Venezuelans in the USA,41 receive their homeland international channels via cable or satellite.

While working on this section of my study, I had to go back and forth in analysis as political relations between Cuba and the U.S. became subject to changes over the last two years. The flexibility of Barack Obama’s approach to foreign affairs, in particular with Cuba, does not have to do only with the inefficacy of a half century old policy; during his official trip to Havana on March 2016, he was accompanied by a retinue of men and women from an array of US spheres: business, cultural, religious and political. The delegation and the ongoing visits of distinct US entrepreneurs, politicians, artists, senators and House representatives to the island demonstrates the interest of different sectors, including Cuban Americans, in a rapprochement.

As I was engaged in the elaboration of a contrast between other Latino groups and Cubans in the USA in relation to satellite television, June 2016 lent another turn to my research. DishLatino, a company with 14 million U.S. subscribers, and about 250 channels with international programming, stunned me (as it did others) with an unexpected announcement: the beginning of transmission in US territory of Cuban television. The Colombians have managed to access domestic Colombian TV via internet. Elcartel.tv has become one of those spaces that connect émigrés with their homeland.

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41 Colombians have managed to access domestic Colombian TV via internet. Elcartel.tv has become one of those spaces that connect émigrés with their homeland.
commercial dial with a recently launched channel, CubaMax, was to be celebrated with a cultural night at Miami’s Olympia Theater, entitled “From Havana to Little Havana.” Indeed, the festivity was seasoned with the performance of Cuban actors and musicians, among them Luis Silva, the comedian who leads the staff of Vivir del Cuento, the most popular TV comedy show on the island.

Such an event reinforced my thesis of the back and forth communicative flux between the two countries, which accentuates the transnational dimension of the Cuban diaspora in the States. As a matter of fact, CubaMax’s transnational aim is to present a “culturally open product that crosses borders… a bridge between the two cultures” (Gámez Torres 2016, online). Actually, Iadoebex, a Spanish company specialized in the acquisition and sales of visual products participates in such a bridge, by creating a U.S. branch in order to administer the channel (under the lead of Cuban actress Amarilys Núñez). This is a fact relevant to our discussion as it makes visible the accentuated transnational character of current conditions of production, commercialization and consumption of media content, both in the regional and the global markets (Gómez, Miller and Dorcé). Nevertheless, in the Cuban case, we must underscore how U.S. embargo laws limit this transnational sphere, as Idaobex Living can only buy Cuban audiovisuals once they are finished, according to the newspaper article. Its intervention in this commercial deal is related exclusively to issues of copyright, while CubaMax as a US company is not allowed to take part either in the production or the financing of new series or televisual projects in Cuba.

While Cuba is still forbidden territory for televisual content production, Miami might represent an important source for the CubaMax programming offer. As Rodríguez explained to El Nuevo Herald, “It’s not just Cuba but also Miami and any person who
wants to [make a program] can do it” (Gámez Torres 2016). The official said that Cuban artists in Miami already have contacted the channel to provide programs with local content.

Indeed, the transnational orientation of the recent Cuban market in the US was reinforced by an Idaobex representative, who brought to light who they expect to be the “key audience” of CubaMax: “the new wave of Cubans that started in 2000” (same article). Actually, the channel “will appeal to ‘nostalgia’ and the possibility of seeing actors they recognize while also watching — for the first time — the same programs that their relatives on the island are seeing.” Such an assumption connects again audiences “here” and “there” as linked by an emotional bond that has to do with the need for communication on shared experiences (albeit from a different standpoint) in this case on the consumption of a communal content. *Vivir del cuento* and other Cuban programs included in the offer by CubaMax are already familiar to the Miami audience as these products are among the most popular on the island, hence, of resonance in daily life communication with people “there.”

As a humoristic approach to daily contingencies, *Vivir del cuento* has served as a cathartic vehicle to exorcise the pain and anguish provoked by a contrived quality of life in Cuba (*El País*, 2015). Recent émigrés relate to such hardships, as they maintain constant contact with their relatives and friends on the island through email, calls and regular visits. Actually, the Ministry of Tourism of Cuba informed that “a total of 390,000 Cuban-Americans traveled to Cuba last year and in the first four months of 2016, 116, 000 did so… representing an increase of 93% over the same period of 2015” (Fernández 2016).

US media corporations are aware of this reality, and of the success of the local TV stations in Miami which target recent immigrants through a “here” and “there” approach to content. Moreover, CubaMax’s commercial endeavor is not new; América TeVé has
kept on the air for several years different spaces that show, for instance, Cuban cinema as well as independent video productions on the island for specific news shows since recent émigrés did not have access to satellite television from Cuba or a cable station with Cuban programing. The commercial achievement of CubaMax complies with one of Chalaby’s (2005) registered sources and goals of transnational television: global media corporations in the pursuit of “out-of-home-market revenue” (2). Yet, we should not underestimate the involvement of Cuban State institutions, as State television programming is one of the main components of the “package” to be transmitted. According to the newspaper, 1960 percent of the channel’s content comes from RTV Comercial, the State agency that markets Cuba’s audiovisual products”. There are also telenovelas, sitcoms, and musical shows like Sonando en Cuba — a singing contest a la American Idol — which constitute part of CubaMax’s offer to Cubans and other Hispanic audiences.

While Cubans in Miami and other U.S. cities start watching in a more systematic way televisual products from the island, Cubans on the other side of the Florida Strait have been watching Miami media content for the last three decades through homemade antennas that capture satellite signals, and evolving video supporting technologies, among other

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42 We should add that last year an online site, cybercuba.com, emerged. Created by the island’s émigrés in Spain, it shows videos transmitted by Cuban television as well as by local Miami stations on current events. Obama’s visit to Havana, the Rolling Stones concert in the Cuban capital, and the Chanel fashion show in the same city were followed in detail by cybercuba.com.

43 The extraordinary range of cross-border television around the world, as Chalaby (2005) has put it, has to do with the following objectives: “Certain channels have been launched by governments trying to reach expatriate populations, while others belong to global media corporations aiming to increase the percentage of out-of-home-market revenue in their total turnover. Some channels address an audience of migrants with common linguistic and cultural background, others target the cosmopolitan corporate elite (2).

44 Actually the article highlights various statements as a disclaimer for any political charge to the commercial joint venture with a Cuban state institution. Rodríguez, vice-president of DishLatino, anticipated to El Nuevo Herald that the channel “will be pure entertainment and nothing more… There are no ideological programs”. Rodríguez also stressed the inclusion of documentaries produced by young Cuban filmmakers or movies, “many of them filmed outside the control of the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Arts and Industry (ICAÍC) and even outside the island” (Gámez Torres).
mediums. Yet, the circulation reach and socioeconomic and political impact of “El paquete semanal” (The Weekly Package) has no comparison in the longstanding flow of visual products between the Florida Straits. “El paquete” shows the simultaneity fostered by a transnational televisual spatiality through which Cubans “here” and “there” engage in a transnational cultural type of citizenship, more oriented to a communality of cultural consumption (communicative and artistic goods, including their exchange on the social networks on Internet, despite limited access on the island) than to a traditional sense of citizenship. In this sense, I coincide with Laguna’s claim concerning the works of affects, like familiarity and simultaneity, in the current transnational space between Miami and Cuba (2017). Furthermore, I underscore that this transnational citizenship is dismantling a traditional understanding of the national public sphere.

“There”

Jorge Duany (2011) has asserted that the transnational practices of recent Cuban émigrés share similar traits with those of other Caribbean and Latin American immigrants in U.S. Some exceptions apply in such a comparison, like the exercise of political rights (to vote, for example), and direct investment of the Cuban diaspora in the island economy. Yet, this situation is challenged by the very reforms implemented by Raúl Castro’s government, and the profound social changes of the last three decades after the collapse of the communist block, which have ironically situated émigrés as a potential catalyst for change. Velia Cecilia Boves has already pointed out that the expansion of the private sector in Cuba derived from the recent economic reforms, “abre una brecha para la entrada de la iniciativa y la participación de la diáspora en el nuevo sector empresarial” [Opens a gap for the entry of the initiative and the participation of the diaspora in the new business sector] (2015).
Duany (2001) has analyzed the emergence of a transnational economic circuit between Havana and Miami, in which he includes the proliferation of “paladares” (private restaurants). We have to consider other forms of mutual impact; as Eckstein (2013) asserts, remittances and regular contact with family and friends on the island, as well as their frequent trips, have impacted, and even eroded the socialist system in different ways.45 For instance:

[Cubans on the island] began to identify with the materialistic culture visiting friends and family had taken on for themselves upon emigrating. Cuban awareness of U.S. brand names became among the highest in non-English-speaking countries. Lifestyle differences between families on the two sides of the Florida Straits came to hinge more on differences in earnings than on differences in values. (Duany 103)

We should add that such values also travel through other venues, like televisual and cinematic products, made possible through the increasingly cross border mobility of the last decade. Moreover, Cubans on the island have expanded the constrained capitalist forms put into practice by the government, resisting its limits and boundaries. New technologies have allowed Cubans both to create and develop media products without the participation or sponsorship of the State, and to access and distribute illegally foreign products obtained

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45 It is not that the government has been reticent to accept the dynamics fluxes of the global world today, rather, it has been obliged to be part of it, as the critical post-soviet Cuban migration has helped to alleviate the economic crisis and living conditions of thousands of people in the island through millions of dollars of yearly remittances. Eckstein observes: “State and societal interests in remittances may converge, but so too may they conflict, and the interests of each may change over time. Neither state nor society is static in their needs and wants. In turn, the impact remittances have hinges on the political economy in which they become embedded. Remittances may generate consequences distinct from the reasons immigrants share earnings and the reasons homeland people and their government seek them. The impact of remittances may be far greater than the parties involved want or even comprehend.” (93) Such “hinges” mentioned by Eckstein, about remittances have changed Cuban society in ways that the Cuban government was not naïve about from the get go. Even though unexpected consequences can derive from the oversea remittances of money, the Cuban State has been always suspicious of any measure that can imply even a minimum margin of independence for its citizens, being this economic or political. The invasion of the values connected to capitalism were foreseen since the beginning, and they were not only the result of the dollar intake by Cuban citizens but of a broader contact with everything foreign to the socialist society. They were just accepted by the government as a necessary “evil.”
through satellite antennas, Internet websites, and Cuban migrants. Satellite antennas are not available to ordinary citizens, only to foreigners and some authorized Cubans working for international companies, embassies or the government.

In the last decade, “el paquete” has impacted Cubans in an array of ways, from habits of consumption to everyday life affective relations, as well as connection with their Miamian relatives and friends. Created by a group of young people in Havana who used to distribute musical videos, “el paquete” has become the alternative to Internet on the island during the last nine years. It contains a varied package of information that expands from sitcoms, documentaries, movies, US reality shows, HBO series, soap-operas (from the regional market, but also Asian), musical videos, international and local digital magazines, sports championships, games, local advertising, cellphone apps, to humoristic segments of Miami made TV shows. It travels weekly through different means from Havana to every corner of the country, including the southern island, Isla de la Juventud. People acquire it through USBs or external disks; they do not necessarily need to buy the whole weekly offer, but can create their own package according to their interest and monetary solvency.

Albert S. Laguna posits it as “one of the most visible and felt results of Raúl Castro’s economic reforms,” that fits under the 178 jobs categories listed by the government as legal self-employment options (trabajo por cuenta propia). For Laguna, hence, “el paquete” is “not a black market phenomenon:” despite the fact “the government criticizes el paquete, distributing it is technically legal—covered under the legal occupation of selling media in the form of music and audiovisual materials” (45-46). Yet, I would argue that “el paquete” enters into that realm of ambivalence in which many activities might not be technically illegal. For instance, during one family trip to Cuba, to the small
town of Jovellanos (Matanzas province), I asked my cousin to get me in touch with her “paquete” provider. I was curious about the provenance of the product: the specific source node, if “el paquete” came directly from the capital via the Habana-Jovellanos bus route, or another form of transportation adding to the eclecticism and breadth of its distribution, or if it came from another node within the province of Matanzas that might impact its content, i.e., local advertising; I was also interested in some approximate statistics like the number of clients and income, if there were more points of distribution, and if the nodes were in contact among them in the very small territory of my home town. My words fell on deaf ears: my cousin nervously shook her head and smiled; she told me that she did not feel comfortable with my request: “You know, he might get suspicious about your interest, he may think it can bring him problems.” My cousin wanted to keep him in total anonymity; in fact, she did not even mention his name, as if selling “el paquete” was not totally deemed as a legal act and, hence, only clients of trust should be acquainted with the distributor. Once a strange person appears in the panorama, the node feels at risk. “El paquete” might have “enjoyed” immunity thus far, but in “real life” there is no such a thing as total safety, as with any of the economic activities under the umbrella of self-employment. Any hole or ambivalence in the law lends to future punishments and/or reprisals. It reminds me of a Silvio Rodríguez’s verse: “Nadie sabe qué cosa es el comunismo, y eso puede ser pasto de la censura” (Song Reino de todavía) [Nobody knows what communism is and that can be the pasture of censorship] (Silvio Rodríguez’s song).

Despite the harsh criticism by state institutions, “el paquete semanal” has let ordinary citizens experience an imagined synchronicity with the rest of the world which is difficult to perceive in other realms of daily life, for example, in Internet access and an
independent press. Institutional attacks to “el paquete” peaked in 2014 and 2015 when a public controversy was led by cultural institutions under the wing of the Ministry of Culture.\textsuperscript{46} In that debate, the vice-president of the National Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT) argued that “el paquete” was as a source of “subculture and banality” in stark opposition to “the values” preconized by the revolution. The ICRT official argued, according to the online journal \textit{Observatorio Crítico de Cuba}:

No nos pueden echar la culpa de no tener prensa rosa, no podemos gastarnos los quilos en prensa rosa aunque realmente hay un público ávido de esas cosas. El paquete está ocupando esos nichos que nosotros no podemos ocupar en defensa de la política cultural, esa es mi opinión como institución y como persona (Roque Matínez).

[They cannot blame us for not having a yellow press; we cannot spend money on the yellow press although there really is a public eager for such things. “El paquete” is occupying those niches that we cannot occupy in defense of cultural politics; that is my opinion as an institution and as a person].

Such a statement brings up questions of audience gratification that do not correspond to the cultural policy of the revolution. It also underscores the existence of a reality different from that proposed throughout decades by state, cultural and media policies. Furthermore, “el paquete” constitutes an expression of the credibility crisis at the core of the political system or, in Velia Cecilia Boves’ own words, “la desconexión entre la continuidad del modelo político y sus fundamentos de legitimación y la nueva realidad de una sociedad diversa reestratificada y reinstituida simbólicamente” [The disconnection between the continuity of the political model and its foundations of legitimation and the new reality of a diverse society re-stratified and symbolically reinstated]. The phenomenon of “el

\textsuperscript{46} Yet, some researchers like Helen Hernández Hormilla, a journalist who has written about “el paquete,” look suspiciously at its expansion in the very eyes of the State. In an interview for this study, Hernández Hormilla observes that to download from Internet and to capture from satellite the amount of data and TV programs included in “el paquete” requires an infrastructure only available through State institutions like the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Revolutionary Armed forces, or the Cuban Radio and Television Institute. Furthermore, “el paquete” constitutes a relief valve before everyday life tensions, which makes it a diversion from other important issues and concerns of Cubans’ daily life.
paquete” is part of that symbolic reinstitution as new social actors emerge and synergies develop in the midst of economic reforms and transnational mobility of persons, ideas, goods, and cultural values.47

Cuban intellectual Víctor Fowler asserts, “el paquete nos habla de deseos, de redes alternativas, de sujetos con agencia, autonomía, de consumidores, de carencias en la oferta” (Roque Martínez) [The package speaks to us of desires, of alternative networks, of subjects with agency, autonomy, consumers, and also about lack of supply]. Such desires linked to the word consumers reveal the transition to a citizenship status that García-Canclini situates in the realm of postmodernity, where the expansion of television and mass media creates new forms for citizen participation:

Pero estos medios electrónicos que hicieron irrumpir a las masas populares en la esfera pública fueron desplazando el desempeño ciudadano hacia las prácticas de consumo. Se establecieron otros modos de informarse, de entender las comunidades a las que se pertenece, de concebir y ejercer los derechos. (23).

[But the electronic media that brought the popular masses into the public sphere were shifting citizen performance toward consumption practices. Other ways of informing oneself, of understanding the communities to which they belong, of conceiving and exercising rights].

Nowadays, such practices are enmeshed in a global and more complex socio-economic and political fabric, where traditional notions of nationhood and the public sphere are continuously redefined. García-Canclini verifies a “redimensionamiento de las instituciones y los circuitos de ejercicio de lo público” [resizing of the institutions and of the circuits for public participation] as local and national governments are challenged by transnational conglomerates (24).48 George Yúdice (2003) speaks of complex cultural

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47 For more on this issue, see the aforementioned volume by Boves.
48 Toby Miller undertakes a similar operation on highlighting the transition from an understanding of citizenship based on political rights and duties, to one that elicits consumption as the postmodern space for the citizen. He focusses on what it is to be a citizen in an era of terrorism, militarism, and multinationalism,
networks through which alternative forms of participation in the public sphere arise in the midst of the inter-penetrability of culture, economics, and politics in globalized times. That is, our current world is witnessing the era of post-hegemony by means of global capitalism, in which “flexible accumulation, consumer culture and the ‘new world information order’ occupy the space of the nation.” (167)

In the Cuban case, State institutions still regulate to a certain extent the influx of globalization expressed in an array of different alternatives for artistic production, circuits of circulation and commercialization. Local community as well as institutional independence from the State in using culture as a resource (to paraphrase Yúdice) is very limited, due to State surveillance over the reduced number of NGO’s as well as civil society and/or local organizations. However, some sparks of autonomy and creativity are emerging. “El paquete,” for example allows us to perceive two connected phenomena:

1) The restrictions of the Cuban social public sphere: “el paquete” itself constitutes an underground spatiality in the sense that it provides an alternative framework for a collective consciousness separated from State hegemony. In this regard, “el paquete” proves itself as political. It undermines the power of state institutions, and creates new possibilities of belonging, debunking narrow notions of Cubans as non-political actors. Their apathy toward the political sphere results from their exclusion from relevant State decisions in all spheres, and the economic crisis that absorbs their daily energies in order to survive.49

2) “El paquete” shapes consumption and is shaped by it, promoting new desires connected to global communicative flows and to Cuban émigrés around the orb. In this sense, it foments a transnational media spatiality. Yet, it is also independent of transnational corporations, private foundations or any other institution beyond the reach of the national territory.

As I have commented thus far, “el paquete” has generated a public debate convoked by the State, which speaks of the menace such an undertaking represents to State control. Besides the alluded controversy, in February 2012, Havana’s Theoretical-Cultural Center Criterios organized a panel opened to public discussion. Afterwards, the academic journal Temas (of limited edition and circulation within the island) launched an issue that put into perspective the debates surrounding the limits of the Cuban public sphere. During the presentation of that issue, journalist Magda Resik stated that “it is in the public space where the image of what we want to be is constructed, hence, the importance to reflect on this topic from the space of ‘mass communication’.”

Yet, such space of ‘communication’ alleged by Resik is an exclusive one, institutionally mediated. Despite the precariousness surrounding the Cuban public sphere, Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier observes a different societal dynamic that fosters communication, involving “el paquete” and more:

50 To counteract the lack of communicative venues, new online independent magazines have emerged, like Vistar and IslaDentro, which are more culturally oriented. Vistar, for example, made its debut through “el paquete.”
Hay una multitud de intercambios dinámicos e inventos de métodos de distribución que surgen de parte de la población. Me refiero principalmente a los modos y redes de distribución de datos digitales a través de paquetes semanales [3], de antenas [4], pero también de las transferencias usuales de material digital entre la gente por memorias flash, y otros transportes o contenedores digitales. Una particularidad de estas redes de distribución, desde mi punto de vista y en comparación con lo que estoy observando en Canadá, por ejemplo, es que representan una constelación de intercambios, en contraste con una concentración, anclados en el movimiento de la gente en la esfera social.

Es decir, se observa el proceso físico de los cuerpos humanos que se conectan físicamente (off-line) a través de herramientas digitales. Básicamente, eso significa que hay que salir de la casa, el espacio privado, por la calle o por el parque, una esfera social, para tener acceso a nuevo contenido digital. Para intercambiar ese contenido, hay que estar en contacto físico con otra gente. Este fenómeno está cambiando progresivamente con el acceso al WI-FI, pero todavía el movimiento y el contacto entre la gente sigue siendo una característica de este modo de circulación. Es un hecho que puede parecer anodino, pero que tiene un impacto grande en cómo se consume y se distribuye el contenido digital en la esfera social.

[There is a multitude of dynamic exchanges and inventions resulting from distribution methods that emerge from the population itself. I refer mainly to the modes and networks of digital data distribution through “el paquete” [3], antennas [4], but also to the usual transfers of digital material between people via memory flash, and other transports or digital containers. One particularity of these distribution networks, from my point of view and in comparison with what I am seeing in Canada, for example, is that they represent a constellation of exchanges, in contrast to a concentration, anchored in the movement of people in the social sphere.

[That is, we observe the physical process of human bodies that are physically connected (off-line) through digital tools. Basically, that means that you have to leave the house, the private space, head to the street or the park, a social sphere, to have access to new digital content. To exchange that content, you have to be in physical contact with other people. This phenomenon is progressively changing with access to WI-FI, yet movement and contact between people remains a feature of this mode of circulation. It is a fact that may seem anodyne, but it has a great impact on how digital content is consumed and distributed in the social sphere.]

In other words, “el paquete” and other alternative modes of digital content circulation alienate Cubans even more from spaces provided by the government for the communality of ideas. It is producing the basis for new forms of citizenship based on a “constellation” of exchanges, characterized by physical and affective mobility which enact distinct _modus operandi_ for the public sphere. It also fosters similar patterns of consumption not totally
foreign to other countries, albeit infused with a local accent deprived of the manipulation and hegemony of both the State and transnational media conglomerates. Transnational conglomerates are used strategically by “el paquete,” which affirms its independence from the latter and renders futile the legal framework concerning international copyrights. As such, this Cuban enterprise/product/social network supports itself at the margins of the law. From its comfortable margins “el paquete” simultaneously resists and takes advantage of globalization. While produced and reproduced locally, it feeds off global technologies, communicative products, and other flows; in effect, “el paquete” has become the Cuban Internet, as pointed out by Elioéctor, one of the founders of “el paquete” (Valencia, “Interview…”).

On another note, some programs/segments of Miami television analyzed in this chapter cater to Cubans on the island, like Esta noche tu night, fragments of which are included in “el paquete.” As a matter of fact, Valdés has made references on more than one occasion to his Cuban audience during his performances, showing that to some extent the program was designed with Cubans “over there” in mind. Elioéctor talked to me about the process of selection:

El programa lo cogía (descargaba) diariamente. Lo que pasa es que el programa de Alexis lo teníamos que buscar en Internet porque no tenía un canal (en el satélite). (A Cuba) no llega... porque es un canal local... Teníamos que esperar a que él o alguien que trabajaba para él lo posteara en su página. [I downloaded daily. What happens is that with the Alexis program we had to search the Internet because it did not have a channel (on the satellite). It does not arrive in Cuba... because it is a local channel... We had to wait for him or someone who worked for him to post it on his page].

Indeed, in terms of consumption, Cubans used to follow sections by Cristinito and other Alexis Valdés characters/performances while the program was aired. During my summer visits to Cuba, I could verify Valdés’ popularity even among a young generation that did
not grow up watching him on Cuban television. Young people under 20 (or a little older) copied from “el paquete” the humoristic segments by Valdés and other Cuban comedians, like Carlos Otero, host of a similar show considered to be Valdés’ competition in Miami. Friends would copy from each other these artists’ most recent appearances, as recent as the programs that had aired in Miami the week prior to the weekly edition of “el paquete.”

According to Elioéctor:

Todo lo que tienen que ver con Cuba desde aquí (tiene) raitings… porque (el cubano) está viendo que es una programación en español primero que nada, y porque …lo está actualizando, porque está viendo a su gente en otro mundo y trabajando.

[Everything that has to do with Cuba from here (has) ratings ... because (Cubans) are seeing that it is a program in Spanish first and foremost, and because ... they see it as current, seeing Cubans in another world and working].

To watch “su gente” (their people) in that “other world” reflects the consciousness among Cubans of the huge distance (not geographical) between both countries, as it is not only an ocean that separates them, but the existence of contrasting socio-economic systems that keep them split. That “other world,” however, becomes accessible through a virtual space that permits what Elioéctor calls “update,” which has to do less with up-to date-information and more with shortening, affectively, the distance between “here” and “there.” Lastly, underground circulation of products made in Miami points towards peripheral venues and relationalities that expand beyond State participation or intervention, and the operation of new alternative networks, like media products (i.e. “el paquete”).

Mobility, open world communication, and global connections constitute the ultimate heresy within a country restrained by a government that considers globalization as a menace (Rojas 2016). As Elioéctor has explained:
Fue así, por mucha información de personas que viajaban a Cuba... que se daban cuenta de lo que estaba pasando y decían ‘aquí falta esto, o esto otro’... Desconocíamos mucha información, y gracias a todos estos clientes que nos escribían, que llegaban familiares de afuera, y decían ‘oye, está saliendo una serie o una novela o tal programa o vayan a tal página y busquen tal cosa’, entonces... lo que íbamos era reestructurándolo, dotándolo de información.

[It was so, in light of a lot of information about people traveling to Cuba ... they realized what was going on and they said 'there's something missing here or there ... We did not have much information, and thanks to all these clients who wrote us about relatives arriving from abroad,' and they said 'hey, there's a series or a sopa opera or a show; go to this page and look for it', then ... what we were doing was restructuring, providing new information].

In other words, it is an underground venue connected to ordinary Cubans’ need to relate to others and to “su gente,” or “los familiares de afuera,” to share one “world” forbidden to Cubans on the island who remain among the non-connected subjects of globalization. I coincide with Laguna in that “el paquete” constitutes “an affirmation of the present and future of Cuban popular culture as a truly transnational project” (58). I propose that “el paquete” is transforming “habitus” within the island. By “habitus,” I refer to “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Bourdieu 1985). In other words, in a nation of “socialism or death” (surrogate for the traditional “homeland or death”), “el paquete” enables a space for political emancipation. In this context, State hegemony does not appear as a determinant externality: there is a space for agency, knowledge, and affects to generate situated practices that are creating a transversal politics, a realm of possibilities beyond traditional spaces for public participation.

51 To this author engaging in diversión as an “ephemeral archive” that “provides a glimpse at how people are narrating the new normal” (that is, the intense flows of all kinds between the two societies).
Conclusions

The shift from national identity to migratory generational identity entangled in the realm of experience allows us to verify the affective bonds created and/or enhanced by recent Cuban émigré televisual narratives as opposed to the affectivity of exiles, revealing the shifting, discontinuous perceptions/relations of migrants with regard to their homeland.

The latter migrant generation in Miami, those who were raised under the uncanny mystique of the “muñequitos rusos” (Russian cartoons), as Fernández Larrea notes,\(^{52}\) conforms to transnational patterns exhibited by other immigrants in the U.S. (Duany 2011 and 2014). Local Spanish stations tap them to establish themselves in the Hispanic television market. In order to consolidate such a niche, these local stations hire a professional staff of writers, artists, and producers who used to give shape to Cuban State television. In so doing, the essentialism embedded in televisual narratives in circulation constitute a space for visibility and affective representation for “the displaced children of the revolution.” These narratives construct a translocal imaginary in which Miami and Havana enable a fluid circuit. \textit{Seguro que Yes} and \textit{Esta noche tu night} envision lines of separation, as these programs invest in the construction of locality, placing language at the core of the local enterprise. Yet, they also construct an imaginary of continuity and synchronicity as verified in \textit{El Happy Hour}.

In their grounding study on Turkish immigrants in London, Aksoy and Robins observe that Turks do not watch transnational television to reaffirm a national identity, rather immigrants display a quest for familiarity. In the diaspora, experiences usually

\(^{52}\) It would be interesting to explore what audiences’ uses and meanings convey to those programs that tap both Cubans on the island and in Miami. In this sense, it is necessary to carry out a reception study to verify to what extent such transnational audiovisual content conveys a meaningful experience for these audiences.
regarded by national audiences like “natural, ordinary, unremarkable, everyday entitlement” (145-146), become insubstantial. It is precisely the impossibility of perceiving Turkish national television in an “ordinary” and “natural” way, that constitutes the reason as to why these immigrants in London cannot relate to it as everyday life banality. Hence, Turkish transnational television does not function as “authentic care structures” for its viewers in Europe, but rather as a transnational spatiality which ultimately brings the affects connected to familiarity (Aksoy and Robins 2006). We are not in the position to state that the spatiality in our case study of Cuba does not constitute an “authentic care structure;” “care” is not only related to “ordinary” everyday life in a particular social setting. Ultimately, the transnational spatiality fostered by such circulation of televisual narratives creates an imaginary of continuity for both sides of the Florida Strait in light of migratory experience and subsequent separation.

I have also argued that we can expand the quest for familiarity when applying it not only to immigrant audiences, but also to those who remain in their homelands. By including programming made by their counterparts in Miami, “el paquete” affirms the pursuit of what is familiar, reconnecting local audiences with the experiences of the Cuban population abroad, in that “other world” recalled by Elioèctor.

Additionally, the new transnational audiovisual spatiality configures a venue for feelings of belonging and identification beyond State projects or summons.53 This does not

53 On the one hand, diasporas are minorities in host countries; on the other, they all have some connection (imagined or real), and share a sense of belonging to a larger community spreading beyond national boundaries. In such a dynamic, a counterpoint between particularity and universality emerges, as Georgiou (2005) claims: “It is very important to realize that diasporic media address those audiences in their particularity, but in the universality of their (imaginary) cultural existence (…) These commonalities are not necessarily real, but even if imagined they can have real consequences. Sharing common cultural repertoires and information, as they appear on satellite Greek television shown across Europe, for example, can lead to the (re-)invention of sharing identity and community.” (4)
mean that we should forget the current role of nation-states in expanding their symbolic frontiers to coopt migrant populations. As diaspora and migration studies scholars have noted, transnationalism neither implies the collapse of the nation-state nor nationalism itself. These constructions still appeal to the affective fibers of national populations abroad.54 It would also be naïve to contend that transnational television and global media undermine the construction of locality. The global, the local, and the transnational are not exclusionary dimensions. They intermingle. For example, “el paquete” invests in the “localization” of its content, as all the advertising included serves to promote local businesses, artists and cultural projects (interview with Elioéctor). In fact, advertising shifts from city to city, as “el paquete” accommodates its design to local needs while “traveling” throughout Cuba. Equally important, “el paquete” has configured a novel tool for Cubans’ connections with the world, and has established a sense of synchronicity with their counterparts abroad, in lieu of internet.

Ultimately, flows of media products like “el paquete” re-configure the affective landscape infused of patriotic nationalism constructed by Cuban official media. That is, they both accentuate and make visible the crisis of representation in the Cuban context, the displacement of the nation-state discourse and power as it is occupied by everyday practices beyond its reach. Consequently, it extends the reach of the aforementioned transnational media spatiality as daily frustrations and the struggle for survival “here” and “there” intensify, giving way to an affective connectivity between both societies. In part, due to the fluid space of digital and televisual products between both societies, the children

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54 We only have to see the instrumentalization of nationalism in current regional ethnic conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, which mobilizes ethnic populations abroad.
of the revolution “here” and “there” stay reconnected, effacing the call of “socialismo o muerte” to achieve a sense of synchronicity with the rest of the world.

“El paquete,” CubaMax, and América Tevé produce and foster such transnational bonds and quest for belonging, in which nation-states (US and Cuba) do not figure as the main actors, even though their policies regarding (im)migration and bilateral relations affect such movements. This fluidity is facilitating a transnational citizenship, a *modus vivendi* characterized by “monitor[ing] what is happening in the other parts of the circuit as closely as they monitor what is going on immediately around them” (Rouse 14). The significance of this phenomenon is affecting the ways in which US society and Cubans on the island envision one another, but this is a topic for a follow-up to this study.

In the subsequent chapters, I turn to other forms of belonging imagined by the children of the revolution in Europe. I will show how they not only build cosmopolitan bonds and nomadic connections, but also distance themselves from the idea of Cuba (as homeland and/or part of the subject’s identity).
Chapter 3: The New Nomadic Man of Livadia

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the transnational circulation of televisual products between Cuba and the U.S., intensified under the presidency of Barack Obama due to the suppression of travel restrictions on Cuban-Americans, and the increasing cultural contacts between the two countries. I situated the latest migrant generation in Miami comprised of the children of the revolution as actors of change within this context. Their distinctive history and relationship toward the homeland, verifiable in their televisual products, separate them from the exiles. I verified how Spanish stations in Miami tap into this segment of the Cuban community by means of commodification of a particular understanding of Cubannes. The children of the revolution in Miami participate in a transnational spatiality characterized by a back and forth flux (of bodies, objects, images, and ideas) that affects both societies and gives testimony of bonds beyond States’ sponsorship, as well as of a cultural form of citizenship. In what follows I scrutinize other geographical spaces beyond the traditional setting and focus of Cuban diaspora studies. In so doing, I verify the emergence of alternative forms of being in the contemporary world that lend to nomadism and the erasure of national origin.

It is estimated that between 100,000 and 300,000 Cubans received university scholarships and professional training courses in the USSR. They became familiar with the unfamiliar, and transformed it into their temporal homes. José Manuel Prieto, author of Livadia (1999), is one of the many Cubans who profited from the educational cooperation agreements among socialist states, during the CAMECOM era. He traveled to the vast

55 In the article “Las diez huellas soviéticas en Cuba,” published on the BBC Mundo website, Liliet Heredero offers the range of statistics on Cubans graduated in the USSR.
Imperium (as Ryszard Kapuściński puts it) comprised of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the trans-Siberian Soviet republics. Living in the USSR during his formative years definitely helped a young Prieto realize total integration; that is to say, he became a “biculural subject” (Valencia, “Interview with Prieto”) or better yet, a writer of multiple inheritance. His wanderings continued later in Mexico and the U.S., underscoring the children of the revolution’s nomadic impulses beyond State sponsorship. His Russian trilogy, consisting of Encyclopedia of a Life in Russia, Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire (Livadia), and Rex, bolsters such a claim.

Livadia is a sort of epilogue to post-Soviet Russia from the perspective of J, a transnational contrabandist who under communism studied Engineering at a Siberian university. Coincidentally, at the age of 19, Prieto (like J) started Engineering studies in the former Soviet Union. J moves across stratified spaces, like a nomad, which is to say across structures of power, never to reach a particular site, but to experience the intensities of the “intermezzo” —life between points. Deleuze and Guattari define the nomad in the following terms:

To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. The nomad, is thus, a way of being in the middle or between points. It is characterized by movement and change, and is unfettered by systems of organization. The goal of the nomad is only to continue to move within the “intermezzo.” (380)

Such a notion of nomadism lends itself to polyglossia, the condition of living between languages, which Rossi Braidotti has connected with the very act of writing as the ultimate release of the self into an open disclosure. Considering such point of departure regarding
nomadism, in this chapter I argue that mobility, as multilingualism and *écriture*, foreshadows a nomadic subjectivity released from a traditional understanding of the socially regulated subject of the nation-state. I will delineate the nomad as polyglot, which I flesh out through the analysis of J, the main character and narrator, as a multilingual subject. I subsequently scrutinize the space of *écriture* as shedding light on the self-fashioning of the writer within a global literary scene; *écriture* makes visible the conformation of a male cosmopolitan and erudite spatiality where the idea of Cuba is effaced through the erasure of origin. Nevertheless, through discourse analysis of book covers of different editions of the novel, including the English version, I grapple with the re-inscription of Cuba by publishing houses and international literary critics to hook audiences through the exotization of a post-national *Cubannes*.

**Erasure of Origin: An Introduction**

In a study focused exclusively on *Livadia*, Britton W. Newmann (2012) underscores the constituent internal censorship of subjects under totalitarian regimes. Newman scrutinizes how “the writer-protagonist consciously or unconsciously continues to lead a sort of guarded and double-voiced existence that living under Soviet-style communism required” (online). As he reads Russia as Cuba, both “duplicity and silence” conform a Cuban post-Soviet subjectivity characterized by paranoia.

That erasure of origin and the simultaneous attachment/detachment to Russia observed by Newman becomes a Cuban identity in transition in Damaris Puñales-Alpízar’s cultural study on the sequels of the fall of *the end of history*. Its impact on Cubans’

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56 He defines that internal censorship as “evidence of a deeply engrained sense that one must not share information unnecessarily, that the authorities may be waiting to trap the unsuspecting person who speaks too much” (online).
imagination is translated into an aestheticized nostalgia that speaks of a “sentimental Soviet-Cuban community” by virtue of a generation’s resourceful memory in response to the end of an era. Hence, for this critic, in Prieto’s trilogy “el narrador ofrece una alegoría de la relación entre Cuba y la Unión Soviética por más de treinta años: una relación de amor y odio al mismo tiempo” (154) [The narrator offers an allegory of the love-hate relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union for more than thirty years]. Puñales-Alpízar connects the trilogy to the genre of auto-fiction as if the protagonist/narrator should be considered a fictionalized biography of the author’s Soviet life experiences. Hence, J’s ambivalence in Livadia as a foreigner/insider in relation to Russia should be read in the context of that sentimental socialist community of which Prieto is a unique example of the silencing of the protagonist’s nationality.

Jacqueline Loss (2013) notes that Prieto’s erasure of origin speaks of an engagement with Russia that appears “almost as if it were an accident, detached from the international compromise that resulted in so many Cubans residing in the Soviet Union” (93). In this sense, “the randomness of origin” restate the cosmopolitan orientation in which the identification with the East “suggests that commensurability with others:” that is to say, J’s experiences after the collapse of socialism inform of a post-Soviet subjectivity in the Eastern Bloc connected to the infatuation with the West (93). Cubans also became part of that as result of the socialist world’s isolation from the very material world of capitalism, in which people in these societies were “purely” preserved. Therefore, “the fall” produced a consumerist frivolity, as it occurs with J. Cuban writer Gerardo Fernández Fe speaks of this phenomenon:
Como los rusos, también nosotros hemos estado mirando a Occidente durante mucho tiempo. Y esto a Prieto también le toca. Nacido en un lugar igualmente feudal, receñido, el caso cubano no puede esconder su explosión, su ser trivial e intrascendente, su éxodo, su mercadeo, su espíritu económico. (personal blog)

[Like the Russians, we too have been looking at the West for a long time. And Prieto is also touched by that. Born in an equally feudal, feared place, the Cuban case cannot hide its explosion, its trivial and insignificant being, its exodus, its marketing, its economic spirit]. (personal blog)

Puñales-Alpízar, Loss and Fernández Fe contextualize historically what seems to be merely “an embarrassing condition” in Prieto’s novel for Rafael Rojas (quoted in Loss 93): Prieto’s distancing/erasure of Cuba as an idea, a place, an identity or a fictional topic. Although Rojas frequently praises a de-territorialized Cuban nation, he seems to condemn Prieto’s “inadequacy” with regard to “origin.” As a matter of fact, Prieto should be linked to a current regional trend among Latin American authors, by which “nadie tiene que justificarse, como les tocó a Borges o a Cortázar, por contar historias europeas o indias o norteamericanas o con personajes de esas regiones. Nuestra tradición es toda la literatura” [No one has to justify himself, as Borges or Cortázar did, when we tell European or Indian or North American stories or with characters from those regions. Our tradition is literature as a whole] (Vásquez 6).57

I read Cuba’s erasure in Livadia as a nomadism resulting from the exhaustion of the revolutionary model of citizenship of the “New Man,” by which the State demanded a sense of absolute commitment to its socialist project, a compliance that included all spheres of society, including the arts. Prieto himself corroborated my argument:

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57 Such a debate about authenticity of the Latin American author, in accordance with the grade of regionalism/localism within a literary work is not a new one. See, for example, Loss (2005) and Aínsa (2010).
Yo creo que el hecho de que yo no mencione lo cubano y todo el asunto en particular en Livadia tiene que ver con una actitud política en esencia, de cansancio, porque detrás de eso hay una falsedad muy fuerte, y un abuso de lo nacional por el discurso oficial (...). Eso requiere una independencia mental muy fuerte (...) yo soy quien soy (...) y todo el libro está montado sin tener una referencia al lugar de donde se viene (...). Es un acto de valentía intelectual, de responsabilidad, y más que nada de independencia mental, un acto de disidencia extrema sin ponerle ese nombre, es un acto de profunda disidencia más aún del que denuncia, delata, como La nada cotidiana (...) En mi caso se trata de ignorar y ya, no existe (...) yo por supuesto hace muchos años cuando era muy joven también decidí no convertir a Fidel Castro ni a la revolución cubana en enemigos míos, ni odiarlos, ni dejar que ese odio me consumiese ni que terminase teniendo ese poder sobre mí.

[I believe that the fact that I do not mention Cuba and the whole matter in Livadia has to do with a political attitude in essence, of tiredness, because behind that there is a very strong falsity, and an abuse of the nation by official discourse (...). That requires a very strong mental independence (...) I am who I am (...) and the whole book is assembled without making a reference to the place of the narrator’s origin (...) It is an act of intellectual courage, of responsibility, and more than anything of mental independence, an act of extreme disidence without naming it, it is an act of deep dissent even more than who denounces, more than La Nada Cotidiana (a book by Cuban exile writer Zoé Valdés)... Many years ago when I was very young, I decided not to turn Fidel Castro or the Cuban revolution into enemies of mine, or hate them, or let that hate consume me or let it have any power over me].

Prieto’s debut on the Ibero-American literary scene was in the 1990s while in Mexico, a peripheral site with regard the traditional centers of Cuban literarute, but also in relation to the fictional landscape: Russia as it surfaced in the trilogy Encyclopedia of a Life in Russia, Livadia, and Rex. Before the appearance of the trilogy, Prieto had joined a group of Cuban writers from the island who called themselves Proyecto Diáspora(s). Diaspora(s) was founded as a literary group in 1993 in Cuba; by 1996, only one of its writers resided outside of the island: Prieto.

The plural case in the term diaspora(s) in the journal’s title is relevant to my analysis, as it is proclaimed while the founders were still in Cuba. Here, the name diaspora(s) seems to entail an imaginary departure from the territory of the nation-state, a voluntary de-territorialization, a line of flight that pluralizes itself as opposed to the unitary
concept of “the nation.” Furthermore, it implies an exile or departure from the very lettered territory within which the nation has been thought.58 One of Diáspora(s) founders, the poet Rolando Sánchez Mejías, asserted: “Acaso fuera oportuno hablar del concepto. Del concepto como forma del Terror. Aterrorizar a las Letras Cubanas a través del concepto” (1) [Perhaps it would be opportune to speak of the concept. The concept as a form of Terror: To terrify Cuban letters through the concept] (2013, 1). The decade of the 1990s appeared replete of these terrors in the field of literature. Suffice it to mention the emergence of two literary groups in the Latin American region with similar intentions: McOndo (Chile) and Crack (Mexico). Such literary generations claimed lines of flight with respect to previous literary creation ingrained in a myth called Latin America; yet, the self-designated titles and ideological intentions —aimed at an independent esthetic path from the Boom generation and the region’s literary tradition— have been exploited by Spanish and American publishers to re-legitimize McOndo and Crack as a new authentic Latin American product, returning to the idea of origin.

“Trato últimamente de luchar contra la metafísica del origen” (191) —I have been trying lately to go against the metaphysics of origin—, reflected Sánchez Mejías in Diáspora(s)’ facsimile compilation of its five years of publications. Such urgency might be connected to what Francisca Noguerol (2008) identifies as distancing from any claim of national/regional identity in today’s Latin American writers:

58 Fernando Aínsa recalls the example of Juan Gabriel Vásquez, Colombian writer, who defines his own book Los amantes de todos los Santos (2008) as a libro europeo de un escritor colombiano (6).
Vivimos un momento en que la búsqueda de identidad ha sido relegada a favor de la diversidad: como consecuencia, la creación literaria se revela ajena al prurito nacionalista a partir del cual se la analizó desde la época de la Independencia, aún vigente en múltiples foros académicos y que rechaza la literatura universalista como parte del patrimonio cultural del subcontinente. (20)

[We live in a moment when the search for identity has been relegated in favor of diversity: as a consequence, literary creation is revealed outside the nationalistic prurit from which it was analyzed since the time of Independence, still in force in multiple academic forums. The new stance rejects universalist literature as part of the cultural heritage of the subcontinent.] (20)

Accordingly, Proyecto Diáspora(s) founded a homonymous magazine in 1997; their writing performed that separation of McOndo and Crack by claiming a migration from the Cuban national canon, anchored in realism (the socialist realism of the 1970s, the naïve realism of the 1980s, the dirty realism of the 1990s, or the neo-baroque aesthetics). By the 1990s, as Cubans began to bear witness to the crisis of a socio-economic and political paradigm that followed the revolutionary triumph of 1959, the literary scene started to explore autonomous ways to dialogue with the world.

There emerges “short circuits that open the present towards the future and that modify its institutions” (paraphrasing Negri on the work of Deleuze), short circuits that in our case study relate to the institution of “national literatures.” Nomadism meant performing the “escape” from such origin/place of enunciation, and it became a scriptural mission for the writers of Diáspora(s). The literary proclamation of “terror” acquired in their writing a raison d’être: what is the nomad but a war machine, Deleuze and Guattari tell us, a machine that constantly produces escape lines, moments of rupture that contain their own futurity. For Diáspora(s), it is understood as “una avanzadilla (sin) táctica de guerra. […] La vida como proceso. La historia como proceso, la escritura como proceso” [An advance (without) the tactic of war. [...] Life as a process. History as process, writing as process] (Sánchez Mejías, 2013 [1997]: 175). Therefore, the de-territorialization that
Diáspora(s) performs, and that has been identified as “minor literature” by Duanel Díaz, has to do less with geographic territories than with literary cartographies:

La desterritorialización funciona, en general, contra una ontología de lo cubano, de los orígenes. Para esto, Diáspora(s) se conecta con ciertas líneas de la literatura contemporánea; se conecta, por ejemplo, con Bernhardt (el asco por el propio país, la burla contra la mediocridad de lo austriaco, el cinismo y el humor negro), con Deleuze (la literatura como política, una idea funcional de la literatura. No ya la escritura como expresión ni como impresión, sino como máquina de guerra, como dispositivo maquinico esquizo que permite combinar elementos ajenos y ponerlos a funcionar en un determinado contexto), con escritores “subversivos” como Beckett, Kleist, Piñera, Handke.

[Detteritorialization works, in general, against an ontology of Cubanness, of origins. As such, Diaspora(s) connects with certain lines of contemporary literature; it is connected, for example, with Bernhardt (disgust for his own country, mockery of Austrian mediocrity, cynicism and black humor), with Deleuze (literature as politics, a functional idea of literature. Writing not any more as an expression or even an impression, but as a war machine, as a schizomachinic device that allows the combination of elements from outside to function in a given context), with “subversive” writers such as Beckett, Kleist, Piñera, Handke].

These lines of flight are produced in Livadia, which I analyze through the spatial metaphor of the intermezzo, the non-space of the nomad. J, Livadia’s narrator/protagonist decides to stay, performing all kinds of obscure occupations like that of a contrabandist of Russian merchandise, after the implosion of the Soviet frontiers. As a smuggler, J’s life lapses in constant mobility, always affected by contingencies, unexpected changes of route, which only cease when he reaches the resounding space of Livadia, a seaside Crimean paradise.

In one of his adventures across Europe and the East, J meets in Istanbul a young Russian woman, V, and discovers that she is working as a strip dancer in a seraglio after having been fooled by white slave traders. J succeeds in helping her escape, arranging a sea trip to Odessa where she is supposed to continue the journey to her family home in a Siberian village, and to reunite with him later on in Livadia, where he would hunt an exotic butterfly at the request of a rich Swedish collector. Livadia is also a place in the Russian collective
memory: there, the winning allies hosted the historic Yalta conference in February 1945, where Franklin D Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin established the post-WWII order that lasted almost a half century. In effect, Loss notes that “Prieto captures the rhetoric of memorialization of Soviet times in the days of the new Russian republic in a unique way” (122), as Prieto’s narrator acts as interpreter of a contrasting reality (that of the socialist era and the new one of capitalist values). What is important to my argument here is the resonance of Livadia as a point of relay, in terms of J’s constant mobility, given that Livadia resonates as much historically as it does literarily. In effect, J devotes most of his time to writing and reading while in Livadia. By becoming the very non-place of écriture, a nomadic activity itself as Rossi Braidotti reminds us, Livadia might be understood as an intermezzo.

The Nomad as Polyglot

Livadia’s nomadism is not only related to an embodied subjectivity, but to a linguistic mobility that leads the subject to unfixity. I verify a multiplicity in the multilingual that renders him/her as a non-unitary subject. Speaking about the mother tongue can result in a foreign idea, in an estrangement of the subject within himself. I connect polyglossia with Aneta Pavlenko’s notion of multilingual affective repertoires (in plural) so as to underscore how polyglossia dismantles “the illusory stability of fixed identities, bursting open the bubble of ontological security that comes from familiarity with one linguistic site” (Braidotti, 43).

Aínsa reminds us through George Steiner, that what characterized the work of writers like Nabokov, Borges and Beckett was a de-territorialization accompanied by
multilingualism, a position that is now claimed by Latin American writers (Aínsa 58). If the polyglot, as a form of nomadism, leads to becoming-imperceptible, we shall note that through the resonance of multiple languages J becomes “una idea inatrapable…, las alas de una mariposa, un sueño” (Livadia 51) [An unstoppable idea, butterfly wings, a dream] (Livadia 51). Becoming imperceptible through multiple chameleonic selves/languages, and registers that defy orders of ‘indexicality’ entails transcending passivity and gaining sociolinguistic mobility. I speak of a mobility “of concrete semiotic resources” (Blommaert 47) as well as of a mobility in the ability to use more than one language. Blommaert studies take into consideration sociolinguistic systems, that is to say, ordered social structures that regulate/normative individuals’ interactions. He calls for a reconsideration of such regimes in a global world, yet he does not explain how they operate in multicultural societies or in contexts of nomadic activity.

According to Blommaert, mobility, “sociolinguistically speaking,” refers to “a trajectory through different stratified, controlled and monitored spaces in which language ‘gives you away’” (6). In other words, society assigns particular values to individuals in relation to community or group belonging independent of speech style, which assumes other categories like class, educational background, possible place of origin (region within a particular country and/or setting –rural/urban, and so on). Considering this, I advance that J defies such orders by which society usually locates the individual in particular grids of social meaning like identity and role by virtue of his linguistic features and style. The

59 Interestingly, Prieto’s literary referents in Livadia deal with such aforementioned writers (Nabokov, Borges, Beckett), and he himself has been a commentator of Beckett’s pieces. The latter, like Nabokov, enters in the category of “international” authors (interview with Prieto for my research): that is, authors who defied the laws of gravity of “national literatures.” Prieto follows his international masters hoping to transcend the passing of time.
narrator/protagonist of *Livadia* undoes such linguistic regimes: because of his resourceful use of the Russian language —moving across registers— and because of his multiple linguistic identities that make the task of location an impossible or at least difficult enterprise.

J, living in the “intermezzo,” is pure intensity between points, including languages. The intensity and movements between points-languages might be connected to polyglossia, or multilingualism, not only as a “condition” by which borders are undone, but as a “process” that entails the interplay of fugues as well as centripetal forces (similar to the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia). In any case, heteroglossia as a multiplicity of registers within a given language similar to polyglossia (the coexistence of multiple languages) produces the impossibility of a “sedentary” language, in society and/or in the subject.

Concerning the interplay of languages in Vladimir Nabokov’s novels (one of Prieto’s literary referents, and an echo in *Livadia*), Robert Kiely has noted a non-dialogic interaction (generatively speaking). According to Kiely, the Nabokovian metaphors are:

in contrast to those in Bakhtin, ones not of “animation” but of disease, aggression, and exile. Languages infect, assault, and repudiate one another. Insofar as there is play —and there is, of course, a great deal of play in Nabokov— it consists not of a newly harmonious amalgam of voices but of a nondialogic farce in which the cause of hilarity is a mistake, a verbal or human misfit, that has entered unbidden into an estrange context and must endure the inevitability of its own alienation or eventual exclusion. (129)

Puns, malapropisms, and other linguistic resources, undoubtedly speak of a ludic enterprise while in exile. Yet, despite the dazzling and joyful display by characters/narrators, they feel immersed in a surrealistic world in which Russia (Nabokov’s motherland) “—its time, place and language is absent around” (129). English —affirms Kiely— constitutes a “decontextualized substitute, an artifact masquerading as a natural environment” (129).
Even though narrators and protagonists “contribute to the carnival” in an American context, “they are not at home in it” (129). What this critic emphasizes is the feeling of homelessness in the Nabokovian exiles, like Pnin, a Russian professor working at a U.S. college, in the novel of the same name, who is “victim and carrier of paronomasia” (129). It is as if behind the playfulness there lays an awkward, absurd exilic reality in which linguistic misleadings, poor translations, slip of the tongue, and misprints, convey a sense of estrangement.

In terms of the linguistic shifts in *Livadia*, Weimer observes an uneasiness in the narrator that points to an emphasis “en evitar los juegos lingüísticos al nivel semántico y oral” (130) [In avoiding linguistic games at the semantic and oral level] (130). Weimer notes that this avoidance of linguistic word plays might be a strategy used by Prieto to nuance his relation to Nabokov, whose multilingual characters —Weimer proposes— “tienden a disfrutar de su habilidad de cambiar entre idiomas (129)” [Tend to enjoy their ability to switch between languages] (129). I might agree with her in that the implosion of borders in light of the fall of the communist system, created an unstable terrain in which J’s struggle for survival influences his obsession with linguistic transparency (parentheses, translations and varied explanations). Yet, I argue that the traces and/or presences of languages in *Livadia* configure a multileveled nomadism, in which the author advances an ideological position of detachment (from Cuba as idea and place, for instance) as well as a simultaneous operation of attachment to and capitalization of a multicultural reality. In fact, J does not feel any estrangement when surrounded by the Russian language, like Pnin with English, but his attachment to the Russian “cultured” world demonstrates a desire for belonging. Spanish, on the other hand, fails as J’s mother tongue in one of the passages.
Moreover, languages sometimes become a sort of machine, menacing the very borders that fix them in particular structures/grids not to indicate an inadequacy in the “migrant” character, but to demonstrate the vibrant mobility of the nomad among them.

In Helsinki, J manages to survive a chilly winter night: to calm his hunger and cold, he decides to spend the night in a peculiar temple led by polyglot priests. Curiously, the need to protect his body from the harshness of the Nordic climate takes him to the temple of languages. The multiple tongues spoken by the polyglot priests may put into perspective the non-hierarchical nature of the mother tongue as experienced by J:

Estremecido en lo profundo de mi alma, aturdido por lo mucho que ambos habían gritado a mis oídos, creí despertar de un sueño cuando de pronto se hizo silencio y Peckas me preguntó algo que me hizo pensar si no se me había afectado el programa para decodificar el lenguaje humano. Porque al convertirme yo también en un glosólalo, confundido por las múltiples lenguas que a partir de ahora sería capaz de entender, habría perdido la capacidad para entender la mía propia. (68) [Trembling deep in my soul, stunned by how much they had both screamed in my ears, I thought I awoke from a dream when suddenly there was silence, and Peckas asked me something that made me wonder if I had not been affected by the program to decode human language. By a sort of glossolalia, confused by the many languages which I would now be able to understand, I would have lost the ability to understand my own]. (68)

When the priest asked him a simple question in Spanish, like “Tienes calzoncillos limpios?” (68) [Do you have any clean underwear?] (68), J is chocked by the sound of his mother tongue and, more importantly, by the absurdity of listening to his native language in such a context. The simple question astonished him as if he had lost his linguistic center. The bodily imperatives for a place to rest and eat lead him to the temple, which result in his baptism by the “glossolalous.” At the core of this passage is the idea of achieving purity through a cleansing that involves a non-purist linguistic perspective: the intermingling of tongues, related to the gift of tongues or glossolalia, almost a “supernatural” ability.
From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is not surprising that the mother tongue, Spanish, resounds in estrangement. J moves constantly between English, periodical limited uses of European languages, and Russian during his transactional enterprises. He feels scattered, like dispersed physical particles, because of his constant traveling to make a living and capitalize his ability to cross national and linguistic borders; therefore, listening to the Spanish language in a Nordic setting is definitely an unexpected event. His cognitive, affective, social and individual experiences comprising a mental space (Caravedo) have been challenged by the sound of the mother tongue in an unfamiliar urban setting. Yet, is this a mere non-correspondence between individual experience and reality, an episode remarkable of the dis-orbited subject? A simultaneous textual operation of self-detachment from a linguistic origin? Or might the very mention of his mother tongue in the narration of estrangement be considered a way to create a space for recognition of cultural belonging? In fact, the narrator does not eliminate all traces in relation to cultural origin or background; he leaves clues, tiny pieces here and there, particularly when those traces pertain to languages: “Los libros empezaron a llegar en una semana… epistolarios principalmente en ruso, en inglés, francés y en mi propia lengua” (43) [The books began to arrive in a week (...) epistolaries mainly in Russian, in English, French, and in my own tongue] (43).

On the other hand, J capitalizes on the Russian language when writing the long draft to V, while Prieto writes the manuscript of the novel in Spanish. As such, we might note a mirror effect between Spanish and Russian as the languages of écriture. They are the languages of vast/exhaustive readings and interpretation within and outside the story. J utilizes Spanish along with French and English to seize upon the content of the historical
notorious letters. In so doing, J’s epistle brings about an ungraspable incommensurability granted by the weight of centuries and “imperial languages.”  

By the same token, Prieto (as author) imbues the published text with a secular wisdom translated into Spanish, a density of multicultural layers.

Spanish, French, English and Russian are the languages of Prieto’s literary masters: Joseph Conrad, Samuel Becket, Jorge Luis Borges, and Vladimir Nabokov. Actually, J introduces one of the passages of his draft with a direct reference to Conrad (62). The Polish-British writer as well as the Irish-French —Becket— become examples of multicultural vocation, diluted in more than one tongue. Prieto mentions these authors in most of his interviews, as he did for the present study:

Conrad es el último escritor semejante del siglo XX, alguien que se diluye dentro de otra literatura, claro que él es alguien que entra en la literatura anglosajona, y la literatura anglosajona tiene también eso, ha sido receptora de esos nómadas, el caso de Conrad y el caso de muchos otros.

[Conrad is the last similar writer of the twentieth century, someone who is diluted within other literatures, of course he is someone who enters Anglo-Saxon literature, and Anglo-Saxon literature also has that, has been receiving these nomads, like Conrad and many others].

Equally significant, in the very introduction of the novel J appears reading the first of V’s letters. Prieto situates his character as a receiver/reader from the beginning: “Siete pliegos de papel de arroz iluminados por la luz de la tarde (...) que me permitieron deslizarme rápidamente del encabezamiento a la firma” (13) [Seven sheets of rice paper illuminated by the afternoon light (...) that allowed me to glide quickly from the heading to the signature] (13). What J reads is a Russian letter, while the first reader of Prieto’s novel (published by Mondadori) reads it in Spanish. From the start, Prieto opens the window for

60 In these terms, Prieto speak of the weight of certain European tongues in our current world.
an accomplice parallelism between the reader of the published text, and J, to which I shall return later on.

Such simultaneity of position between character and reader, the inside and the outside, situates both as interpreters/de-codifiers, and consumers of a cultured product. The attention to the materiality of the language, beautifully and carefully packaged in the finesse of rice paper (V’s letters), points to the richness embedded in language as Spanish and Russian become a precious spiritual capital (Bourdieu). Deriving from Marxist logic on capital as the foundation of social life, which grants one a position within a particular social order, Pierre Bourdieu posits language at the core of mobility beyond the economic: linguistic capital as power in the symbolic realm of culture.

The interplay between Russian and Spanish as ghostly presences, in the absence-presence of Russian in the world of the reader, and, by the same token, the Spanish in J’s writing enterprise, reinforces the bicultural nature of the author as well as the narrator, and more importantly, the vital participation of both languages in the creation of cultured worlds within and outside the text. This bicultural scene is reaffirmed by the author in our interview: “En mi caso particular, cuando yo era joven terminé por asimilarme bastante a Rusia, y convertirme (…)”. Interestingly, he leaves the last phrase inconclusive: “I ended up assimilated into Russian culture, and converted...” Conversion here sounds almost like a religious process, an act of devotion or faith; he does not use the term integration, which is usually the term employed, interpreted as a shifting notion of belonging by which biculturalism appears as a clear benefit/advantage (Valencia, “Interview…”):

61 It must be added that the reader encounters him/herself in a less advantaged position because he/she has access to only what J has to say about V’s letters. Yet, such a position results in an active reading, as one is seduced to imagine/create what would have happened in the worlds of J and V.
Mi conocimiento de esa materia (Rusia) es fluido del mismo modo que la lengua que uno aprende cuando es niño se aprende de una manera fluida. (Se trata de) no solo un bilingüismo sino de un biculturalismo, es decir, un profundo biculturalismo: las claves en las que yo me encuentro son visibles para mí (...). decía Maluf que las identidades no se restan sino se suman...

[My knowledge of that subject (Russia) is fluid in the same way that the language one learns as a child is learned in a fluid way. (It's about) not only a bilingualism but a biculturalism, that is to say, a deep biculturalism: the keys in which I find myself are visible to me... Maluf said that identities are not subtracted but added up].

In the following fragment we can “feel” the absence-presence as a trace of Russian in the Spanish language in J’s memory recall. Jacques Derrida explores the complexity of the trace as an anti-structuralist gesture, in order to undo the closures in the logos, and open the realm of possibility: the open chain of absence-presences embedded in écriture. Trace, as absence of presence, permits us to see the interwoven and contingent nature of languages, and ultimately the heterogeneity of the text itself. Here, both languages are liberated from their “prison,” resembling a dialogue, or at least, an echo of a conversation. The bilingual/bicultural J enters and leaves both worlds fluidly, in a way that both codes are legible.

Semanas después... usted me envió una carta, la quinta, en la que pude apreciar no solo los engañosos nódulos que me dio a palpar en Estambul, sino su verdadero yo. Hubiera podido verla en aquella ocasión; tuve, repito, la oportunidad de descubrir su juego... Unos “sukas” gritados con fuerza aunque sin alterarme... hubieran bastado para darle a entender que había “mordido de parte a parte su juego”, para utilizar una exacta expresión rusa. Mordido de parte a parte hasta dar con el hueso, lo duro, la verdad debajo de su aparente enfado. (184)

[Weeks later ... you sent me a letter, the fifth, in which I could see not only the deceitful nodules that I felt in Istanbul, but her true self. I could have seen her on that occasion; I had, I repeat, the opportunity to discover her game ... Some “sukas” shouted loudly without twitching...that would have been enough to imply that she had “bitten” her game, to use an exact Russian expression. Bitten to the bone, the hardness, the truth under her apparent anger] (184).

J utilizes the same Russian language to explain his feelings when he realizes that V does not love him. The encounter of Russian and Spanish become the context for J’s emotional
display with respect to V’s resistance to fully embrace him. J’s desire becomes a desire for language, or even a desire to “marry” languages. The final reunion with V, he suspects, will not take place in Livadia, and can be compensated only by the purported game among languages to voice the subject’s feelings.

Pavlenko establishes a parallel with the text as a dialogical entity (Mikhail Bakhtin) by focusing on the relation between language, emotions, and personality in bi and multilingual speakers. That is, the text is a container of other texts, potentially relevant speeches and voices, a notion that Derrida identifies as the trace. As such, bilingual and multilingual subjects are exposed to a sort of internal dialogism that may manifest the diverse forms of self-perception experienced in terms of a multiplicity of selves—whether delimited or fluid.62 Emotions in Livadia are connected to the mobility of these selves in the act of speech; they crystallize in language according to memory and linguistic repertoires in the bi and multilingual speaker.63

Bi and multilingual subjects, in specific immigrants (excluded from the “normality” demanded by the nation-state), are bonded to a metaphorical discourse of impossible monolithic loyalties, in other words, to the “oneness” of the nation (one language, one homeland). Prieto asserts: “Para un monolingüe es difícil imaginar el bilingüismo, cómo es vivir dentro de otra lengua y perfectamente vivir dentro de ella. ¿Por qué? Porque tú vives en la cárcel de tu lengua” [For a monolingual speaker, it is difficult to imagine

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62 Pavlenko situates her study in the contexts and ages of acquisition of a second and other language(s).
63 In this sense, Bakhtin (1981) and his followers have emphasized the following: “texts and, for that matter, people do not simply draw on social and historic resources but transform them into meaningful ways. The notion of dialogue, in this view, points to the simultaneous connection and tension between the present and the past that forms individual voices” (cited in Pavlenko 27).
bilingualism, what it is like to live inside another language and perfectly live within it. Why? Because you live in the jail of your mother tongue] (Valencia, “Interview…”).

Like Prieto, J undoes the prison of the mother tongue to express his emotions to V, his Russian reader. In the same way, the Spanish text (the novel) displays that affective Russian repertoire to the reader, contextualizing an experience that simultaneously remits us to the bilingual world of the writer, to his emotionally laden linguistic resources. “Morder de parte a parte” resonates as a Russian response released from J’s affective memory to convey anger. But it also attains mobility since the phrase ended up written in Spanish. Emotions that fluidly move between one language and the other acquire performativity of a speech act. In other words, it is only in the interplay between both Russian and Spanish that the phrase “tear out” (morder) acquires the strength of a speech act: J’s impulse to “tear out” or destroy V’s “deceit:” “Mordido de parte a parte hasta dar con el hueso, lo duro, la verdad debajo de su aparente enfado” (207) [bitten, piece by piece, to find the bone, the hard, the truth under her apparent anger]. For J to perform the ultimate grasping of V’s real intentions (she used him to escape from Istanbul), he must master the Russian language. Not coincidentally “morder de parte a parte” entails a carnivorous act: to bite into V’s game piece by piece, and reveal its inner flesh and bones. If the phrase projects a desire for the unreachable mysteries of languages and for V, it also “bites” both V and language symbolically: in order to destroy her allure, he must tear apart the allure of language itself. Finally, the compulsive postponed desire both materializes and is undone in the mixing of both languages. In so doing, Spanish becomes infused with the Russian trace that alters and impacts its very sound, hence, the aforementioned performativity.
In other words, in translating literally into Spanish a Russian phrase, Prieto makes Spanish resonate as a heterogeneous body. Neither Spanish nor Russian remain the same after such an encounter: the new phrase in Spanish is neither a hybrid nor exactly an echo of another language in translation a la Benjamin. It is about the intensity of a transient language assemblage that defies semantics and structural laws to become an act of liberation: that of the bilingual speaker/writer undoing the prison of one idiom, the resonance of his internal and affective dialogism. Uneasiness, then, does not necessarily rule out joy. It is all about the playfulness entailed in that dialogism, in the multilingual subject’s capacity to move his own resources around, to move his selves, and to move us to activate our role as non-passive readers.

Finally, I argue that Livadia brings up the very impossibility of translation as opposed to translation (for Weimer, a cosmopolitanism of difference can only work through translation). His insistence in “la búsqueda… las posibles variantes –los paréntesis-, los titubeos… (314),” [the search ... the possible variants-the parentheses-, the hesitations...] (314), which redounds in meaning: “Abordar una misma idea desde mil puntos (314) [approach the same idea from a thousand different points] (314), led him not to seek literature, but rather écrite: a connection of dispersed and disparate elements across languages, fragmented memories, scientific theories, and so forth.

In the very effort of translation, the traces of a variety of languages, and/or their reference, we should look at the vastness of the nomadic experience. Such wideness involves multilingualism, and with it the fugues of the polyglot who infuses the matrix language of the text with all languages. Curiously, in an article published by Prieto himself
in *The New York Book Review,* he assesses his own translation of the poem “Epigram Against Stalin,” by Russian poet Osip Mandelstam:

As the poem moves from one language to another, the aura of meaning and allusion that was absolutely transparent to the Russian listeners is lost. It’s as if the poem were a tree and we could only manage to transplant its trunk and thickest limbs, while leaving all its green and shimmering foliage in the territory of the other language. (online version)

I modestly disagree with Braidotti’s notion of translation as adaptation. Prieto’s comment above alludes to a politics of estrangement that does not guarantee adaptation. What we encounter is a dazzling schizophrenia, that of the bilingual or multilingual subject, and his/her multiplicity of registers, meant to be transformed; in such embrace of languages lies a potential, a virtual reality. We might agree that language is the means and content of subjectivity, and, hence, subjects are always “adapting” to changing realities. But in *Livadia* such adaptation is always transient. By shedding light on the fluid mobility of the multilingual subject who embraces creativity, the very estrangement of the subject in one language becomes apparent. The multilingual subject, then, does not live in translation, but in the creation of fluid selves, worlds and realities. To speak of linguistic identity or linguistic community in the singular in today’s world is problematic because, as Pavlenko states, bi and multilingualism should be thought of as the norm, and therefore the normal, not a deviance or aberration.

On the one hand, it is true that translation allows J to “guess” other characters’ intentions towards him, that is to say, to have control over situations, to prevent contingency. Such an idea is a complex one in relation to J’s effort to bring into Spanish the vastness of the violent nomadic trajectory he goes through. At the same time, translation poses a violence in the attempt to fix meaning. In fact, J utilizes translation as a shield to
defend himself from predators, from a violent world of smugglers, as well as of those Russians who made a living at informing on foreigners like him to the authorities. In this sense, mastery of the Russian language permits him to constantly be aware and ahead of possible negative contingencies. He is constantly translating gestures or body language with the same purpose, that is, trying to decipher others’ thoughts, like those of Tirán, the Armenian who manages the strip-dancers at the sex club in Istanbul, and who keeps V and the dancers under surveillance. The nomadic environment through which J travels is one replete with risks as well as challenges. Therefore, translation is related to a violence that attempts to capture subjects through linguistic orders/locations. Yet, how does one translate a self or a reality that is always in movement or in transition? How does one translate the trace?

If we look at the author’s biography, in conjunction with Livadia as an aesthetic project, we might recognize the potential of Prieto’s bicultural sense/being, which penetrates the novel. Like Prieto’s experience with Mandelstam’s poem, which illuminates translation as an act of forced transplantation, a cut tree, I suggest here the pertinence of fluidity and interdependence of languages within the novel of a bicultural writer who does not live in translation, but in conversation.

English also participates in such conversation among languages. English is the idiom of movements across borders, the tongue of the pragmatic nomad that is J, for mercantile and contraband activities. The usage of English denotes a sort of lingua franca in J’s transnational “moves.” Weimer notes that the novel foresees English as a form of violence in the sense that English does not operate as a global language: it ironically produces (in)communication due to characters’ precarity when speaking it. This reading,
however, fails to acknowledge the nomadic potential of the linguistic “improperness” of
the international smugglers in the novel. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that language, as
an abstract machine, seeks to capture, entangle, or constrict lines of flight. The forms of
negotiation of meaning enacted by the inadequacy in the use of the English language
among the contrabandists allows for the emergence of difference, not sameness as the
standard prescriptive use in English-speaking societies might demand. English, then, erases
a specific national origin, in an anonymity akin to the dislocated efforts of the nomad and
his/her constant negotiations. In this way, the variety of Englishes spoken may be
considered a line of flight with the potential to create other alternatives to that of the global
language: English permeated by all languages, gestures, sounds, a multimodal
communication. English as a global language ceases to be a straitjacket for those non-
native speakers in contact zones, like cosmopolitan cities. For them, English is no longer
an isolated structure, with prescribed and fixed norms:

Hice un intento desesperado por recordar su nombre en inglés… Cuando el mozo
estuvo junto a mí, balbuceé en inglés mi pedido, señalé el desayuno de la joven.
Entonces me puse de pie, fui hasta la otra mesa … el tieso fez del mozo … me hizo
comprender que no había comprendido una palabra de lo que estaba diciendo.
Señalé la avena y proferí un rotundo niet en ruso… (104-5)

[I made a desperate attempt to remember his name in English ... When the waiter
was next to me, I stammered in English during my order, I pointed to the girl's
breakfast. Then I stood up, went to the other table ... the stiff fez of the waiter ...
made me realize that he had not understood a word of what I was saying. I pointed
out the oats and delivered a resounding niet in Russian]. (104-5)

In Istanbul, the global language sometimes fails. And what emerges in a particular
restaurant is the addition of a Russian word, or a gesture. I argue that English in Livadia
might work as a global language only in relation to practicality, transactional economic
endeavors, and, as such, the uses of English in the novel speak to what Suresh Canagarajah
(2013) calls “translingual practices.” As Canagarajah claims in his grounding study on
Englishes spoken by migrants, norms of different orders and currency can be invoked in contact zone communication (154-157). It is not that English stops being a means of communication; rather, immigrant practices might shape the lens through which to look at linguistic competence. Despite J’s failure to speak a proper, standard English, his usage renders it effective for the contraband enterprise, transactional activities, as well as for the maneuver to liberate V from the sex trade.

In other words, we cannot affirm, as Weimer does, that English does not work as a global language: it is the language of pragmatic endeavors for the nomad, it is the idiom in which J communicates with Stockis, the successful Swedish contrabandist, who commissioned the yazikus and who “sabía perfectamente sostener una conversación a cualquier grado de intensidad de inglés (58)” [He knew how to hold a conversation in perfect English]. What occurs in Livadia, besides polyglossia, is the problematization of linguistic competence in transnational subjects in the midst of continuous human fluxes, involving migration to cities where English is not the first language. What we must look at is not a fixed set of norms, but a “performative competence,” a concept central to translingual practice, as speakers both adopt and adapt existing and emergent resources for successful communication (Canagarajah 174), as in the case of J. Through multiple negotiations, contextual/situated forms of interaction become the space for meaning-making.

Écriture

Thus far, I have reflected upon the nomad in language. If for Weimer the bicultural subject is a decentered subject to some extent, I have argued that the nomad affirms spaces for difference everywhere he/she goes; therefore, that “world” as “one” of the cosmopolitan
resonates as a multiplicity in the nomad, manifested not only in physical mobility, but in multilingualism. It is about dialogical process, a polyglossia, rather than “being” in the prison of one tongue/one affective self. Such heterogeneous identity in the making appears transferred to the meta-process of writing the very text: the awareness of the novel as a construction, in an architectural way, the process of writing as nomadic exercise (Braidotti). At the same time, the trans-generic impetus of *Livadia*, between the intensities of the novel, the gloss, the epistolary, and other minor genres, undoes the conventions of such genres.

In the Crimean summer town of Livadia, J’s search for the “yazikus”—an extinguished specimen of butterfly, last seen in the times of Tsar Nicholas II—merges in pure reflection and fragmented memory recall. J receives seven letters from V upon which he reflects, painfully, as if trying to find the ultimate meaning or inter-relation among languages. All previous nomadic paths across Europe and the East arrive at a point of relay, to be saved: “las cartas de muchas hojas que me enviaba eran como nuevos paquetes de comandos, la secuencia binaria que tanto había esperado para rectificar mi rumbo” (52) [The letters of many pages that she sent me were like new packages of commands, the binary sequence that I was awaiting to rectify my path] (52). J hopes to “rectify” his direction which involves a turbulent recall of memories of his nomadic paths as well as literary explorations, the reading of old letters written by an array of Western and Eastern intellectuals and even emperors. This is needed to write the draft of what will be, supposedly, a letter to V: a pre-text for literature. Not by chance Prieto assumed his novel as an homage to the epistolary genre even though *Livadia* is not particularly an epistolary novel:
Me propuse a escribir una novela epistolar peculiar (...) el modelo canónico es que la historia transcurre en un intercambio de cartas entre los personajes, y la historia va transcurriendo entre estas cartas, se va entreverando entre estas cartas. En mi novela, epistolar en cierto modo porque es un gran borrador, es un largo borrador, no es una novela epistolar en el sentido canónico del término, sino más bien una suerte de homenaje a la novela epistolar. Los textos que se citan todos son cartas reales, no son textos de novelas epistolares, son epistolarios reales que están citados y esos epistolarios vienen de todas las procedencias del mundo. Por supuesto la novela transcurre en Rusia y se añaden estos elementos digamos para contextualizar. (personal interview)

[I proposed to write a peculiar epistolary novel (...) the canonical model is that the story takes place in an exchange of letters between the characters, and the story elapses among these letters. My novel might be considered, to some extent, epistolary because it is a great draft, is a long draft, but it is not an epistolary novel in the canonical sense of the term, rather a kind of homage to the epistolary novel. The texts that are quoted are all real letters. They are real epistolarios that are cited, and these epistolarios hail from all over the world. Of course, the novel takes place in Russia and we add these elements to contextualize the story]. (Personal interview).

In fact, the narrator uses dozens of letters intermingled sometimes in the story and others directly quoted without breaking with the intentions of their original text. The work of the author resembles the art of goldsmith or marquetry. How to create a mold akin to such a story? All the pieces put together, ultimately, do not subscribe to the conventions of the novel:

A la hora de contar en qué molde uno lo vierte porque son diferentes moldes y uno utiliza diferentes dispositivos narrativos y lo que yo me propuse a la hora de escribir Enciclopedia, Livadia y Rex fue usar un dispositivo narrativo que no hubiese sido construido específicamente para contar historias.64

[At the time of telling a story, in which template one pours ... because they are different molds and one uses different narrative devices, and what I set myself at the time of writing Encyclopedia, Livadia and Rex was to use a narrative device mold that had not been constructed specifically to tell stories]. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

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64 Prieto puts forth the example, Encyclopedia, which is created following the principle of “la ordenación alfábética, la idea, la máquina de la enciclopedia que se construyó para referencias y tal, no para contar una historia. De modo que esto altera cronológicamente lo que se quiere decir...la novela no es lineal, etc.” (personal interview) [Alphabetic ordering, the idea, the machine of the encyclopedia that was built for references and such, not to tell a story. So this chronologically alters what is meant ... the novel is not linear, etc.] (personal interview)
If the montage, or as Prieto calls it, the “marquetry” of écriture emulates a ludic enterprise, language is not far behind. The yazikus share a ludic similarity with the Russian word for language, язык (yazik). All these clever references and the “benefic influences” (as Mauricio Montiel Figueiras would call it), situate literature itself as the kernel of the text:

Besides Nabokov and the authors mentioned by Montiel Figueiras, the invention in this short passage of the title Mariposas diurnas... remits us to Borges’ genius to insert fictitious literary titles within his texts. Interestingly, and probably equally less coincidental, the name of V (Varia), only known by the reader at the end of the novel, designates “a literary miscellany” (per Merrian-Webster’s online dictionary). Varia is what gives form to Livadia: random pieces of memories with skillfully selected letters written throughout the history of Western and Eastern civilizations.

Prieto uses J to shed light on the playful task of the demiurge: linking, creating, knitting together an array of elements and worlds, external and internal. The rare and extint butterfly becomes a metaphor: the precious and painful hunting of language through
écriture: continuously erasing itself, like Penelope’s web, extinguishing meaning for the sake of its being. Moreover, the resonance of the trace, the constant emergence of what is not visible but is there, and will always be in the making: the absence-presence of the Derridean trace and, ultimately, the dialogic world of the text. Prieto refers to such multivalence as a form of literary transcendence (Valencia, “Interview…”).

Other authors of Proyecto Diáspora enact the same ritual. In effect, Cuaderno de Feldafing by Rolando Sánchez Mejías posits what literature is and what is national literature by precisely negating it via the question: “What can écriture do?” Cuaderno de Feldafing came out in 2004 by the Spanish publishing house Siruela. It is a book of 89 brief situations that were conceived as “la cara oscura y complementaria” in a previous volume of short stories entitled “Historias de Olmo” (2001), also published in Spain. Like its predecessor, Cuaderno de Feldafing breaks with narrative conventions. In Feldafing: a lake, a German philosopher, a narrator, and also a writer who attempt to exercise prose in motion; venturesome images of non-delineated characters come to life in a process where language itself, and particularly, écriture, becomes self-referential.

The narrator of Cuaderno de Feldafing is a pilgrim in other lands (a fugitive of a dystopic island, as some letters he receives suggest), haunted by the (im)possibility of écriture: “Parte del Cuaderno… fue escrito en el tren. Parte frente al lago. Parte no se escribirá jamás” (83) [Part of the Notebook ... was written on the train. Part in front of the lake. Part will never be written] (83). Pérez Cino would call the arrangements of the different situations “un procedimiento que podríamos llamar de iluminación, y que consiste sobre todo en un engranaje: cada una de las piezas que lo conforman ilumina el sentido de las otras y termina iluminada por ellas” (171) [A procedure that we could call illumination,
and which consists above all of a gear: each of the pieces that make it illuminates the sense of the others and ends up illuminated by them] (171). I would rather call it a “process,” a process that reveals the very dynamic of the book as an assemblage; pieces mingle and disperse again, forming temporal micro-assemblages.

It is about literature as a self-referential act: the notion of *écriture* as a process that reveals the very undertaking of creation, its intertextuality, the writers’ turmoil (J or Escribonio), the very traces (absent presences) of particular world literary traditions, and/or the putting together of pieces, fragments of other texts, making visible the blurring frontiers of reality and literature. Like *Livadia*, a writer wanders around a small town, in this case German. There he meets an old philosopher, an encounter that unravels disparate topics of conversation that usually sound like everything and nothing: an absurd journey to the tropics by the philosopher’s brother, a dangerous lake, a ghost. Their dialogues, like *Cuaderno*’s arrangement, follow only the logic of a hazy reality, almost dreamlike, in which: “el orden más hermoso del mundo sigue siendo una reunión azarosa de cosas que no significan nada en sí mismas” (*Cuaderno* 143) [The most beautiful order in the world remains a random gathering of things that means nothing in and of themselves] (143).

The back-cover sentences: the “logbook of the exile (literary and existential), in the limit between the long story, the travel book and the notebook.” I would situate it as the site of (in)sile, of back-folding of the writer/protagonist into his pace, which is that of memory and re-creation like J in *Livadia*. Escribonio is tormented by the search for language, which always seems insufficient. Events/situations seem to agonize over their own event-ness as they emerge, but at a higher scale. There appears that sense of fugacity, as if *écriture* could not grasp the world it attempts to unravel, or even more so as if there
were not a world (a unity) to unravel but a simple succession of sensations, acts, images, atrophic dialogues, that do not follow a linear temporality. In fact, time does not frame, rather movements and speeds—or their absence—do the work of time.

That impossibility of a fixed time reminds us of the pertinence of the trace: “No less to what is called the future than what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by the very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not, that is, not even to a past or future considered as a modified present” (Derrida 142-43). The trace does not remit to a chronology. I shall situate it, then, in the intense concavity of the intermezzo, the spatiality where, additionally, the narrator of Livadia transforms memory into écriture.

What is at stake is the notion of “style as politics:” in other words, “the crossing of the frame and attention drawn to it” which comes from “outside of the text” (Mal Ahern 2003): “What is transmitted, then, is not a static logic or codification of the world, but “a current of energy,” (Deleuze 145) a theoretical force, a way of interpreting the world that is fully contingent on the world in which the text exists. Rather, the “revolutionary force” of the text” (146).

In effect, the coalescence of multiple realities or worlds points to that “revolutionary force” where no possible hegemony arises: minor genres within a non-linear narration, memory recall, and reflections/annotations/commentaries/parenthesis. From such a cluster emerges the novel, Livadia, and its nomadic imprint: a mobility within the very streams of the novel as a genre, and hence, a break with the expectations of the reader, who must assume a third posture as interpreter of the varia on the blurred limits between the outside and the inside worlds of the text.
The nomadic structure of *Livadia* does not enter into exclusive contradiction with the desire for grounding in *écriture*, for the latter result does not emulate immobility but a perennial stream of life. Both *écriture* and the world of literature run parallel and interpenetrate each other resulting in a reciprocal spinning, relays and intensities, in the passing from one state of the matter/scriptural body to the other until the very text is almost exhausted “in ashes” (literally): “Y las arrojé todas (las cartas), después de leerlas, al fuego. Leí también, de punta a cabo, este borrador, todos mis apuntes, los fragmentos de cartas ajenas, que fui lanzando al fuego” (318) [And I threw them all (the letters), after reading them, into the fire. I also read this draft, all my notes, the fragments of foreign letters, which I threw into the fire] (318). In fact, by the end, J makes a decision not to pursue the *yazikus* any more. But the reader has *Livadia*, and, with it, a new transactional economy.

**Self-Fashioning and the Market**

Thus far we have analyzed the politics of the nomad in relation to polyglosia and the space of *écriture*. However, Prieto’s literary nomadism sheds light on different strategies and negotiations of writers in the midst of globalization. In order to make visible the intersection of aesthetics and the economic dimension of globalization, I will grapple with the strategies of self-positioning of authors in particular niches/markets. As societal (molar) structures (cultural institutions, publishing houses, and their creation of circuits of readership) coopt writers by attempting to fix their works in traditional places of enunciation, authors also actively negotiate their own image.

Extraterritoriality, for example, is not only linked to topics, characters and fictional landscapes, or places of residence of authors. It also permeates the publishing industry, affecting finished literary works. For instance, *Livadia* was published for the first time in
1999 under the seal of Mondadori, a prestigious press in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{65} Three years later it was released by Grove Press in English under the title \textit{Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire}. Grove Press has published (since the 1960s) titles of Spanish writers like Camilo José Cela, Federico García Lorca, and Ray Loriga, among others, and classic Latin American authors like Jorge Luis Borges (1968 and 69); Octavio Paz (1985 and 89); Pablo Neruda (1971, 1974 and 1988); and Juan Rulfo (1994). The only Cuban authors to appear in the list are Leonardo Padura (2006), and Prieto with his trilogy.\textsuperscript{66}

Curiously, the new 2004 Spanish edition appeared with a translated title: (\textit{Mariposas nocturnas del imperio ruso}). While the first cover shows an illustration of a man wearing dark lenses with the solitary word of \textit{Livadia} under the image, the latter edition portrays a luminous curtain (the Turkish seraglio), and a red butterfly coming from one of the stage corners. Barely noticeable, what seems like a crushed insect might be mistaken for a woman or a piece of a red rag, which make us think of the fragile status of the Russian seraglio dancers —the fleeting objects of desire—objects of the gaze, habitually under surveillance. Therefore, both covers suggest a symbolic reading of the novel: in both editions the gaze, and hence, the optical sense are at stake, and yet, in both the distortion or the impossibility of accuracy is signaled.

For Newmann (2008), the “manipulation of the title may be the most obvious example of marketing “Russianness,” while the biographical synopsis in most of the editions capitalize on Prieto’s belonging to Cuban literature as well as his expertise on

\textsuperscript{65} Mondadori is one of the most “transnational” European publishers. First it was Italy, then France, and later Barcelona; in the late 1980s it bought Grijalbo, http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/2504.html. In Spanish Mondadori had several series, but literature was published under the label of “exquisite.”

\textsuperscript{66} Grove has published the whole trilogy: the first one to appear was \textit{Nocturnal…}, followed by \textit{Rex} in 2010, and \textit{Encyclopedia of a Life in Russia} in 2013.
Russian culture/literature. Therefore, for both the American and Spanish reader, Prieto “is a two-for-one exotic author.” I coincide with this clever observation for two main reasons:

1) Spanish and non-Spanish publishing houses have exploited the Cuban brand (mainly during the 1990s and early 2000s) as a generation of young disenchanted writers emerged, depicting in their work the weariness of post-Soviet Cuban society, the barred lives and disbelief of its citizens.

2) Eastern European societies were no less an object of speculation for Western audiences seduced by the exoticism of socialist otherness, and hyperbolized horror stories of totalitarianism. In contrast to the Cuban case, the socialist governments totally collapsed in those lands, a reason for further interest in the impact of the “fall” on everyday life, as the corpse of socialism was observed by a triumphant Uncle Sam (indeed, visual variations of this concept circulated worldwide at the time).

Consequently, Prieto possesses the allure of both worlds, being catalogued as one of the most promising Cuban literary voices ever, and, conjointly “a Nabokovian delight,” according to The New York Times. The Nabokovian quality definitely markets Russianness, a very convenient tag to tap on the American reader. Indeed, Grove Press introduced Nocturnal…with these words to the American reader:

Combining the intellectual sophistication and luminous prose of Nabokov with the worldview of a scion of Castro's Cuba, Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire is a novel of immense power and originality from one of the most exciting new talents in Latin America (online).

Other descriptions point to Livadia as an “allegory of economic transition in Eastern Europe,” or depicting “the independent spirit of post-Communist Russia” that shocks J, to which we might add the English edition’s back cover: a “bittersweet love story, international intrigue, and one man’s quest to write the perfect love letter.” Hence, both
Livadia and The Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire contain everything the avid consumer of world literature needs: a lavish display of exoticism packed for an “aesthetically blissful reading” (*The Village Voice Literary Supplement*).

By using a phrase like “Nabokovian delight,” more akin to “enchanting,” *The New York Times* brings up the notion of commodity linked to a sort of enjoyment: high culture. Prieto’s delightful prose positions him in a very specific market, that of the exquisite reader, like the American readers of Nabokov to whom the famous newspaper appeals. Prieto himself affirms that

*(Livadia) es un libro de construcción difícil, de difícil lectura, una prosa que requiere una atención, que requiere un lector entrenado, no es un libro que la lectura se de entre diálogos, con pequeñas descripciones, etc, etc… o sea es un libro que tiene una prosa con un determinado espesor literario, con juegos, múltiples referencias.*

[(Livadia) is a book that flows more for the reader, perhaps, but it is also a difficult book, difficult to read; it has a prose that requires attention, which requires a trained reader. It is not a book that is read between dialogues, with short descriptions, etc... That is to say, it is a book that has a prose with a certain literary thickness, playfulness, multiple references]. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

That “literary thickness” ultimately grants a value in a cosmopolitan elite niche. Prieto’s distancing from the market brings attention to his awareness of how non-commercial, serious literature works:
(…) porque el mercado (y la literatura) son dos cosas diferentes: la literatura, un libro como Paradiso es un libro también que está escrito de espaldas al mercado, y Paradiso no es un libro que haya tenido éxito del público, ni lo tuvo ni lo tendrá, es decir, por definición es un libro que lee un determinado por ciento de los lectores. Incluso un escritor como Carpentier prácticamente toda su obra…quién lee a Carpentier, lo sienten las personas que tienen un entrenamiento literario… (Esos libros) son como catedrales sonoras, repujados, (de) un barroquismo y un nivel de acabado, de detalle, esos son los libros que están escritos también sin ninguna consideración por el mercado… Como dice Borges “los clásicos son libros que todo el mundo dice que ha leído y no los ha leído”, porque adquieren un prestigio, y el prestigio lo dan las personas que realmente leen y saben de literatura, que terminan por aportar un prestigio a los libros que mucha gente lo toma como un acto de fe. …El caso de Lezama es paradigmático… o un caso como Proust, muy pocos son los lectores que han leído a Prust de Pe a Pa… No sé cómo será leído dentro de Francia si es un escritor popular o no, lo dudo. Pero toda literatura tiene que tener este tipo de escritor también que son como los pilares, yo diría... es como la matemática aplicada y la pura, la matemática sirve para cuestiones de ingeniería… creo que de esos libros complicados como el caso de Lezama o de Carpentier, emanan descubrimientos y verdades.

[Because the market (and literature) are two different things: a book like Paradiso is a novel written without regard of the market… Paradiso is not a book that has obtained sales success, neither had nor will have, that is, by definition it is a book that is read by a small percentage of readers. Even a writer like Carpentier, practically all his work ... Who reads Carpentier? People who have a literary training... They are carefully constructed… like embossed and baroque cathedrals, with a level of detail… These are the books that are also written without any regard for the market ... they end up being sold for (other) reasons... As Borges says: “the classics are books that everyone says they have read, and have not read them,” because they acquire a prestige, and this prestige is given by people who really read and know about literature. They end up bringing a prestige to books that many people take as an act of faith. ... The case of Lezama is paradigmatic ... or a case like Proust, very few are the readers who have read Proust from A to Z... I do not know how Proust is read inside France, if it is a popular writer or not, I doubt it. But all literature must have these types of writer who are like the pillars, I would say… I think of those complex books like Lezama’s or Carpentier’s, as works from which discoveries and truths emanate] (personal interview)

When asked if, in his case, the distancing from the Cuban theme had any impact on editorial success, Prieto denies ever considering the market: “esto adultera el resultado del libro. Es una consideración que jamás pasa por mi mente… La construcción per se ignora cualquier exigencia del mercado” [This adulterates the result of the book. It is a consideration that never goes through my mind… Their very construction per se ignores any market demand].
Prieto’s disavowal of economic forces manifests his proneness to literary purity; the market would contaminate, ruin the aesthetic value of literature. But such an attitude does not exclude the recognition of certain figures; a different kind of reader, one who takes delight in acquiring and absorbing masterpieces. For a literary work to gain prestige it must be appraised by ‘prestigious readers.’

By invoking Borges’ definition of classics as books extensively known as such but not extensively read, Prieto posits his work at the same level. The novels comprising the Russian trilogy may not have become best sellers; yet, like artistic cinema, the novels may have been acclaimed by a trained and demanding audience. In effect, it is precisely artistry that literary critics feature the most about Livadia and Rex, comparing them with classics, a position that, if not claimed, is insinuated by Prieto. To be included in a minority that writes not for the market but for the sake of literature itself, will be a rewarding “act of faith:” such books will transcend the era in which they were written, to be regarded as sources of “discoveries and truths.”

Ultimately, Prieto’s formalist feature, a writer obsessed with écriture as a process of detailed artistry resembling Lezama and Carpentier (not only in the attentiveness to language use, but in the careful interweaving of multiple motifs) brings forth the accumulation of literary capital. Interestingly, the eventual end of the dazzling search for the yazikus does not put an end to the pursuit of value. J’s obsession with the ancient, historical letters, which become “packages” sent by his 75-year-old friend from Saint Petersburg, makes visible that notion of accumulation related to capital, that of the author in a global market who infuses his work of all cultural cosmopolitan density (accumulation?), while also producing a saturated (overloaded?) prose, inclined to find
delight in “‘the artifacts of culture’ from chocolates to books, letters, and so on” (Wimmer 2009).67

The freedom in “cazar mariposas, la búsqueda de la belleza rara,” [to hunt butterflies, the search for rare beauty] above all, an escape from “las normas estéticas y políticas” [aesthetical and political norms] (Weimer 133), intersects with the freedom of the new individualist subject in the midst of capitalist novelty. If frivolity is the sign of the new post-Soviet era in the Russian trilogy, the presence of literature and languages as beautifully crafted and cumulative materiality bring to the fore Bourdieu’s notion of capital as I already analyzed.

It is important to consider the self-positioning of Prieto and other authors in particular markets, and how they shape their images beyond the realm of literature. In effect, Molly Metherd explores how Chilean writer Alberto Fuguet, one of the authors of the controversial anthology of new regional literature called McOndo (1996), has constructed a public persona, affirming agency alongside the work of English and Spanish publishing houses that promote him “to a larger hemispheric readership (8).”68

He publishes literary and cultural criticism and film reviews to magazines in South America, the U.S., and Spain, while maintaining a website http://www.albertofuguet.cl

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67 It should be noted: the notion of craftiness suitable in the “finesse of rice artisanal paper of V’s letters.” The manually crafted material in which V writes her letters posits at the core of the story the exquisiteness of an object to be appreciated, sensed, and consumed.

68 Metherd (2008) has examined the emergence of a transnational publishing industry as transnational negotiations take place to situate works beyond their “natural” linguistic market through the intervention of the very regional publishing houses, demonstrating: “(..) to publishers the potential US market for Spanish-language texts. Consequently, these publishers are reaching out to Spanish- language audiences in the U.S. by forming strategic partnerships and introducing new imprints. Vintage now has Vintage español and Harper Collins has an imprint, Rayo, which publishes over seventy-five new titles a year in both English and Spanish versions. These newly emergent transnational institutions are reordering the literary marketplace. They are releasing works in English and in Spanish simultaneously, coordinating their release dates, marketing materials and book tours so that books are reaching audiences in the United States and Spanish America at nearly the same time” (3).
and several blogs, e.g., http://www.albertofuguet.blogspot.com (Metherd 7). Yet, it seems that both sites were deactivated, and a Facebook page became the official author’s website.

    In fact, “some critics may wonder if Fuguet is selling out to U.S. capitalism, marketing himself as a commodity and creating a corporate identity” (8). Yet, Metherd nuances this observation with the possibility of looking at the self-promoting activity as a form of agency, since authors like Fuguet “utilize the forces of international capital to disseminate their transnational messages” (8). In a similar way, Prieto participates in the construction of his public persona. For instance, Prieto holds a personal blog (https://livadia.wordpress.com) where he features interviews, articles, chronicles, travel diaries, news releases and reviews on his books and essays.

    As a New York Review of Books contributor, his last entrance was nothing less than a chronicle about Soviet science, published on August 20, 2016. The story revolves around the physics labs at the University of Novosibirsk, concerning pictures taken in the 1970s by a Mexican photographer. The article, entitled “Atomic Light,” portrays the scientific Siberian installation as a relic of a romanticized past in which science was deemed and respected. Other articles published under his name include topics like the retreat of the Cuban state in certain aspects of daily life, and a reflection on his own translation of a Russian poet: again Cuba and Russia in the light of one of the most prestigious literary journals in the U.S.

    The Mexican allusion in “Atomic Light” indicates the trace of Prieto’s nomad experience; it was precisely in that country where he obtained a Ph.D. in History, and positioned himself in the literary scene. Prieto’s Mexican immersion can be seen through
his contributions to www.letraslibres.com, mainly on the literature produced in this country. In effect, as a residuary debt after living almost a decade there, Prieto’s latest manuscript, The Painted Book, owes a great deal to Aztec culture (interview).

Cuban authors produce at the mercy of the regional Spanish publishing houses, since “el mercado del libro es algo más que el precio en librerías y la engañosa publicidad para venderle bodrios al personal. Lleva asociado un sistema de divulgación, un marco de reseñas y una crítica que le sirven al escritor para autoeducarse” (Menéndez 2015, El País online) [The book market is more than the price in bookstores and the misleading advertising to sell cheap literature to people. It has associated a system of marketing, a system of reviews and criticism that serve the writer to self-educate] (Menéndez). Prieto, like Karla Suárez whom I will study in the next chapter depend on such prestigious Barcelonan houses, and their linked marketing system, to make their work come to light successfully in Spanish. His last two manuscripts have not been released yet; in the meantime, part of Prieto’s endeavor has focused on the publication of his trilogy in the U.S. where it was successfully acclaimed. Like Fuguet, Prieto has become an international/global author who does not undervalue the potential of any linguistic market.

Conclusions
The encounter of languages as mobile realities, the dismantling of the genre of the novel—the coming together of “minor” genres like epistolary, the commentary and the gloss, the very insertion of the language of science to create parables and/or “images,” and the effacing of the idea of Cuba separate Livadia from the corpus of Cuban literature in the diaspora and in Cuba itself.
In contrast to Roberto Bolaño’s 2666, where post-national borders push society into a diabolic celebration of absurdity resembling the terrifying face of death a la Robert Rodríguez, Prieto’s character/narrator celebrates the dismantling of such national/self-containing borders. I advanced that the Russian traces speak of the author’s scriptural resources that undo the monolingual quest of the homogeneous nation as thought and sought by the Cuban/Russian State. The simultaneous strategies of self-des-localization and attachment speak back to the very anxiety about location of the nation-states, as well as to the agony of the squared model of the Cuban “New Man” grounded in a fixed paradigm, in a subjectivity of perpetual immobility with respect to its only center, a revolution suffocated and that suffocates by its excess of nationalism. Nevertheless, the traces of the “New Man” emerge as the space of écriture becomes a spatiality of masculine resonances, in this case connected to an erudite cosmopolitan communitas of writers.

I found compelling how the masking of national origin/Cuba entails the complexity of a post-national subject that cannot be grasped as a monolithic entity. It is a subject penetrated by an array of situations, contingent upon contacts and connectivity, a “New Nomadic Man,” who makes visible the passing from that transcendental politics of the revolution to a subject for whom the world is an array of circumstantial connections that involve languages as well as economic and cultural capital accumulation.

Despite Prieto’s effort to detach himself and his fictional characters from Cuba, publishing houses, like Grove Press, along with important international journals and literary magazines, brand him in connection to his national origin. By simultaneously linking Cubanness and Russianness, his work circulates as an exotic artifact to be consumed by cosmopolitan readers of exquisite palate.
Chapter 4: Karla Suárez’s La viajera: The Embodiment of Nomadic Experience as Difference

In the previous chapter I analyzed the nomadic dimension of a post-national subject focusing on the erasure of linguistic and national borders. I demonstrated the cosmopolitan vocation of the writer José Manuel Prieto in Livadia’s narrative space and in a personal interview. In contrast to Prieto, Karla Suárez’s novel La Viajera does not erase the question of origin, though Cuba is merely a point of departure. Yet, both novels and authors circulate connected to the commodification of Cubannes in the global market.

I turn in this chapter to the figure of the nomad once more but this time embodied by a woman. The character, Circe, develops transitional and situated bonds of commonality with migrants of different ethnic and national origins, as well as non-migrants. I expand Glick-Schiller’s concept of “sociability practices,” an inclusive and situational understanding of cosmopolitanism related to everyday practices, to a nomadic dimension characterized by the transiency, the fleeting materiality of the nomad’s bonds in a space free of negotiation. What matters is the sensorial capacity of the body to produce lines of flight with respect to power dynamics. I propose, then, to follow the work of affects that subverts processes of identification based on traditional categories of localization of the subject, and allows for the emergence of positive engagements.

I explore how Suárez’ novel La viajera turns to diverse ways to be a Cuban around the world. The novel moves away from topics of economic migrancy and/or political exile

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69 This concept rather than expressing a “tolerance for cultural difference or a universalist morality” which “celebrates” multiculturalism, refers to how people of “diverse cultural or religious backgrounds build relationships and identities of openness (401).” The authors in the volume edited by Glick Schiller try to overcome the idea of origin: the notion of “migrants as living within ‘transnational communities’ or ‘transnational spaces’ bounded within national, ethnic or ethno-religious categorization (405).” The cosmopolitanism at stake here touches upon other forms of association and community building among displaced people and non-immigrants as well, in the midst of global human fluxes, beyond questions of preconceived notions of group identities and representation.
to embark upon an exploration of what “ser un extranjero” means (Valencia, “Interview with Karla Suárez”), particularly, from the experiences of two women. In this sense, it is as much an Aristotelian predicament of human fluxes in globalized times as it is about being a woman under such conditions. Suárez dialogues with the myth of Odysseus and Circe, producing a debate about the place of the nation/island, female identity, and citizenship in the contemporary world.

Travel is also a trope in Karla Suárez’s most recent novel, Um lugar chamado Angola (2017), where she explores the weight of the Cuban nation-state project on her generation. A young man, Ernesto, is haunted by his father’s death as a Cuban soldier on Angolan soil during the 1970s. Like many of the children of the revolution, Ernesto leaves Cuba but, obsessed with his father’s death, abandons a relatively comfortable life in Lisbon, and sets out for Luanda after “os seus próprios sonhos entre os silêncios, as mentiras e os ideais dos seus antepassados, num percurso difícil rumo à liberdade individual” [his own dreams among the silences, lies and his predecessors’ ideals, on a difficult path toward individual freedom] (Suárez 2017, back-cover). In an interview for this research, Suárez commented that

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70 The traveler son of the dead hero eventually discovers a different account of events told by Cuban officials, and history becomes a fable, a flawed lesson.
(...) era claro, nosotros vivimos una guerra que estaba a no sé cuantos kilómetros de distancia pero que era nuestro día a día... Pero esta historia que a la mitad del mundo no le interesa, a nosotros nos determinó la vida en muchísimas cosas.

(...) Él (Ernesto) va reconstruyendo la historia de la guerra, una guerra que sufrimos pero nadie sabía qué estaba pasando... tratando de entender, porque desde que murió su padre tuvo que convertirse en otra persona, tenía que ser el mejor... A él se le puso ese letrero de “el hijo del héroe”. Él tuvo que hacer todas las cosas que se supone que haga el hijo de un héroe, pero después se va de Cuba... Fueron quince años (de guerra), eso también determina muchas cosas, el último período glorioso terminó con el olvido, y con el regreso de los muertos. (Valencia, “Interview..."

[He (Ernesto) reconstructs the history of the war, a war that we suffered but nobody knew what was happening... trying to understand, because since his father died he had to become another person, he had to be the best ... He had to do all the things a son of a hero is supposed to do, but then he leaves Cuba... The war lasted fifteen years, which also determined many things. The last glorious period ended with oblivion, and with the return of the dead.] (personal interview)

In effect, Porto Editora introduces the novel to the Portuguese reader by highlighting the impact of the Angolan war on the children of the revolution: “o primeiro romance que narra o impacto que a participação de Cuba na guerra em Angola teve nos cubanos nascidos sob o signo da Revolução” [the first novel to narrate the impact of Cuban participation in the Angolan war on a generation born under the sign of the revolution]. Being born under that “sign” carries a heavy load since Cubans during the first 30 years of the revolution had on their back a responsibility with most de-colonizing struggles/movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Parrondo 2008; Peters 2012). My purpose is not to analyze Um lugar chamado Angola, but rather to highlight how the title puts at the forefront the ideological and critical stance of a generation that lived remote wars as if they were their own, as Suárez asserts: a generation that embraced a politics of internationalism as the revolutionary doctrine, the one that should define the New Man.71 This concept, as some

71 Curiously, the Angolan war has not stimulated a vast corpus in Cuban fiction. Ambrosio Fornet mentions only two novels that reflect upon contemporary armed conflicts in which the Cubans have been involved: Hacia la tierra del fin del mundo (1982), by Joel James (about Angola), and La red y el tridente, by Gregorio Ortega (1985), on the guerrilla movement in Latin America (60).
scholars have noted, entailed a politics of masculinity aimed to foster a model of citizenship attainable in a belligerent world as opposed to in the construction of a peaceful society: ultimately, a masculinity represented by the recurrent image of the “barbudos” (bearded men) who came down from the mountains in 1959, and would become the haunting political narrative of the revolution. For instance, Abel Sierra Madero has published several articles on the emergence of the “New Man” in the decade of the 1960, and its relation to a patriarchal State aim of societal homogeneization and control through the depuration of reluctant bodies, in order to consolidating its own hegemony. As I mentioned in the Introduction and discussed in the previous chapter, the “New Man” constituted the model of citizenship for revolutionary Cuba. It entailed a moral project of self-abdication for the good of the collective. Presenting the “New Man” as archetype, the masculine/patriarchal nation project embarked the Cuban people in a series of military conflicts in Africa during the 1970s and 1980s (Angola, Ethiopia), in the Middle East (Syria 1973), as well as in “low intensity” warfare in Latin American and the Caribbean. In Angola, according to conservative official numbers, 2000 Cubans lost their lives; “jamás un país del Tercer Mundo había emprendido un empeño militar de tal envergadura” [Never before had a Third World country undertaken such a military endeavor] (Cino Alvarez 2015).

It is precisely this approach to a traumatic historical event that speaks of a generation’s avatar as it was educated to feel the pain of the world on its cheek. It was almost a biblical ethical stance since socialism displaced the cult to god by the infallible compliance to the state project. The transition to a new subjectivity surfaces in La viajera; effacing such a state of affairs and engaging in the ultimate heresy of the children of the revolution: nomadism. To a certain extent, Suárez herself constitutes an example of that
hersy. Suárez left Cuba in 1998 for Rome where she traveled after marrying an Italian citizen; five years later she moved to Paris, where *La viajera* (2005) was completed, a novel that was translated later into Italian, French and Portuguese.\(^2\) Suárez belongs to a literary generation coined “los novísimos” by Cuban writer and literary critic Salvador Redonet, a generation that bore witness to the profound crisis of faith within Cuban society during the 1990s, a situation that was already in the loop in the previous decade, during Suárez’s formative educational years. Margarita Mateo Palmer observes that this generation

conocen durante sus estudios la generalización del fraude académico en la enseñanza media y los actos de repudio del Mariel; son testigos de la caída de algunos paradigmas de heroísmo durante la guerra de Angola y la invasión norteamericana a Granada. Más adelante, con el derrumbe del campo socialista, presencian la crisis de un discurso y una retórica que habían alimentado largamente una perspectiva ideológica. Hay en ellos una constatación evidente, desde muy temprana edad, de la diferencia entre la historia real —aquella que viven cotidianamente— y la oficial —la que se divulga a través de la prensa y los medios masivos de comunicación—. La ruptura que estas experiencias ocasionan en el plano ético contribuyen a la fragmentación del sujeto, vinculada a vez con la utilización de múltiples máscaras que se superponen en la vida cotidiana. (53).

They know during their studies the generalization of the academic fraud in secondary education, and the acts of repudiation of the Mariel exodus; they are witness to the fall of some paradigms of heroism during the war of Angola and the American invasion to Granada. Later, with the collapse of the socialist camp, they witnessed the crisis of a discourse and rhetoric that had long fueled an ideological perspective. There is a clear evidence, from an early age, of the difference between the real history -which they live on a daily basis- and the official one -that is disseminated through the press and the mass media. The rupture that these experiences cause on the ethical level contributes to the fragmentation of the subject, linked in turn with the use of multiple masks that overlap in everyday life. (53)

Such fragmentation of the subject coincides with certain features of postmodern society, but speaks of a resilient subject who, in the Cuban case, invests merely in his/her survival, as by the beginning of 1990s “se acabó un país y empezó otro” [one country ended and

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\(^2\) She was included in anthologies about women narrators of the 1990s and, in 2007, the Hay Festival and Bogotá Capital Mundial del Libro selected her among the 39 Latin American most representative writers under the age of 40.
another one began] (Valencia, “Interview with Suárez”). Most of “los novísimos” literature deals with marginal life, with antiheroes in search of liberation, in the midst of a claustrophobic ambiance that foregrounds the immediacy/urgency of the quotidian. As Sarah Moldenhauer asserts:

Las novísimas autoras [the group of women writers within “los novísimos”] nunca niegan su origen cubano… En sus textos muestran terceros caminos de pensar la “cubanidad” y una Cuba posmodernista que se alimenta de sus “friquis” y roqueros, sus mujeres, sus marginales y sus orígenes culturales altamente híbridos. Las/los marginales se convierten en las/los protagonistas. La transtextualidad, la metaficción, la autorreferencialidad y la hibridez de los textos son las características literarias de estos años. (web)

[The most recent authors never deny their Cuban origin ... In their texts, they show third ways of thinking cubanidad [cubannes] and a postmodern Cuba that feeds on its “friquis” (hippies) and rockers, their women, their marginal people, and their highly hybrid cultural origins. The margins become the protagonist. Transtextuality, meta-fiction, self-referentiality and hybridity of texts are the literary characteristics of these years].

In effect, Suárez’s novels, mostly written while in Europe, reflect an indebtedness to her previous life in Cuba. She, like “las novísimas,” de-constructs the nation as a homogeneous body, demystifies history, and interrogates hegemony in diverse ways. Unlike “las novísimas,” Suárez moved to Europe; she is herself a migrant like her characters in La viajera, or better yet, a nomad: precisely the two forms of life and subjectivity she attempts

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73 In a study about the short story during the ’90s, Laura Reduello affirms: “La Habana, la ciudad como espacio cerrado y más aislado que nunca con la crisis, es el escenario de casi todas las obras de la literatura cubana actual, que han dejado de ver a la capital como el centro de progreso técnico y educativo. En contraste, nos encontramos con una imagen de La Habana en ruinas, desgastada por la humedad, el tiempo, la falta de mantenimiento y su modificación paulatina para albergar a una población en crecimiento constante desde los años sesenta. Esta ciudad mítica para tantas generaciones de escritores “se crece hacia adentro, se torna densa, una colmena, un avispero” (Portela, Cien botellas en una pared, 2002), condición que representa con maestría Antonio José Ponte (uno de los escritores más importantes de los últimos años) en su cuento “El arte de hacer ruinas”. Con la representación del espacio como un texto, Ponte inserta su visión de la ciudad en ruinas en una tradición que pasa por las representantes habaneras de Alejo Carpentier y Guillermo Cabrera Infante (web).” These writers’ anxiety of isolation is sublimated through winks and references to Western literature, and the insertion of phrases in languages like English and French, that express the need for connection/insertion in the world. The need to demonstrate their worldly knowledge and awareness reveal strategies for inclusion and inscription of the local (themes and authors) in a wider circuit of production and consumption.
to capture in the novel, a work written from the paradoxical place of both nostalgia and actualization.

The novel tells the story of Circe and Lucía, classmates during their early childhood in Cuba, who by chance meet again on a flight to Brazil. Lucía has been invited by a Brazilian friend who used to go to Havana as a political activist for a solidarity organization that spread leftist propaganda in favor of the island’s government. The Brazilian invited her to attend a photography course in Sao Paulo, after which Lucía decided to stay without the approval of her socialist friend (22), but with the encouragement of Circe, who subsequently offers her a place to stay in Sao Paulo. In Lucía’s mind there was never the intention to stay; hence, she acts with a peculiar guilt, as if in debt with the homeland left behind. Afterwards, she becomes acquainted with an Italian entrepreneur, falls in love and goes to Rome with him. Once there, she integrates into the Italian way of life, surrounded by her husband’s friends and family, speaking the language and working like the rest of her Cuban friends in Rome. But Cuba never ceases to be a recurrent topic of conversation, a place for memory and longing; in fact, she frequently gets together with Cubans and other Latin American immigrants in Italy. Suárez develops Lucía as

la nostalgia absoluta, esa enfermedad de nostalgia que tenemos mucho los cubanos, que llegas a casa de la gente y Cuba está en las paredes, en la música, y todos los días comen arroz con frijoles, Cuba, Cuba, Cuba, y tú dices: pa’ que te fuiste? La verdad, irse para estar mal? Esa es Lucía… no acaba de irse y no acaba de llegar a ninguna parte. (personal interview)

[Absolute nostalgia, that nostalgia disease that many Cubans have; you come to people's homes and Cuba is on walls, in music, and every day they eat rice with beans, Cuba, Cuba, Cuba, and you say: Why did you leave? The truth, leave to feel bad? That's Lucia ... she does not just leave and she does not get anywhere]. (personal interview)

For Lucía, Cubannes constitutes a refuge to cope with the pain of harsh adaptation to the host society; like one of her Cuban friends, Raúl, who complains about the present while
looking nostalgically to the past: “(...) yo en Cuba trabajaba en el CENIC, nada más y nada menos que en el Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas, donde van los quemados de verdad,” he comments at a party crowded with Spanish speakers. Right away he jumps into the present: “(...) aquí me quedé, pero no fue fácil, Circe. Aquí la pincha no está fácil y en Italia, a menos que seas americano o algo así, eres siempre un subproducto y que me perdona Bruno” (169). No matter how brilliant an immigrant, he/she will always be a “by-product” in Italy, unless s/he’s American. Raúl himself had to become a DJ to survive. When Lucía and Raúl get together in Rome, it is like recovering a piece of Cuba: the food, the music, the conversation. Yet, the reader has no access to Raúl’s emotions or perceptions about migrancy in general. It is through Lucía that the reader can feel the pain of displacement, the struggle against assimilation.

On the other hand, La viajera undoes the trap of homeland nostalgia through Lucía’s counterpart, Circe, by opening a path for a third position among Cuban writers, that of José Manuel Prieto: Cuba as merely a point of departure. As a mythological figure, Circe might be recognized as a nomadic character not with regard to physical mobility, but in the very representations resulting from male writers’ imagination: depicted as a goddess, a nymph, a witch, and also a mother. Even though we might say that this ambiguity abounds in the construction of the feminine as unknown and menacing, even monstrous, such multiple “attributes” as object of the male imagination have granted her the agency to subvert and/or alter the course of narratives. For instance, in The Odyssey, Circe is portrayed as a goddess and as a sorceress: “Y llegamos a la isla de Eea, donde habita Circe, la de lindas trenzas, la terrible diosa dotada de voz, hermana carnal del sagaz Eetes” (online version) [And we arrive on the island of Eea, inhabited by Circe, known for her beautiful
braids, the terrible goddess endowed with voice, carnal sister of the sagacious Eetes]. The terrible goddess that enchants with her voice is able to hold back Odysseus for a whole year on her island. She makes of the errant hero a sedentary man (at least for a while), as long as he forgets his homeland.

Interestingly, Suárez chooses for her female character the features attached to the unbeatable heroes in Homer. For instance, Circe’s diary in La viajera allows the reader to bear witness the construction of the “sagacious” (to paraphrase Homer), a heroic characteristic that for Suárez’s Circe becomes a way of life related to nomadism: “¿Cuáles son tus raíces, Circe? Una pregunta divertida. Quizás cuando esté bajo tierra y las encuentre, podré contestarte, Circe (La Viajera 57)” [What are your roots, Circe? A funny question. Maybe when I'm underground and find them, I'll be able to answer you, Circe]. Like Odysseus, she navigates away to the unknown, to the risks. But unlike Odysseus, she follows her own internal voice, not that of an external entity. If Odysseus asks helplessly, “Oh, Circe, who will guide us in this journey?,” Suárez’s Circe gives herself to the wisdom of the body, to the flux of affects, as she moves and lives freely, repelled and attracted by every city, while the journey is felt in her skin (La viajera 147). La viajera takes from the Greek classic myths the errancy of the hero, and mobilizes it; instead of being tested by the gods and fate, Circe moves according to her own impulses and connections with the world: “todo por descubrir… estamos al comienzo… (La Viajera 129), so akin to be “dotado de la sensibilidad necesaria para aprehender el mundo, para reconocerlo (La Viajera 147)” [Endowed with the necessary sensibility to apprehend the world, to recognize it.]

74 Such fluidity emerges by virtue of affects: the capacity of the body to affect and be affected, while experiencing transformative intensities (Deleuze and Guattari).
One of the strategies implemented by Caribbean writers to claim universality as well as to inquire about collective and historical memory has been the de-territorialization of Western ancient myths (specially the Greeks), and their ulterior re-inscription/re-contextualization. Caribbean writers’ interplay of recognition and estrangement in the use of the myth, with Derek Walcott as one of the eloquent examples, have attempted to erase notions of periphery and center in relation to the West. Poetry, narrative and essay production have tended “to emphasize the universal potential of Caribbean hybridity” by finding “analogies between the Caribbean archipelago and other archipelagos—most notably the Aegean” (Greenwood 2007, 14) that ultimately lends to discourse of exceptionalism concerning the Caribbean. In the Cuban case, the use of myth has been more akin to the political parable, to criticize the State and dialogue with controversial issues in society, since censorship restricts artistic freedom.

Suárez’s inversion of the myth results in the double determination to inscribe her “saber” and work in a vast tradition. Suárez’s (and Circe’s) re-write of the classic myth enables an alternative ‘model’ of the nomad traveler in literary history.75 Moreover, La Viajera injects Circe with a contemporary potential: she is not the woman-island, pinned/fixed on the map as in Sandra Ramos’ etching, in representation of a violent history that has been impinged upon the female body as representative of the nation. Circe does not resemble the woman-island that enacts “la idea del viaje como… desplazamiento sin salirse de los límites de la tierra natal, en este caso la Isla, o como naufragio desde tu propia...

75 Other female Caribbean writers like Maryse Condé or Myriam Chancy, for instance, inspired by the relationship between trauma and history, specifically by its impact on women, draw on cultural traditions rooted in the variety of people that inhabit the Caribbean, as well as in women-centered belief systems (Brinda 2009). While such explorations of identity look at the Caribbean as the locus of enunciation, Suárez moves away from rooted identities.
orilla” (Montes de Oca on Ramos’ work) [The idea of traveling as… moving without leaving the limits of the native land, in this case the Island, or as a shipwreck on your own shore]. Nor does Circe embody the mobile nation, “la balsa perpetua,” as she does not spring forth as metaphor of the nation. Instead, she moves away from it through her own écriture in the diary, that registers her fears toward incertitude and her resolution to be an independent subject, cut off from traditional narratives of Cubans around the world.

Figure 1 La maldita circunstancia del agua por todas partes (1993). Etching on paper 50x80 cm.

76 This notion of the trip as shipwreck depicted by Ramos’s visual art, permeated the short story production of the ‘90s in Cuba, yet Ramos’ work is imbued of a self-reflexive/autobiographic poetics. Sandra Ramos allows the traversing of memory and identity from a liminal position, the woman creator that emphasizes feminine agency. By appropriating the natural and historical elements used in the patriarchal design of the Cuban nation, Ramos reframes the foundations of collective and historical memory as constructs in permanent configuration. Her work deals with an ontological visual discourse that within Cuba manifests itself in resistance to the current nation-state project.

77 The diary novel has been a recurrent sub-genre with feminine writers in Latin America. Among “las novisimas,” Wendy Guerra’s first novel, Todos se van (2006), displays the diary in an intuitive rendition of the construction of gender sexual identity through fiction (Gancedo 2014). The diary serves the purpose of “énfasis en el discurso femenino que utiliza el diario íntimo para plasmar las contradicciones de un ser en busca de una nueva identidad alejada de estereotipos” (Aguilar Alatorre). In her 2010 novel Posar desnuda en La Habana, Guerra returns to the diary model, this time to combine it with the epistolary, a hybrid narrative device successfully used in the 19th century by feminine writers like the Colombian Soledad Acosta de Samper in her not sufficiently known Una holandesa en América (1888). Guerra’s Posar desnuda en La Habana is inspired by Anaïs Nin’s diaries about her two years stay in the Cuban capital where she arrived at the age of 19.
Circe evades any form of essentialism portrayed so far in the artistic struggle for legitimation and recuperation of memory in the Caribbean, including Cuba. I advance that she performs a reconceptualization of homeland as trajectories defined by the effects of multiple encounters in different places.\(^{78}\) Hence, her home is not something lost in essence, but rather an affective “inventory of traces” (Braidotti 41). Her obsession in finding “her city,” as if finding herself (the ultimate homeland), simultaneously cancels and spins her nomadism. Her search resonates as a desire in which the subject does not emerge “on negation but on creative affirmation” (Braidotti 46),\(^{79}\) not on “loss,” as in exile literature or in Lucía, who feels amputated, condemned to an existence “desarraigada, fuera de nuestros códigos y de nuestra cultura” (La Viajera 73). On the contrary, she is a subject that relies on “vital generative forces” and flows (ibid).

**Migrancy and the Old Lady Mother Land**

*La viajera* turns to migrancy, and to the trope of the trip —a topic oft-exploited in the literary creation in Cuban literature of the 1990s— from a different perspective. However, the political effect of the literal representation of the massive scape as it was approached by fiction during that decade, appears attenuated here. Campuzano notes that Suárez de-emphasizes migration as a problematic Cuban phenomenon, starting with the very title of the novel. By the same token, the dialogue with Homer’s *The Odyssey*, and Italo Calvino’s novel *Le città invisibili*— “reducen a cero su carga política” (Campuzano 79). For instance,

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\(^{78}\) “Estuvimos un par de horas y allí me encontré con la fauna cubana. Son raros los cubanos, Lucy, somos raros (329-30).” This passage is particularly relevant as it is not under the account of a third person narrator. It is Circe’s voice in a card to Lucía. The initial inclination is to talk about the Cubans as “they,” under the category of “fauna,” as animals of a repetitive nostalgia by which they are identifiable, preventing her from using the inclusive “us.” But since the diary-letter is also addressed to Lucía, her Cuban friend, Circe rectifies the line with a “somos,” as if to not convey total alienation from her national origin.

\(^{79}\) It is not about commodification of the sexual feminine body, but about reframing female desire as a free flow, a current of instincts where there is no such a thing as subordinations.
the excerpts “(...) orientan la lectura... hacia la aventura y la errancia, hacia espacios por
imaginar y conocer; y, en el caso de Homero, hacia Circe, la protagonista, la viajera, cifra
y clave, en su transformación, en su inversión del mito” (Campuzano 79). Consequently,
the very aim of the text to “exorcizar, abolir la satanización del tema de la emigración”
(Campuzano 80) within the Cuban context, loses power before La viajera’s reluctance to
approach it in its negative dimension. The same applies to Mabel Cuesta’s analysis, who
asserts that La viajera deconstructs “la emigración como una tragedia nacional” (7). In
addition, Circe as a name responds to “un marco de referencias de cultura universal” (7),
which redounds in the notion of travelling “no como una maldición local” but as an
ontological search (Cuesta 7).

In effect, the “rótulo” of the traveler does not convey the critical impact of
migration both within and outside Cuban territory. First, we need to look at the particularity
of socialism: “travel” beyond the national territory was unthinkable before 1990s, unless it
occurred under State sponsorship: you could travel in a political, military, educational or
diplomatic mission, or travel to the socialist countries was used as a reward. To trespass
the island’s frontiers on personal account was to betray the revolution, hence, Circe’s
exclamation to Lucía: “Ser cubano a veces se convierte en mucho más que un gentilicio
cualquiera, pero yo no permito que nadie me convierta en marioneta. ¡Qué absurdo!” (La
Viajera 37) [Being Cuban sometimes becomes much more than just any kind of word to
denote nationality, but I do not allow anyone to turn me into a puppet. How absurd!] (La
Viajera 37). She refers to the stigma of being a “quedada” —typically used by the State for
Cubans who decide to stay outside the national territory. With this phrase, Circe affirms
her independence from any form of mandatory sense of belonging or being fixed to/by a prejudice on her national origin.

My thesis here grapples with the previous chapter’s suggestion that we might approach nomadic characters among late Cuban migrants as the consequence of the abraded paradigm of citizenship designed by the Cuban government, and the weariness it produced. Thus, contrary to Campuzano’s reading, I argue that this move proves to be a political and defiant act. Circe’s words verify my observation:

La patria es como una vieja señora inmóvil que come bombones de chocolate mientras juega al ajedrez y las piezas son las personas… La patria (...) susurra, la patria, la patria y tú debes responderle como si en eso te fuera la vida, como si tuvieras una mierda de signo de pertenencia marcada en la frente (La viajera 345-46).

The homeland is like an old lady who is immobile, who eats chocolates while playing chess and the pieces are the people ... The homeland (...) whispers, the homeland, the homeland and you must respond to it as if it were your life, as if you had a shitty sign of belonging marked on your forehead. (La viajera 345-46).

With her reflection on detachment, Circe is sending a poison dart to the nationalist stance of the Cuban revolution, and all the sacrifices invoked in its name, including internationalism. She does not make a case about Cubannes or national origin, as opposed to Lucia. For Circe, “patria” is a construction, an ideological trap. Her phrase contains the resistance of the subject to be used, exploited, and compelled by the construct of nationhood, and, furthermore, to the politics of exclusion and inclusion epitomized by the revolution’s nationalistic project’s idea of Cubannes. With such a phrase, Circe affirms her right to be, beyond the nation, as response to a history of state control and discipline: the subject-marionette, a hostage of Cuban state politics. As such, the trip becomes an exercise of freedom, and the traveler, a liberated subject.
Furthermore, the reiterative claim for freedom of mobility, present also in Lucia when she feels cornered by the Brazilians who replicate the Cuban official discourse of migration as betrayal, enacts a dialogue with the guilty conscience of a subject who internalized the interpellation of the socialist government. By simultaneously making visible the internalization of that guilt and advancing new possibilities of citizenship, not necessarily connected to political and socioeconomic paradigms, *La viajera* makes visible the political: in Cuba, to leave aside the relevance of the nation/state framework constitutes a dissident act.

Yet, by reading the novel exclusively as result of the ideological and political backdrop of the island is to miss the characters’ (and author’s) insertion in a dynamic of contemporary global fluxes. Cuesta does make this connection:

Suárez coloca por primera vez a este sujeto cubano diáspórico del que nos habla Iván de la Nuez, en una dimensión efectivamente transnacional, pero sobre todo globalizada. La lógica que sigue para ello es probar que para sus personajes no sólo se trata de instalarse en espacios físicos diferentes a los del suelo patrio/matrio sino que además, llegan a reconocerse como parte de una comunidad internacional. (8)

Precisely, in the next section I analyze Circe’s trajectory as an “inventory of traces,” as intensities whose present condition are endowed with futurity.

**Pain as Affirmative Feeling**

Racism and/or exclusionary policies in host societies move the subject towards lateral forms of connection and nomadic practices. It is not about considering the world as our own homeland, but about forging disparate and multiple connections beyond identification:
encounters of any kind, with systems of meaning/signification (like language), non-human bodies as well as humans, that affect our paths in different ways. I am using here a notion of the nomad based on Deleuze and Guattari’s explorations on nomadism as a way of life characterized by “movement across space which exists in sharp contrast to the rigid and static boundaries of the State (380).” This consideration allows me to propose that the children of the revolution experience not only the freedoms embedded in nomadism; their moves are also impacted by “enforced evictions.” In other words, societal structures, norms and State policies might compel immigrants to adopt ways of life outside the organizational and locational enterprise of the power structures.

Indeed, La Viajera offers passages that shed light on the pains of displacement and on what it means “to be a foreigner,” as Suárez stated in an interview for this research: Lucía in Rome, Circe’s friends (the Polish girl in México, the Peruvian in France, the Moroccan in Spain), and sometimes Circe herself. There appear different situations in which Circe has to struggle with the legalization of her status in order to work. Before leaving México for Spain, she writes in her bitácora: “Me preocupan los papeles. Dice el productor que no debo preocuparme, no será la primera vez que él resuelve un problema de éstos; pero aún así, no tendré calma hasta que todo haya terminado” (La Viajera 182) [I’m worried about the papers. The producer says that I should not worry, it will not be the first time that he solves a problem of this kind; but still, I will not be calm until it’s all over] (La Viajera 182). Again, in Spain, the question of her immigrant status shows up: “Papeles OK. ¡Viva! Después del calvario ¡existimos legalmente Ulises!” (261) [Long Live the Papers!] (261). “After the calvary, we exist legally,” says Circe with relief, as if otherwise

80 I appropriate here a term used by scholar Christine Walsh on the analysis of Irish poetry.
there would only be invisibility. In Madrid, Circe had to live in harsh austerity after her contract with a Mexican salsa band expired. She feels like “una extranjera,” to the point that “a veces me parece que ni siquiera entiendo el español” (155) [Sometimes I feel like I do not understand Spanish] (La Viajera 155). In France something similar occurs. The opportunity to survive is connected to legal status in the country.

When she falls in love with a Moroccan man, a Spanish friend warns her against the Arabs as persons not to be trusted; it is one of those lines in the novel in which the narrator, like Circe in her diary sometimes, gives testimony to the racialization of foreigners in Europe, where some “others” are more racialized than others. Cuesta turns briefly to this point:

Suárez asocia a Circe con otros que padecen penurias de ilegalidad y/o condición de extranjería parecidas a la suya. En Sao Paolo es Santiago el colombiano, en México es la polaca Elzbieta, en Madrid son casi todos con quienes convive, pero especialmente el marroquí padre de su hijo. (8)

[Suárez associates Circe with others who suffer similar hardships of illegality and/or alien status. In Sao Paolo is Santiago the Colombian, in Mexico is the Polish Elzbieta, and in Madrid there are almost all with whom she lives, but especially the Moroccan father of her son]. (8)

Paradoxically, in a global world of free and intensified fluxes (of all kinds), the human element constitutes the most controversial one: nation-states continue to tense the chords of nationalism and exclusion. However, the bonds of sociability established among migrants beyond national, ethnic and racial identity overcome the harshness of adaptation.

81 “Una tarde, después de caminar por el parque, cansada y hambrienta porque apenas le quedaban 100 pesetas para terminar el día, se sentó frente al estanque y se dedicó a observar a los patos que nadaban serenos, pero tenía tanta hambre que sólo lograba verlos fritos y servidos en una gran bandeja.” (La Viajera 204) [One afternoon, after walking in the park, tired and hungry because she had only a few pesetas left to finish the day, she sat in front of the pond and watched the ducks swimming serenely, but she was so hungry that she could only see them fried and served on a large tray].
It is in this sense that cosmopolitanism, as a non-privileged feature of elite travelers, enters into conversation in the novel.82

The processes of change that Circe undergoes speak to the multiple reinventions of the subject as s/he travels through a series of stations. In effect, Circe “no necesitaba inventarse el mundo. El mundo estaba siempre allí y ella lo único que hacía era, como le gustaba decir, dejar abierta la posibilidad de realización de las cosas” (La viajera 205). Circe’s openness to others, migrants or not, speaks to her “receptivity” from a “vitalist” philosophy, to use Braidotti’s term. At every city she arrives, Circe creates a network of contacts who help her find a job and a place to stay for free at the margins of any involvement in economical transactions. The latter is particularly relevant, as she moves outside the spaces of economic relations among individuals: in Mexico, sleeping at the house of an old Cuban friend, with other people; in Rome, at Lucía’s apartment; and in Madrid, at a Spaniard’s place where almost a dozen people crash every day. The Madrid station might reveal this notion of disinterestedness:

El apartamento es pequeño: cuarto, estudio-comedor, sala, baño y cocina. Aquí vivimos Gastón, Robertico (el cubano), Gema (de Barcelona) y yo, aunque hay otros que a veces se quedan a dormir. Por ser la última en llegar, duermo en una balsa de playa en la sala; pero Paco dijo que no me hiciera problemas, cuando tenga sueño me puedo echar en el mejor lugar que encuentre y los que lleguen más tarde que se arreglen. Tengo una confusión de nombres tremenda, porque cuando me despierto siempre veo una cara distinta que mastica un pedazo de pan delante de mi balsa. (La Viajera 193)

The apartment is small: bedroom, study-dining room, living room, bathroom and kitchen. Here we live, Gastón, Robertico (the Cuban), Gema (of Barcelona) and I, although there are others who sometimes stay to sleep. Being the last to arrive, I sleep on a beach raft in the living room; but Paco said not to worry. Whenever I get sleepy, I can sleep in the best place I find and those who arrive later can figure it out. I have tremendous confusion with names, because when I wake up I always see a different face chewing a piece of bread in front of my raft]. (La Viajera 193)

82 Again, migration appears as a global phenomenon, de-escalating any exceptionality with regard to Cubans. More importantly, mobility fosters the enrichment of a non-elite travelers, casting light in alternative forms of cosmopolitanism and nomadism.
With that description, the Madrid apartment sounds almost like a boat inhabited by survivors. Her bed (a beach float), increases that sense of people adrift, without a route or a path to follow: journey-people.\footnote{At the next station, France, she finds Alejandro, a Peruvian that “lleva 2 años en París, pero hace 10 que salió de Perú, fue camarero en Colombia, barman en isla Margarita, secretary of a priest in Naples, and now he cleans offices in the mornings and in the afternoons he makes leftist tourists happy for some coins]. Circe actually engages in a temporal affective relationship with him, until she leaves for Rome.} Interestingly, the roomers share even the beds and the food as if in a commune. Paco, the utopic socialist and owner of the house, “no cobra alquiler, todo es por so-li-da-ri-dad” (191). Somehow Circe follows a flux of transnational solidarity that speaks to alternative forms of association in today’s globalized world.

Something similar occurs in France, where Circe works as a care giver in the house of an old German woman. Circe speaks of Karin, “mi dama de trenzas rubias (166)” or “la Diosa de las trenzas rubias” (331, 33, 34), as if making a bridge with the goddesses of the ancient myths. Here, the goddess is not a menacing sorcerer, an unknown territory of male conquest. Circe repositions the classical Homer epithet, “dama de trenzas rubias,” by which the goddess, Karin, is presented to the reader by another woman, and her introduction to us is deprived of the negative connotation of the Greeks. In effect, the “mi” (my) used by Circe should not be interpreted as a possessive gesture, but as a gesture of love, the recognition of a link that has left a positive imprint in the subject.

Karin, a German lady, arrived in France before World War II, but after the conflict everything changed for her: “ante los ojos de Karin, París se había convertido en otra cosa, era la mirada inquisidora de sus vecinos franceses, el ser alemana allí” (316). Karin decided to fold unto herself, to live her own internal exile that increased after her husband’s death.
A foreigner in France, like Circe, Karin takes refuge in her German tongue and classical music. Marked by the experience of pain, she shows reluctance to speak French again, and demonstrates a spiritual incapacity to reconnect to the host society, or others. Circe and her son Ulises find shelter and food in Karin’s place, as the job requires them to live with the old lady. The arrival of the trinomial (Circe, Ulises and Sai) transforms sadness into joy, as the old woman becomes fond of them. She tells Ulises stories in German that he does not understand, and asks him to join her at the piano, gradually building a close bond: “No sé quién es, por qué vive en París, dónde está su familia; pero ella tampoco sabe de nosotros y no parece importarle. Es como llegar a una isla y detenerse: este espacio de tiempo lo viviremos juntos, lo demás no importa” (La viajera 310). Circe’s reflection reminds us of Odysseus again, his stay in Circe’s island, but unlike the myth Circe is not worried about time: time and space do not frame experience, the intensities of the “cluster” do.

If Karin set for herself a life outside society, fixed in her German identity as a reaction to French neighbors’ own predisposition to the Germans, these bordered territories (Karin’s house and the outside world) become unsettled with Circe’s arrival. A new space detached of identity frontiers emerge in its place, defying even linguistic barriers. Again, language does not appear as fundamental for communication and/or connection; instead, it is a flow of affective energy that leads to other ways of intimacy among a group of “strangers.”

That intimate solidarity makes us think of alternative possibilities to borders of any kind: transient assemblages in which family is not necessarily a fixed structure that society has endowed with meaning, but a contingent bond that Circe creates in her mobility, as every city becomes a point of departure, not one of arrival. There are no closures, but
intensities that foster new states and stations. In this differentiated connection with the world, she is not concerned with making money, like J in *Livadia* who tries to get the most out of the arrival of capitalism to Russia. Beyond economic transactions, solidary practices in *La Viajera* have the touch of duration, that is, “the double generation of the past and the present, the virtual and the actual (Grosz 4).” In other words, Circe’s trajectory connects the intensities of past encounters to next ones “fracturing and opening up of the past and the present to what is virtual in them, to what in them differs from the actual, to what in them can bring forth the new” (Grosz 4). It is as if Karla Suárez had made visible in Circe and her travels some values and features of the children of the revolution, raised in an utopia where money was not relevant for the pursuit of happiness. In any case, the reader is faced now with a new type of utopia, not precisely that of socialism.

**The Sovereignty of the Body**

If utopia is the non-place, in *La Viajera* it coincides with the Deluzian notion of the intermezzo as a non-place of vibrant journey. What is nomadism if not utopia perpetually in the making? A utopia that emerges in that “transitional space” (Braidotti 205) that is “not visual but rather affective, tactile, and ethical” (Braidotti’s reading of Jessica Benjamin 205).84 Interestingly, Circe tends to engage in that affective, tactile and ethical

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84 Benjamin defends the notion of “intersubjectivity,” as “it specifically addresses the problem of defining the other as object” (30). The argument behind intersubjectivity counteracts the logic of subject and object. “It refers to that zone of experience or theory in which the other is not merely the object of the ego’s need/drive or cognition/perception but has a separate and equivalent center of self” (30). Yet, this notion does not reach the other forms of equal inter connection, where subjectivity is not at stake. Braidotti’s philosophy is explained as follows: “This humbling experience of not-Oneness, far from opening the doors to relativism, anchors the subject in an ethical bond to alterity, to the multiple and external others that are constitutive of that entity which, out of laziness and habit, we call the ‘self.’ The split, or not-one nature of the subject, entails the recognition of the totality and the always-already-thereness of the corporal self is that which must become foreclosed, and thus remain inaccessible to the reduced, but more functional unit that will become the socialized subject. As such, the totality and priority of the enfleshed corporeal subject—rooted in desire—is that which remains unthought at the heart of the thinking subject, because it is what drives him/her in the first place” (112). It is precisely in that prediscursive “reality” where the multiplicity of an array of haeccties (things) and bodies come to an encounter of a different kind, beyond any type of hegemony.
space of transitional contacts. Such space has the body and its sensations at its core connected to the notion of the feminine as an ethical stance.

Circe travels through the senses: the body as the core of experience, the site of sensations that must be equaled to a saber. Every time she arrives at a city, reason does not provide an understanding of the world around her, or moves her to particular sites or transforms her approach to experience. The only knowledge Circe trusts is that of her body. Circe moves around a world of sensations, that guide her, propel her in specific directions, forging different forms of association at any site of arrival, which become, inevitably, a site of departure. Like J, in Livadia, Circe lives in the intermezzo, between points; but unlike J, Circe’s nomadism is not to be found in linguistic mobility; instead, it points toward the body as the core of transformation. Circe is restless, always feeling, always sensing: “México? No sé qué pensar. Tú me atraes y me repeles al mismo tiempo. Existe en ti algo que me distumba…, pero esto lo siento en la piel” (La Viajera 147) [Mexico? I do not know what to think. You attract me and repel me at the same time. There is something in you that disturbs me … but this I feel it in the skin] (La Viajera 147).

In Circe’s journey of the body, knowledge and power —constitutive of domination— are dismantled. Hence, La viajera affirms the body as bearer of lines of flights that present alternative modes of subjectivity connected to marginal social identities. This inscription of the ephemeral accentuates the construction of an open, relational self, but also of a paradigm that replaces hierarchical dynamics, which is to say power dynamics, with horizontal connections. By putting the body at the core of experience and relation, there emerge processes that reject regimes/systems of organization and “normative visions of the self” (Braidotti 221).
For instance, Circe is bewitched by the tone of a young Moroccan’s voice. It is first sound, and not the empire of sight, that attracts Circe. Different from the Western travelers (male and female) who affirm themselves in the appropriation of the “other” via sight (see Mary Louise Pratt), Circe does not attempt to empower herself through the reduction of the other, or even through the rationalization of identity categories in any form. As Greenwood (Arriving Backwards” 13) reminds us in the analysis of Caribbean writers: “It is not the imperial eyes, the privileged traveler that ‘discovers’ a disappointed, unrecognizable world, not keen to his categories, and hence force what he/she sees to make it fit in his expectations” (13). Indeed, the gaze of writers who attempt to foreground the conjunction of universality and particularity in the Caribbean “is reciprocated belatedly in twentieth-century fiction and critical prose” by supplementing “the Old World perspective with a New World ‘way of seeing’” (13). In Circe’s case, we not only bear witness to a distinct ‘way of seeing’ but, more importantly, of feeling.

Frequently, she has the feeling of being inhabited by the world: “No sé por qué a veces me siento habitada por otros seres, como si ella y yo o ellas y yo nos valiéramos del mismo cuerpo” (179). Interestingly, her heterogeneity as a sense of being compounded by multiple beings is not related to the mind, rational knowledge, ideas or languages like J in Livadia. Most of the time Circe’s multiplicity appears in connection to her materiality, which is no more relevant than a stone or a tree. Nomadic thought, as Braidotti affirms, “rests on the practice of estrangement as a way to free the process of subject formation from the normative vision of the self, the frame of reference becomes the open-ended, interrelational, multisexed and transspecies flows of becoming by interaction with multiple
others” (Braidotti 221). Circe’s estrangement with herself responds to her own receptivity to that multiple world that surrounds us in a positive interconnection.

Circe does not force the cities and people on her path into her own categories of representation of reality. Rather, she leads a life of unexpected encounters, a flow of vitality, as I pointed out before, based mainly on affects, where sight is not precisely at stake:

y de repente, escuché una voz. Particular, redonda, grave, de compactos colores rojizos. Una voz como diseñada para mostrarse en las grandes catedrales del canto, en escenarios operísticos, qué sé yo. Pienso que alguien que vaya por el mundo con una voz similar tendrá que estar acostumbrado al público improvisado, a la platea que escucha, a anuencias inesperadas, simplemente porque no es usual encontrar una voz con ese tono. Claro que lo que decían no pude entenderlo, porque hablaban en árabe, pero ése no es el punto, era la voz, los tonos, los colores. (La Viajera 211). [and suddenly I heard a voice. A particular voice: round, grave, of compact reddish colors. A voice designed to be displayed in the great cathedrals of singing, on operatic stages, what do I know. I think that someone who goes around the world with a similar voice will have to be accustomed to the improvised audience, to the listening plateau, as well as to unexpected gatherings, simply because it is not usual to find a voice with that tone. Of course, what they said I could not understand because they spoke in Arabic, but that is not the point; it was the voice, the tones, the colors.] (La Viajera 211)

In effect, Circe falls for the voice, and only after, she looks at the man. Even though Muftaf’s voice has properties akin to sight (like colors and forms), such features seem more related to the sense of touch,85 be it music, cities, bodies or voices, the skin lays at the core of the experience. If in Livadia the sound of languages enchants J and the author, a persistent motif throughout the novel, in La viajera sound activates the memory of the body; it is not necessarily linked to a human rational ability. In effect, Circe and Muftaf can barely communicate verbally: he does not speak Spanish and she does not speak Arabic or any of the Moroccan dialects. For Circe, languages are “sonidos articulados, reglas

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85 Like synesthesia.
gramaticales, denominaciones, pero a mí no me importan” (117). Around Muftaf, Circe abandons herself to “energía… que se concentre a tal punto que escape más allá de mí y se conduzca” (117). Eventually, their attraction will be transformed into the suspicion of “una forma no personal del verbo, un gerundio: amando” (218). To love becomes impersonal in language through the gerund form. Circe and Muftaf de-personalize themselves in an ephemeral but transformative experience of bodily embrace.86

Loving, that gerund form of “to love,” sheds light on de-identification, as it is not about the person/subject who carries out the action, but about a process that “involves the loss of familiar habits of thought and representation to pave the way for the creation of creative alternatives” (Braidotti 221). In fact, Circe’s love is not a possessive impulse. It is a process of becoming, of leaving behind any form of personalization and/or familiarity: “usar otra piel. Transfigurarse (...) Somos el gran zoológico (...) un tigre, una paloma, la sierpe venenosa, la hormiga, todos están dentro de mí” (181). From that sensed-zoo-encounter, desire can be “defined as a process of production” whether “it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it” (Deleuze and Guattari 154). Desire for Circe is a line of flight. It produces encounters of an ephemeral and transformative type, not possessive feelings.

Afterwards, like Odysseus, “the foreigner” (the Moroccan) departs, but leaves his seed inside.87 Their encounter generates an affective potential, in which the body expands the limited nature of the self. It leaves more than a trace in Circe. As I will explore next,

86 On the other hand, Circe lives her sexuality freely, without any limitation for being a woman. She is detached from any sexual regime in which particular places and roles are assigned to certain people. In México, for instance, Circe tells Carlos, an Ecuadorian friend: “Esto no se parece al amor ¿y a quién le importa? Se parece a las buenas ganas, soy un pedazo de carne, puro instinto, un animal que otea el horizonte” (158).
87 In effect, when Circe is at the point of giving birth, she writes in her diary: “Muftaf, tu hijo está listo, mi, tu, nuestro, está cabeza abajo” (250). The guilt for being a single mother or complaining about it
maternity in Circe becomes an experience disentangled from societal representations of motherhood; maternity, indeed, emerges as a resource for bodily self-exploration as well as an ethical responsibility.

**The Woman’s Body**

Circe will carry the seed of “the foreigner” at the same time she receives a particular present: a bonsai offshoot. Suárez presents maternity as a doubled parallel process of procreation and interconnection; the simultaneity of life in the human and the nonhuman generates an affective linkage, a vital one:

> En cuanto Wasim... supo que Ulises nacería, regaló a Circe un retoño y ella asistió al crecimiento del árbol, mientras en su vientre se desarrollaba su semilla. Una gota para el niño y otra para la planta. Fue como si el bonsái le hubiera explicado los procesos que acaecían en su interior. Cuando llegó el momento, lo transplantaron y Wasim la enseñó a cuidarlo por el resto de su vida. ([La Viajera](La Viajera 52) 52)

[As soon as Wasim... knew that Ulises would be born, he gave Circe a shoot and she bore witness to the growth of the tree, while her belly was developing its seed. One drop for the child and another one for the plant. It was as if the bonsai had explained the processes in her inside. When the time came, the bonsai was transplanted and Wasim taught her to take care of the plant for the rest of its life.]

The tree gives unexperienced Circe the knowledge about what is happening inside of her. While the tree shows Circe the changes in her body, the woman takes care of the bonsai in an equal manner. Their bond appears related to the production of life, but it also entails a sort of perennial linkage as if woman, child, and the plant were the new model for a family, and I will return to this later. In order not to fall in an essentialist trap, in which “woman” must be equated to motherhood, my reading here focuses on the kind of explorations that maternity permits more than on social expectations: the “modes of carnal knowledge and the focus of perception, empathy, and interconnectedness beyond the economy of

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88 The notion of the feminine connected to nature as nurture is also evident here.
phallogocentrism” (Braidotti on Irigaray 99). Maternity here is not bound to the imaginary and the symbolic realms in the sense of societal constructions as derived from the signifier ‘woman’ (with its double charged signified: the being-giver of life, and the being-to be subsumed into the symbolic patriarchal order). Maternity does not participate in the pre-established economies of language and mental spaces; instead of the patriarchal closure of the logos, by which woman becomes the other of the man, and with it, a sort of menacing byproduct —Kristeva’s abject, maternity, in my analysis, is shown as a process that belongs to the realm of bodily experiences: to the pre-discursive.

A re-assessment of the representation of women emerges in *La Viajera* (both in Circe’s voice and in that of the third person narrator) through “the political will” to assert “the specificity of the lived, female embodied experience” (ibidem). As Braidotti reminds us, this embodied experience has to do with a materiality involved in the maternal: a carnal or incarnated knowledge, which ultimately renders “the specificity of female sexuality” (ibidem). Ultimately, what is at stake here is the presentation of difference as something positive (100). Suárez’s Circe enjoys maternity and sexuality through the senses of the body, an emphasis that highlights maternity beyond a prescribed structure of feelings and organization like the patriarchal family. Circe undoes any expectation: she feels, makes love, and lets her body be without being concerned of having the father by her side. And, later, she just lends herself to the joy of sensing the growth of the seed:

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89 According to Braidotti: “One of the symbolic pillars on which sexual difference theory rests is the term materiality, the root of which is matter. The emphasis on the matrix foregrounds the materiality of the maternal body as the primary and constitutive site of origin of the subject. It is also one of the defining features of the specificity of female embodied existence.” (99)
El tiempo, los meses, los cambios en mi cuerpo, la lentitud de mis pasos, las ganas reprimidas de fumar, todo este percibirte poco a poco, seguir tus movimientos, hablarte, colocarte los audífonos, leerte poesía, todo esto no es nada, se hace polvo, agua que corre. (La Viajera 250)
[The time, the months, the changes in my body, the slowness of my steps, the repressed desire to smoke, all this perceiving you little by little, following your movements, speaking to you, putting on earphones, reading you poetry. It becomes dust, running water]. (La Viajera 250)

The transiency of Circe’s experience lies in that which becomes a fluid happening, like running water, where maternity becomes another stage, or station. Yet, such a fleeting state transforms Circe, propels her towards the future, and, most importantly, impacts her écriture. In effect, Campuzano observes that Circe’s fulfilling maternity expresses itself in “un extraño y contradictorio juego mítico-textual” (84) as she “regresa poco a poco a su reescritura transgresiva del texto clásico” [she returns to the rewriting of the classic text little by little] in her logbook (bitácora). However, Circe’s écriture’s demystifying purpose is not totally fleshed out by Campuzano: What does she exactly transgress? Cuban migration as a literary and socio-political topic? Family structure? Social expectations of women? All of these within a feminist project? The potential of a woman to turn upside down the patriarchal island of Fidel Castro/Homer/Odysseus? The repossession of the myth to convey (a la Braidotti) a collective “repossession of the images and representations of Woman… in language, culture, science, knowledge, and discourse, and consequently internalized in the heart, mind, body, and lived experience of women” (100)?

Campuzano connects Suárez’s writing to the existential project of feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray, Sara Ruddick and Luisa Muraro whose arguments ultimately revolve around “el compromiso de promover sus vínculos afectivos con la descendencia” in “fomentar el libre desarrollo de las potencias y capacidades de ese individuo que ha nacido de su cuerpo” (Fernández Guerrero 432, quoted by Campuzano). Indeed, Circe’s ethical
project involves the development of Ulises’ potential, but in such involvement Ulises’s connection to others plays an essential role, particularly his connection to nature. This aspect is relevant to my discussion of the assemblage-like form that generates the linkage between Circe, her son, and Sai: “el hombre-bonsái privado de sus raíces” (315). As Jasbir Puar states: “Assemblages do not privilege bodies as human… Along with a de-exceptionalizing of human bodies, multiple forms of matter can be bodies—bodies of water, cities… Matter is an actor” (57). Indeed, Circe, Ulises, and the tree, the three mobile bodies without roots, in defiance of subjections and supremacies of any sort, emerge as an assemblage that generates a line of flight of multiple resonances in La Viajera.

In a previous novel, Silencios, Suárez scrutinizes the topic of the family as institution by including a Cuban nuclear family where various generations cohabitate, symbolizing a microcosm of the nation, while shedding light on Cubans’ vicissitudes under the revolution (from the 1960s to the 1990s). In La Viajera, however, such traditional space disappears. The family as it used to be represented is left behind, and Circe does not even feel nostalgia about her present distance from immediate relatives on the island. In fact, she never mentions any members of her family in her bitácora. Leaving Cuba implied a new beginning in which Circe, like the bonsai offspring, moves detached from the very tree that gave her life. Moreover, the only family that emerges in La Viajera is that of Circe, Ulises and Sai; not even the union of Lucía and Bruno, the only stable one throughout the

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90 For Mabel Cuesta, in Silencios. “La intervención de la autoridad familiar que es sin dudas un tema universal, aquí se asocia con una frecuencia nada despreciable a la autoridad militar (el padre) quien dicta el curso y deber de los sujetos que habitan “la casa grande” en los primeros treinta años revolucionarios… “La Flaca” sería sin dudas el más jugoso de los prototipos que Suárez elabora. El hecho de que ésta sea una novela que parodia a las bildungsroman descansa completamente en ella. Los recorridos por su infancia, adolescencia y primera juventud son un paseo por los primeros veinte años de la Revolución y sus procesos de ascenso y caída que sólo encuentran reconciliación en la escritura a la que “La Flaca” se dedica con pasión cuando todas las personas que la rodean se alejan de ella para emigrar o morir” (7).
novel, has produced any offsprings. In fact, Lucía has no desire to have children. This situation leaves space for the emergence of alternative family forms, like the friends/guests at every house Circe arrives, contingent families in temporary commune.

In any case, it seems that the only project with a sense of futurity is the Circe-Ulises-Sai assemblage. Circe, the most mobile person besides her friend in Brazil, a male without children, becomes the only character to give birth in the novel. Circe’s mobile family de-territorializes the norm, inventing new images of being with others. This breaking with norms and forms of organization lends itself to nomadism, producing an ethical stance beyond the transcendental subjectivity of the Cuban concept of the “New Man.” Moreover, the “New Man” did not break with the reproduction of family stereotypes where men remained as heads of the family unit, a nuclear family always well located/fixed in a physical place as in the symbolic realm. I remember in my childhood during the 1970s, how various forms of symbolic representations of such paternal/male domination were reinforced through the language of bureaucracy, for example, in forms (planillas) through which the State used to control the population both statistically (i.e., from control of housing fumigation against plagues to food-ration books) and bio-politically.

Circe represents the most mobile element; not even maternity limits her to move from city to city as Ulises and Sai join the errancy. As I argued in the previous chapter, the characters’ nomadic way of life comprises a fugue from the nation-state project; nevertheless, such fugue is captured to some extent by the locational enterprise of publishing houses and consumers who read based on constructed expectations about authors’ places of origin. I will expand on this issue in the following section.
Seductive Artifacts and Uncomfortable Literatures

Karla Suárez finished her cycle of Cuban topicality with her novel on the Angolan war (Valencia, “Interview…”). Yet, it is precisely Cuba as scenery or idea that has captured the attention of editorial houses since she started publishing in the decade of the 1990s. When I asked her if being a writer from Cuba that touches upon different themes related to the island has been a conduit for editorial interest, Suárez affirms: “No he visto la literatura como una cuestión de modas… ahora no sé cual es la moda…por ejemplo, los editores (dicen) ‘queremos la Cuba de los 90s, el desastre, los autores jóvenes, queremos esas voces’… Sí, buscan a veces lo que alguien cree que va a vender” [I have not seen literature as a matter of fashion ... now I do not know what the fashion is ... for example, the editors say ‘we want the Cuba of the 90s, disaster, young authors, we want those voices...’] Yes, sometimes they seek what someone thinks can sell].

However, it seems to me that the inclusion of discussions on Cubannes and identity, as well as an array of global cities and songs in La Viajera, and the Italian character (and reference) in Habana Año Cero, speak to the author’s tactical move to insert herself in the European market without effacing national origin. La Viajera, despite its distancing from Cuba as the characters’ playground and the presence of multinational migrants, still makes several reflections upon what it is to be a Cuban outside of the island, and how to survive in a global scene having such a national background, which, in the novel, also implies an educational formation, ways of being in the world, and views toward the island. As such, it does not break totally with the expectations of readers. According to her French editor, Ann Marie Métailié,
Cuba is a theme that seduces, an original case in our civilization... it comes with a whole mythology, be it revolutionary, be it musical, be it tropical, according to the culture of the individual. And for most people it’s an adventure to go to Cuba. Then, to defy the idea of Cuba as tropical paradise is a risk. (Valencia, “Interview...”)

Those whose narratives venture into other lands, like José Manuel Prieto, are deemed indifferent. Why not to publish Cuban authors who do not tap into national identity —I asked again: “Porque se espera que se hable de lo suyo... [for example] la novela de Jesús Díaz, Siberia, [se publicó] porque es la visión que puede tener un cubano de Rusia, el choque de las mentalidades es lo que es interesante” [Because an author is expected to talk about his mother land... [for example] the novel by Jesus Díaz, Siberia, (it was published) because it is the vision of Russia a Cuban can have, the clash of mentalities is what is interesting]. An opposite example to Prieto would be Suárez, or Leonardo Padura, a writer from the so-called disenchantment generation: those who started writing in the 1980s, the ones that preceded “los novísimos” and whose narratives reflected the end of utopia as nostalgia for a past and a future that never was as it was told/promised.

Padura’s saga with the character Mario Conde, and two other novels, La novela de mi vida y La neblina del ayer, “son ventas que están alrededor de, digamos entre ocho y quince mil, y las dos últimas son de 30 mil,” under the editorial seal of Métailié. Consequently, a Cuban author detached from Cuba has no space here. Moreover, Cuba as a theme turned out as a commodity. Indeed, the island imagery is displayed in Padura’s books front covers already portraying such nostalgia: it could be the illustration of an old

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91 In the words to the French edition (May 5, 2016) of the short story compilation, first published in Spanish as Aquello estaba deseando ocurrir, Métailié editorial webpage highlights: “On trouve surtout le sel des
American car, a mulatto kid at a bar, a view of old Havana from its bay, or palm trees swaying in the wind. Indeed, publishing houses, “en aras de ofrecer productos reconocibles para el comprador en potencia, lleva a las editoriales y a sus publicistas a recurrir a distorsiones y simplificaciones flagrantes” (Quesada Gómez 25) [In order to offer products that are recognizable to the potential purchaser, publishers and their advertisers resort to flagrant distortions and simplifications] (Quesada Gómez 25) in paratexts, visuals and press releases.

Interestingly, Padura and Suárez enter in the category of “uncomfortable books,” even if their work meets certain audience’s expectations on what to read from a Cuban novelist of the 21st century. According to Métailié, “uncomfortable books” are those coming from places that allow her to show the Frenchmen a new mentality: “Yo no quiero que el texto se aproxime al lector para facilitar las cosas, yo prefiero que la historia te saque de tus costumbres y que te ponga en otra realidad, me gusta la literatura inconfortable” “[I do not want the text to approach the reader to facilitate things. I prefer that the story take you out of your comfort zone, that it places you in another reality. I like uncomfortable literature]” (Valencia, “Interview…”). She believes in books that tell “una historia que toque al lector y obligue a pensar de otra manera… La literatura tiene un papel de despertar a la gente, de mostrarle otras maneras, otras realidades” “[A story that touches the reader...”

romans de Leonardo Padura, sa marque de l’humanité qui irradie à chaque ligne, la nostalgie des vies qu’on ne vit pas, et l’art suprême de nous plonger dans une île qu’on emporte toujours avec soi.” On another note, the Spanish newspaper El país, underscores the trope of “la maldita circunstancia,” that is: “Personajes atrapados por un destino que les supera y del que por su inevitabilidad ha acabado siendo olvidado. Personajes que tratan de no naufragar más allá de lo imprescindible entre el desamparo y la soledad, la aceptación de todas las derrotas y la imposibilidad de que las cosas cambien a menos que el azar tenga aquella noche los dados borrachos” [Characters trapped by a destiny that surpasses them, a destiny that because of its inevitability has ended being forgotten. Characters who try not to wreck beyond the essential between helplessness and loneliness, the acceptance of all defeats and the impossibility of things to change unless chance has drunk dice that night” (Zanón 2015).
and compels us to think differently... Literature has a role to awaken people, to show other ways, other realities” (Valencia, “Interview…”).

In effect, it is all about “other realities.” Métailié confesses that the uncomfortable literature her house releases is more tempered to that other European world, even within Europe, like Scotland, immigrants living in Germany, the Italian “corruption catalogue” (her words). From Latin America, Métailié publishes those who write about Latin America. The Chilean Luis Sepúlveda figures as the region’s bestseller, with *Un viejo que leía novelas de amor*, a novel that throughout the years has sold 1 million 800 thousand commercial copies (around 30 thousand a year). Sepúlveda’s book is presented to the French reader with the following description: “Au bord de l’Amazone, un vieil homme ami des Shuars, qui lui ont appris à connaître la forêt, découvre la lecture et chasse un jaguar” [At the edge of the Amazon, an old man who is a friend of the Shuars, who have taught him to know the forest, discovers reading and chases a jaguar]. That is: “Un livre sauvage et beau, bâti comme un thriller américain” [A wild and beautiful book, built like an American thriller], according to Frédéric Taddei, from the magazine *Actuel*, whose words were replicated on Métailié’s website. A mythical Latin American emerges again in the French reviews advertised by Métailié.

With regard to consumer expectations, Catalina Quesada Gómez reflects that, indeed, there is a “horizonte de expectativas de los lectores históricamente determinado” (25). By the same token, I argue that such expectations are the result of the construction of tastes, hopes, and narratives that fix places and peoples in specific categories and mental images, as we have explored previously. Moreover, such representations should be systematized historically as they also move with the “times.” In relation to contemporary
literary readership scene, James Procter and Bethan Benwell explore how thematic concerns with migration, hybridity and diaspora unifies certain authors in the marketplace. The British newspaper, *The Guardian*, for example, in order to situate Monica Ali in the English market, equates her with the already established Zadie Smith, while Andrea Levy, the daughter of first generation immigrants, is called a “bastard child of the empire,” a phrase utilized by the British writer of Indian origin, Salman Rushdie. Such comparisons create the image of a linage that is supposed to facilitate the reading enterprise. In other words, all the marketing exercises attempt to fix authors and their works in categories of meaning “cooked” for the reader according to fashionable topics, which move with the rhythm, concerns, and hot issues of the time.

For example, Procter and Benwell recall “Tariq Ali’s prognosis for literary production in “an increasingly neoliberal marketplace” (117). Ali contends that a book can be consumed just like a McDonald’s burger, since authors are exhibited like “cattle,” and potential bestsellers “auctioned by a new breed of literary agent” (Ali 140). So “it is the shared market conditions under which much contemporary fiction flourishes that links it most compellingly within the public imagination” (138). These scholars’ claims remind me of Karla Suárez’s most recent tour sponsored by Péniche du Livre (France), which I read on the author’s website, karlasuarez.com. I am talking of the “Festival Lettres nomades 2017,” to which Suárez was invited to participate in France between May 1-6. Eighteen authors from such diverse places as Taiwan, Ireland, the Maurice Islands, Togo, Morocco, Argentina, Belgium, and Tunisia were scheduled to give talks in sites like libraries, schools, and prisons on topics like nomadism, exile and migration. It seems that
certain authors, from certain places, are deemed the fascinating literary entertainment of our global times. Métailié comments that:

A Karla le va muy bien… Estamos en un período de hace 15 años en el cual el público no es un público muy intelectual, es un público que quiere ver a los autores, lo que les interesa es que sean individuos… Nos gastamos un dinero monstruoso haciendo viajar a los autores porque en realidad un autor que no viene, que no pasa en las librerías, que no pasa en las ferias del libro, no vende. (El público piensa) ‘veo a mi escritor, me va a firmar el libro y el libro va a ser una cosa mía.’

Karla is doing very well… We are in a period since 15 years ago in which the public has not been a very intellectual public; it is an audience that wants to see the authors. What interests them is to meet the authors as individuals... We spend a huge amount of money in making the authors travel because, in reality, an author who does not come, who does not attend readings at bookstores, who does not attend book fairs, does not sell. (The public thinks) ‘I see my writer, he’s going to sign my book and the book is going to be a thing of mine.’ (Valencia, “Interview…”)

The author becomes an object in a showcase to be sold and the book, a fetish. Festivals, book fairs, tours, talks, compound the engine that produces sales. I ask Métailié about the motif or image her company uses to market Karla Suárez, and she answers: “Nosotros sacamos a Karla, la ponemos delante de un público, y al cabo de 20 minutos de charla… Con Karla todos salen a buscar los libros, es que es una mujer que tiene un carisma increíble, cuenta historias…” [We take Karla, put her in front of an audience, and after 20 minutes of talk … With Karla, everyone goes out to look for books; she is a woman who has incredible charisma, she tells stories].” If we were not aware that the editor is talking about a writer, we indeed might connect this to Ali’s comparison of authors to cattle (in an agricultural fair).

Métailié emphasizes the multilingual translations of Suárez’s novels and the adaptation for Cuban television of her short stories (which shows Suárez’s relationship with the island on “good terms”) in the marketing of this author. Without making a political statement about Suárez’s positioning with regard her homeland, Métailié’s words sound
like the publicity in the printed French translation of *La Viajera*: “Voici le roman vital d’une jeune romancière cubaine pleine de curiosité pour le monde” [Here is the vital novel of a young Cuban novelist full of curiosity for the world] (https://editions-metailie.com/livre/la-voyageuse/). The words immigrant or exile are suppressed: Karla Suárez is just a young novelist *residing* in Paris at the time, as any privileged traveler in today’s world (but makes sure to mention her national origin). Hence, despite the coincidence between Suárez and nomadic Circe, the publishing market grants writers (born in Cuba) a special entitlement as a citizen of the world, as well as a catalogue of European cities in her residency record (back-cover).

We might verify the privileged status of authors in the catalogue of recurrent tours, participation in international festivals, congresses on art/literature, press releases and interviews in world newspapers, literary scholarships, creative writing workshops in European cities, programs of “writers in residence” (which functions as attractive retreats where they are invited to finish their projects for a few months), and so forth. Such transnational spaces of marketing, production/work, networking, and connection to cross-border audiences posit an advantage to writers from the so called third world who are struggling to insert themselves in the global market. I inquired about the advantages and disadvantages of being a Cuban author outside the island in the midst of globalization. Suárez responds:
Estar fuera me permitió quizás estar más accesible para ir a lugares, tienes mucha capacidad de movimiento. No es lo mismo invitar a alguien que viva en París a (alguien) que viva en La Habana: tienen que pedir visas y permisos... pero para publicar no te sabría decir... Para mí es un gran misterio: mis dos últimas novelas no tienen editor (en español).92

[Being outside Cuba allowed me to be more accessible to places, you have a lot of movement. It is not the same to invite someone who lives in Paris to (someone) living in Havana: they have to apply for visas and permits... but in relation to publishing I would not know what to say... For me it is a great mystery: my last two novels have no editor (in Spanish)].

As it occurs with Circe in the novel, where mobility becomes a gain for the subject (Cuesta), the extradiegetic reality (that of the author’s world) might portend a similar advantage. Cuban authors without the transnational visibility of Suárez do not receive such invitations; yet, the most successful ones living on the island like Padura, Ena Lucía Portela (to mention a couple) do travel (or tour) with their books. The issue resides on Cuban authors’ dependence on foreign publishing houses for the regional linguistic market, which make authors visible and valuable. As Jorge Fornet argues:

92 According to Suárez: Con cada libro la historia comienza, porque ahora es diferente, ahora mismo yo no tengo editor para mis dos últimas novelas en España. Porque en España ahora hay una crisis tremenda entonces ha cambiado mucho el mundo editorial español...cuando yo empecé a publicar, por ejemplo, había mucha literatura cubana que buscaba jineteras, Fidel Castro y esas pequeñas editoriales que publicaban esos libros ... o para antologías en los años 90s... Yo siempre he escrito lo que he querido...Después el problema es si te lo publican o no.” Her later novels Habana año cero and Um lugar chamado Angola were not yet published in Spanish at the time of our interview in June 2016. Habana año cero tells the story of five characters, among them an Italian journalist who lived in Havana during the early years of the ‘90s, and are obsessed with finding the original document that proves Antonio Meucci as the real inventor of the phone. They all seek to advance personal goals with such a finding and improve their life conditions. But, it seems that the decade that hallucinated European editors about Cuba does not attract the same interest anymore. The novel came to light later on in 2016 by Ediciones Unión, Cuba, five years after being published in Portuguese, and four after the French edition. Is the seduction of the harsh and terrible ‘90s gone? Suárez expresses skepticism of the literary market: “a mí se me escapa a la comprensión” (personal interview).
Si en los años 20 había una independencia que permitía a los jóvenes escritores latinoamericanos sublevarse indignados, hoy las grandes editoriales, sobre todo las que generan más reconocimiento a nivel de la lengua, están en Madrid y sobre todo en Barcelona. Es por allí, lamentablemente, por donde pasa hoy nuestro meridiano editorial y, en no poca medida, también el intelectual. (Revista Malabia online).

[If in the 1920s there was an independence that allowed young Latin American writers to revolt indignantly, today the great publishers, especially those that generate more recognition in terms of language, are in Madrid and especially in Barcelona. It is there, unfortunately, where our publishing meridian is today, and, in no small measure, the intellectual.] (Malabia Magazine online).

Readers of La Viajera can obtain a piece (a souvenir) of the author as individual (almost literally). The Spanish edition includes a CD; every city in the novel is connected to a classical concert or a popular song that recalls not only the characters’ affective memory but that of the reader. Thus, readers have the opportunity to feel the nostalgia, the sadness, the happiness or the reflexive moods of Circe and Lucía while these characters listen to their songs.93 Since the songs included in the book and the CD are widely known by an average semi-cultured reader, the simultaneity of reading the novel and listening to its music in synchronicity with the very characters produces an affective identification. Such musical inclusion foregrounds the materiality of the book as a hybrid artifact, whose design varies according to the target audience. For instance, the Spanish edition’s front cover illustrates traveling through themes of postcard remittance and faded pictures of the Roman Coliseum. The cover design is connected to the motif of mobility (throughout

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93 Not only in the “company of the CD,” but in the very literary language of the novel that treats languages as music: “su alemán no me resultó distante, fue como una música, la música no necesita de fonemas, es puro estado de ánimo” (310) or “el portugués que suena como si todos anduvieran cantándote al oído” (38), or “Música en la lengua de tu padre” (267). Music does not “conoce fronteras,” and is considered “el verdadero lenguaje universal” (267), believes Circe. And this intratextual context that attempts to transform music into emotions and into a universal language, trespasses the text, creating a liaison with the external paratext (the CD): a new assemblage that might foster the connection of the reader to the characters, as in the previous passages, through the eliciting of emotions beyond issues of identity of any kind. However, my emotional reading should not lose track of the marketable impulse of such liaison among text, internal music, and external artefact, which, at the end of the day, works as a strategy of attraction of the reader to the world of the writer/individual.
Europe or a travel narrative that involves, at least, Italy). At the same time, it gives a tint of identification with places considered world symbols and/or world patrimony, from which we might infer a cosmopolitan orientation of the author and characters. In the meantime, the Italian edition presents a mulatta (woman of mixed race) walking among palm trees under the sun, with luggage by her side and a bonsai in hand. Such illustration foregrounds the theme of “tropicality,” a woman with an origin in what appears to be a sunny island, a “tropicality” that is linked to race and even “attire.” Ultimately, it represents a non-Western woman that moves far away from her place of origin, without looking back. The interlocking of tropics, race and sex might as well indicate a promise of enticement for the reader. By the same token, the French edition portrays a young woman standing on a balcony of what appears to be Old Havana, as if the story took place there. Designers might defend that Havana is a site of nostalgia in the novel, or that the city feverishly searched by Circe might be a Havana different from the one she left behind. Nevertheless, there emerges a nostalgia that I shall put in dialogue with that other longing or yearning among the French reader who acquires Cuban cultural products; a yearning that Méitaillé could not leave unmentioned: the Cuban mystique.

Returning to the text, the creation of a writer-reader tie is also at stake in the Lucía-Circe relationship. Circe writes her diaries (and travel postcards) not only to register her journey and to record her sensations, feelings, encounters. She writes considering that Lucía will read her diary one day; in effect, Lucía becomes the receptor/codifier. From the very start, the reader has news of Circe through a postcard she sends Lucía from Greece (which returns at the end of the novel as the last point in the geography traversed by Circe thus far: a circular motif). Later on, Circe’s journey begins for the reader as Lucía is left
with her friend’s diary in Rome, where Circe stays for a period of one year. While Lucía reads, we discover Circe’s trajectory: Sao Paulo, México, Madrid, Paris. Circe-Suárez endows the process of reading with the emotional engagement of Lucía when reading the *bitácora*: the concerns, questions, feelings and quandaries about displacement. It also underscores Circe’s affirmative positioning, claiming the world as an open, inclusive space. Just as Circe’s diary does not recognize frontiers, *La Viajera* as a published assemblage of text and songs to be heard/felt, attempts to expedite Suárez’s insertion in a global readership network.

**Conclusions**

*La Viajera* has had only one Spanish edition (by Roca Editorial in 2005), and has never been published in Cuba. Therefore, to speak of its subversive potential considering exclusively the state of affairs regarding migration in the context of Cuba, and to not weigh the impact of migration in the Western world, is to miss one of the critical points of the novel. *La Viajera* is a book that grapples with the stigmata of migration within Cuban society, but it is also a work by a Cuban writer negotiating her place in a globalized world. In so doing, the novel might serve as a vantage point to observe the contradictions/paradoxes of postmodernity, in which post-hegemony, as the end of State hegemony, and the ubiquity of global capitalism means neither the total dissolution of national borders nor the end of rejection toward global south immigrants in Western societies. As such, the multiple forms in which one can experience “travel,” as conveyed in the book, may appeal to a cosmopolitan reader outside the island who might reflect, along with Circe and Lucía, on the quandaries of certain “travelers” who are not precisely from the so called first world. Yet, such “quandaries” and “travelers” are endowed with an
exoticizing seduction by means of graphic/visual design of the novel editions as well as through the publicity made by publishing houses through their diverse networks. By marking a Cubanness more tempered to a Western tropicalization of the idea of Cuba, being its revolutionary “mystique” (a la Métailié) or an “endulent” racialization in the Italian edition, publishing houses underscore “national origin” to promote novel and author, despite the very claim of the novel against the images that circulate globally about Cuban identity or concerning Cuba as an idea.

_La Viajera_ reflects on the conditions of the so called third world immigrants in Europe, making visible the various modes in which societies segregate individual “others.” It also offers a glimpse into how transnational mobility of bodies (of all kinds) allows for transversal political possibilities. As non-privileged migrants in Europe, Cubans in _La Viajera_ appear integrated into a marginal spatial cartography to which other migrants from the global south belong. But Circe’s relationality with the world of migrants exceeds representation, localization or fixation of otherness, and/or margins, unsettling any preemptive cartography. In so doing, it amplifies notions of cosmopolitanism so far discussed in academic research, to what I have termed “nomadic cosmopolitanism.”

Circe’s nomadism is not to be found in linguistic mobility as in _Livadia_; it aims at complex allegiances that elicit hope as a micro-politics of resistance. The nomadic affective landscape of the novel points toward hope as space for an affirmative ethics that dismantles boundaries by transforming otherness into difference and desire into a line of flight. The body, in particular the woman’s body, is at the core of this ethical stance. _La Viajera_ makes us reflect on the nomadic experience as to make visible new forms of imagination and reenactments of solidarity and utopia beyond the paradigm of the “New Man,” precisely
from the creative potential of the woman and her sexual difference. Circe and Ulises become the reference for a model of citizenship in today’s globalized world. We might consider Ulises and Circe within Suárez’s literary work as the “New Nomadic (Wo)Man” who travels the world in an assemblage-like form, composed of a human and a non-human body (a bonsai), ultimately, the symbol of earthly connections without hierarchical structures and organizations, a vital mobile flux. In the meantime, Cuba ceases to be a compelling place or idea; it becomes a point of departure to a larger trajectory of self-actualization.
Chapter 5: Traces as Presence: Carlos Martiel and the Politics of the Black Body

Carlos Martiel is the son of a gloomy revolution. When Martiel was born in 1989, the sun of the vast Soviet empire had already set. Cuba did not have any resources left to move its economy, even less to sustain another “antimperialist” military endeavor. The Havana in which young Martiel grew up was unfettered before another sort of “allure,” that of the dollar and the pacotilla (rubbish goods) of the once forbidden West (like J in Livadía). Just after 1991, when the socialist bloc dissolved, Cubans were farther and farther away from that utopic society pursued for four decades and had to resort to extremes to survive. The prodigal sons and daughters of the revolution were about to experience the arrival of the paraphernalia of capitalism, ironically, without free market economic structures. That is, Havana was already becoming part of a transnational circuit of production, circulation, and consumption of goods, images, ideas, and bodies, without totally giving up the socialist model of economic organization and production.

In those years, I was a journalist for the official newspaper, Granma, with the task of writing about Cuban society during the “special period,” and no matter how many changes in the panorama I was interested in touching upon (like kids on the streets of old Havana asking for candy and money from tourists), the state editorial policy forbid me to

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94 For more on the economic adjustments made by the government, I recommend the reading of Richard E. Feinberg, and Ernesto Hernández-Catá’s The Fall and Recovery of the Cuban Economy in the 1990s: Mirage or Reality?
95 The government implemented a plan of adjustment and economic change that, unlike the former socialist countries, did not transform the political structures of the state, although it did change the façade, and services in key economic sectors. The adjustments led to the introduction of elements of the global economy, such as foreign investment in strategic sectors: tourism industry, mining (modernization of nickel and cobalt plants), and processing of agricultural products. The dollar was liberalized and, for the first time, Cubans witnessed the opening of private initiatives on a very modest scale, such as the creation of family restaurants and cafeterias, and the permission to host international tourism in non-state facilities, that is, in family homes. These measures, while trying to “clean up” the fiscal deficit of the State, exposed the population to elements of capitalism, foreign to the younger generations.
do so. The Havana that I could not reflect in my chronicles because of the country’s flawed socioeconomic landscape remains as a painful memory not only in the minds of Cubans who suffered it, particularly the 50 percent of the population that did not have access to dollars or any other hard currency to satisfy their basic needs. The economic adjustments and reforms oriented to the intake of hard currency, as Carmelo Mesa-Lago (2003) noted, affected this disadvantaged sector devoid of dollars, among whom were Afro-Cubans, who received an average wage equivalent of 31 dollars a year. As the national press could not meditate or provoke a debate on the harsh reality experienced by Afro-Cubans and Cubans in general during the excruciating 1990s, literature, art, theater, film (specially the documentary), and music gave testimony from different perspectives/angles.

In such a context, for certain artists like Carlos Martiel, the relationship between the individual and the Cuban State belongs also to the realm of the body. His own flesh gives testimony of life in the Cuba of the last twenty years. However, Martiel’s work constitutes a journey of a varied itinerary: from Cuba, to Ecuador (and South America), and the U.S. As a political artist, he is committed to deal with any form of oppression and discrimination whether in Cuba or beyond. Eventhough this artist was not raised under the experimental project of the “New Man,” or precisely because of the project’s failure in

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96 I was part of that 50 percent as my salary as a journalist for the most important Cuban newspaper between 1994-1995 reached the sum of 198 Cuban pesos, which at the exchange rate became $1.50 dollars a month. With that amount, which was the standard salary for young professionals for their first two years of work, one could only buy a bar of soap and a bottle of cooking oil for the month, while any meat, dairy and body care products, and clothes disappeared from the rationing book (libreta de racionamiento). The rationing book existed (and still does) from the decade of the 1960s when, between the US economic embargo and the inefficient Cuban economy, food and all material goods became scarce. In order to keep a homogeneous life standard, the state distributed such products at subsidized prices among the population through the rationing book.

97 Afro-Cubans were widely excluded from emergent job positions in tourism as well as in the mixed capital (foreign and state) enterprises (Gámez Torres 2014).

98 Eric Corvalán filmed in 2008 the documentary Raza, on racial discrimination. On Cuba Magazine (online) as sagacious and controversial (2014).
conjunction with the macro-narrative of socialism, his work becomes a political intervention in every context of Martiel’s transnational trajectory.

As an extreme performer, we might look at Martiel’s work as nomadic embodiment of memory: the body as a register of traces of his multiple itineraries. I propose to look at performance documentation as both a folding and unfolding process; in other words, the event (the performance) leaves its trace in a non-mediated form, the artist’s body, as well as in a mediated artistic platform (photography, video), to resist the very nature of performance art: disappearance. Furthermore, documentation elicits the anticipation of affects as photography and video that monitor performances circulate online in galleries, museums, and media websites to promote artistic presentations by the artist. Finally, I turn to what affects appear connected to documentation and their relation to the original event (performance). In addition, galleries and other artistic institutions invest in the promotion of particular affects connected to Martiel’s performances, that allows me to locate the strategies used by the market to position his work. I propose that Martiel’s body, linked to a Cubannes marked by blackness, circulates as a commodity in the global artistic arena.

Ultimately, such an approach informs us of alternative trajectories (physical, ethical and aesthetic) in cultural production by recent émigrés of the revolution. In the following section I will trace the transnational orientation of an artistic project that constitutes the pillar of Martiel’s formative years in order to shed light on the ethical and affective stances in which this artist initiated his career.
The New Transnational World

The 1990s began, as I mentioned, with ground zero for Cuban society. Cultural industries, devoid of finances and dependent on the state, could not continue with regular production. Artists and writers saw themselves negotiating contracts for the first time with foreign record companies and editorial houses. The economic crisis obliged the State to adopt a more “permeable” form of power with regard to cultural agents, to not lose its control over the cultural sphere, while benefiting economically and symbolically from the insertion of Cuban art in the global market (Fernandes 37).

Cuban artists and writers entered in new forms of understandings of creation, circulation and consumption processes, traversed by political economy (how art becomes a commodity shaped by the rules of capital and transnational corporations with access to regional and global circuits). Like Karla Suárez noted in our interview about her experience as a writer outside of Cuba:

Yo no tenia idea de nada… no sabia qué era un agente literario… Los agentes representan autores… y te buscan las traducciones… son los que controlan los contratos… Y viniendo de Cuba, donde tú no lo hacías para ganar dinero, ¿qué es eso?”
[I had no idea about anything... I did not know what a literary agent was... The agents represent authors... and they look for the translation of your work... They are the ones that control the contracts... And coming from Cuba, where you did not do it (write) to make money, what is that?] (Valencia, “Interview…”).

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99 The publishing houses (Grevin 2014) reduced drastically their printing, and the only musical recording company had to initiate contracts with transnational corporations for the first time.

100 Something different was happening with the visual arts since painters acquired a relative independence from state institutions in the 1980s when international curators, artists, and art collectors started traveling to Cuba (Camnitzer 1994; 2003).

101 In Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and The Making of New Revolutionary Cultures, Sujatha Fernandes states that the “Cuban state has clung to certain principles and values in order to ensure the support of the population, while an increasing orientation to global economy pulls in opposite direction” (37).
In effect, writers and artists were not familiar with the economic structures of art and its forms of negotiation. Yet, suddenly, the insertion in transnational markets turned into an “artistic” national obsession as recognition could also come from abroad, and with it a path to a more comfortable life, which included traveling as a privileged subject, access to other knowledges and to material goods impossible to find on the island. Art could defy the odds, since it provided the artist with a safe passage to the foreign world without being considered an expatriate, a migrant (a controversial figure as we analyzed in the previous chapter), whom by the end of the second decade of the 21st century still needs a special permit from the Cuban government to visit the country (and more, if decides to return to live in the island). Tania Bruguera, a known Cuban performance artist with whom Carlos Martiel initiated his performance career, comments on this scenario almost as a travesty:

En ese momento, porque las cosas hay que verlas en su contexto… en el mundo del arte en Cuba había una fascinación por el exterior, porque le era algo ajeno. Se conocía, la gente tenía acceso a las revistas, a los libros, la gente viajaba y te hacía los cuentos, pero el sistema de acceso al mundo del arte internacional era un poco místico… ‘Fulano fue a Canadá y ya es superartista, aunque sea malísimo’…. y a mí me parecía que era importante romper el misticismo ese en el mundo del arte en Cuba porque se estaba usando de una manera desproporcionada, pero también política, como que fulano porque viajó y hace arte apolítico es el buen artista. (Valencia, “Interview…”).

[At that time, because things have to be seen in context... in the art world in Cuba there was a fascination for the outside, because it was something alien. It was known, people had access to magazines, books, people traveled and made stories, but the system of access to the world of international art was a bit mysterious... ‘So-and-so went to Canada and is already a superstar, although not good artist... And I thought it was important to break that mysticism in the art world in Cuba because it was being used in a disproportionate way, but also political, as that guy because he traveled and makes apolitical art is the good artist]. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

102 Definitely, the artist was in a vantage point over ordinary Cubans who had two options: to stay and suffer the harsh life conditions, or to leave the country in a boat, through a marriage with a foreign citizen (in which case the person could reside abroad as much as in the island), or through a letter of invitation (under the assumption to get a visa). This last option usually translated into migration, once the citizen could get through the exhausting chain of permissions to leave the country, and the monetary investment in requisites, forms, and travel ticket (sometimes paid by a friend or a family abroad), he or she would not return to Cuba.
Indeed, to be invited to an exhibition in any European or even in any Latin American country became the mark of professional success, as Bruguera affirmed, even if the artist in question was not a first line creator. As I touched upon in the previous chapter, traveling outside the territorial frontiers was limited in the first 30 years or so of the revolution, until the collapse of the Soviet Union obliged the Cuban government to implement reforms on emigration and travel regulations, which made it more flexible for Cubans to travel abroad (a political and economic relief valve to the harsh economic situation on the island); hence, the fascination with the West, not only as a forbidden geography to visit, but as a source of political, aesthetic, and economic threat to communism.

Bruguera speaks of the 1990s as the years in which “se empezó a instaurar en Cuba una política institucional, donde se promocionaba a los artistas apolíticos” (Valencia, “Interview…”) [An institutional policy began to be established in Cuba, where apolitical artists were promoted]. Works from the 1990s were not so confrontational in content or method. It is a phenomenon also approached by Coco Fusco, Cuban-American artist herself and scholar, who has noted that “a steady stream of young Cuban artists, whose practices combine conceptual sophistication, minimal means and a touch of localism in content, circulates in international exhibiting arenas (Interview with Bailey 1),” whereas “the edgier, more politically-oriented and less marketable work takes place outside of official state venues (Interview with Bailey 2).”

In the decade of the ‘90s, when Bruguera graduated from the ISA, she was engaged in a personal proposal to homage the legacy of Ana Mendieta. As Lillian Manzor (2011) observes in “Performance Art in Greater Cuba:” “Bruguera studied Mendieta’s works to reembody those performances in her early pieces (Tribute to Ana Mendieta). By bringing
Mendieta back to Cuba’s cultural memory in ritualistic pieces, she sought to reverse the erasure of previous generations” (733). In Manzor’s opinion, who has studied extensively performance arts in what she calls “greater Cuba” (which includes its US exile), Bruguera “slowly moved from focusing on the personal to engaging the full social body” (733).103

In effect, in the next decade, as a response to the apolitical oriented scenario, Bruguera founded the Cátedra Arte de Conducta (Behavioral Art School), in 2002. The name of this project, which she considered a long term artistic endeavor that lasted around seven years, speaks of a conceptualization of art connected to the transformation of individual attitudes toward and in relation to structures of power in daily life. Arte de Conducta re-formulates the place of performance art, inscribing it “como gestos sociales en la esfera pública” (interview with Finkelpearl) [social gestures in the public sphere] (interview with Finkelpearl), by placing it in the tradition of Latin America and Cuba, where performance art has constituted a tool to contest state policies, and make visible silenced voices.104 As Lillian Manzor affirms:

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103 In effect, her first artist statement from 1992 invoked Duchamp’s words: “I wanted to put art again at the service of the mind” (personal website). “Each of my artistic conclusions is the consequence of existential positions, while art in turn models new attitudes in my own life”, she asserts. That believe in art as “to become the expression of a point of view” (website), was followed, in her 2009 statement, by her more socially engaged art.

104 Bruguera has commented that while studying at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1999-2001, she could not relate to the performance’s perspectives/approaches taught there. On the other hand, there was the language issue: “¿Por qué llamarlo ‘performance’ si mi práctica sería en Cuba? También se usaban otros términos como ‘life art’ (arte vivo) en el Reino Unido, y también estaba ‘body’ art (arte corporal) y cosas así. No sabía cómo llamarlo, sólo sabía que no debía usar ‘performance.’ Pero, incluso antes de todo esto, tuve que vermelas con las implicaciones políticas de identificar lo que hacía con una palabra en inglés” (interview with Finkelpearl) [Why call it 'performance' if my practice would be in Cuba? Other terms such as ‘life art’ in the UK were also used, and there was also 'body' art and things like that. I did not know what to call it, I just knew I should not use 'performance.' But even before all this, I had to deal with the political implications of identifying what I was doing with an English word] (interview with Finkelpearl). To this we should add the influx of feminist artists of the 1970s and 80s, like the Cuban-American Ana Mendieta, whose work with the body disrupted cultural attitudes built upon a male monopolized vision of history, society and art.
Performance art in Greater Cuba has been influential in creating counter-hegemonic public spheres, in pushing cultural policies’ boundaries of what can be said, in redefining the complex relationships between art and politics, and in underscoring the diasporic and transnational nature of cultural production. (732)

With this social interventionist philosophy, the cátedra’s goal centered on the formation of a generation of artists more engaged with political art (Finkelpearl, and Valencia).105

The cátedra constituted an effort of continuity with the Cuban 1980s generation,106 its sense of aesthetical and ethical independence from state cultural policies and socio-political project (Valencia 2016; Betancourt, 2012; Fusco 2000).107 Other pedagogical projects stemmed from art and developed under the institutional umbrella of the University of the Arts (ISA), included DIP (Departamento de Intervenciones Públicas, 2001-2003), ENEMA (2000-2003) and DUPP (Desde una Pedagogía Pragmática, 1997-2001).108 In general, the ISA embraced young artist engaged in a critical attitude toward the pedagogy of art and its place in society.

105Bruguera’s website includes a section about the cátedra, in which it is emphasized the “creation of a pedagogical model that makes up for the lack of civic discussion spaces on the function of art in present Cuban society” and promotion of “the exploration of relationships between art and context (taniabruguera.com).”

106Francine Birbragher notes the following characteristics of Cuban 1980s performance art: “the use of non-artistic contexts, such as alternative spaces; the use of recycled materials; the performance of the event without previous rehearsal; the interest in documenting the process and the event with only minimal resources; the use of communicative elements that were easily decipherable by the public; the criticism of the totalitarian regime; the clear desire to broaden the concept of art; and an explicit sense of humor (ArtNexus online).”

107 According to Bruguera, her intervention in the education of new generations of artists built a pathway to make a difference: (…) a mí me parecía que había que mostrar otro modelo en el que el arte político fuera algo legítimo, y el arte social, que no solo era parte de la identidad del arte en Cuba, (sino) que era algo que yo veía como una diferencia entre lo que se hacía en Cuba y lo que se hacía en el exterior, algo positivo (interview for my research) [It seemed to me that it was necessary to show another model in which political art was a legitimate thing, and social art, which was not only part of the identity of art in Cuba, but was something that I saw as a difference Between what was done in Cuba and what was done abroad, something positive] (personal interview).

108 In an interview for universes-in-universe, the leading figure, René Francisco, abounded on DUPP’s objectives: “Entre las cosas que DUPP se ha propuesto, es rescatar ciertos tópicos del arte cubano que a nuestro parecer estaban un poco débiles, por ej. en primer término, precisamente el hecho de "hacer un grupo" para discutir, en una época en que los artistas han tendido hacia una mirada más introspectiva, más individual. Otra de las cosas por las que el grupo decidió trabajar es, por ej. la "Abstracción" que ha sido una línea marginada del arte cubano, que en todos estos años ha sido más referencial, lleno de tópicos, de historias, de chistes, de alusiones políticas (Binder and Haupt, interview with members of DUPP) [Among the things that
What interests me here is precisely cátedra’s artistic/civic inclusion of three objectives related to the transnational lens of my study: 1) the familiarization with the work of artists from Eastern European countries involved in the configuration of a civil society after the fall of the communist bloc, 2) the demystification of Cuban state hegemony, and 3) the exposure of young art students to the transnational circuit of exhibitions, and production. As a matter of fact, cátedra pursued a conversation that included the former socialist cosmos in order to adelantarnos a lo que viene. Por supuesto, yo no digo que Cuba va a ser exactamente como Eslovenia o como Rusia, pero es interesante ver por donde pasaron los otros… y era interesante pensar qué va a pasar con el arte en Cuba en diez, veinte años, y traer a esa gente era una manera de tener una especie de túnel hacia el futuro, potencialmente, no? Por lo menos (tener) la conversación que nadie la estaba teniendo (Valencia, “Interview…”).

(... anticipate what is coming. Of course, I do not say that Cuba is going to be exactly like Slovenia or Russia, but it is interesting to see where the others went ... and it was interesting to think about what will happen with art in Cuba in ten, twenty years. To bring those people was a way to have a tunnel into the future, potentially, right? At least (have) the conversation that nobody was having]. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

Bruguera invited artists like Rumanian Dan Perjovschi, and Polish Artur Zmijewski who are known for their politically charged art. But there was also the participation of creators, curators, art historians, and journalists from other regions: Western Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Actually the visit of foreign figures related to the world of visual and performance art had started a decade before. In the early 1980s Ana Mendieta, Carl Andre,
Luis Camnitzer, stimulated by the echoes of *Volumen I*, traveled to Cuba, and met with the artists of the exhibition that became a milestone of “dissident” art under the revolution. They organized a series of future excursions that allowed Mendieta to materialize some of her late body-art projects. Moreover, in 1984 the first Havana Biennial took place, an artistic international event that reached its 13th edition in 2016. As a matter of fact,

Tanto fue el impacto de la primera edición en el panorama global que, desde su misma realización, la Bienal de La Habana llamó la atención de artistas, periodistas, coleccionistas, instituciones e intelectuales de casi todo el mundo que llegaban a Cuba para mostrar obras, reflexionar, discutir, realizar talleres de creación con el público y festejar, de un modo u otro, la potencialidad de las expresiones artísticas de tantos creadores, muchos de ellos descubiertos de manera unánime a partir de la segunda edición en 1986, cuando fueron convocados África, Asia y Medio Oriente, además de América Latina y El Caribe. A algunos les costó trabajo reconocer lo alcanzado por el evento, pero no cabe dudas que surtió efecto aquella estructura ensayada por primera vez para articular imaginarios simbólicos a partir de investigaciones librescas y de campo en tantos países y regiones ignoradas o subvaloradas (...)(Herrera Ysla *Arte por Excelencias* online).

[The impact of the first edition on the global scene was so much that from its very beginning the Havana Biennial drew the attention of artists, journalists, collectors, institutions and intellectuals from almost all the world who came to Cuba to show works, reflect, discuss, carry out creative workshops with the public and celebrate, in one way or another, the potential of the artistic expressions of so many creators, many of them discovered unanimously from the second edition in 1986, when Africa was convened, Asia and the Middle East, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. Some had a hard time recognizing what had been achieved by the event, but there was no doubt that the structure tried for the first time to articulate symbolic imaginaries based on library and field research in so many ignored or undervalued countries and regions (...)](Herrera Ysla *Arte por Excelencias* online).

Institutional spaces like the Havana Biennial that have expanded throughout the years its exhibition circuit to Havana streets, including the Malecón, need to be cited as part of the transnational orientation of art in Cuba. Moreover, the Biennial speaks of a

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110 In an interview with me, Leandro Soto, one of the artists included in *Volumen I*, talked about that visit as an event to remember, as it was from there that news about the *Volumen I* group started to transcend national frontiers and attracted attention of international critics and curators. Furthermore, the word “performance,” “began to be used in Cuba after visits to the island by critics, academics, and artists from the United States,” (Birbragher, online).
political and economic strategy to attract first world critics, curators and exhibitors for the appreciation and inclusion of third world artists. Therefore, Cátedra might be considered one of an array of spaces for acquaintances with foreign artistic trends, and for the insertion of young artists in the market.\textsuperscript{112} Such transnational connections were stimulated not only because the artists, many from different historical backgrounds and national origins, travel to Havana to make direct contact with international figures known also for their social art like Christoph Büchel, Stan Douglas, Anri Sala, and Michael Elmgreen, who would present weeklong workshops in Havana; the members of Cátedra also received invitations to participate in exhibitions abroad. According to Bruguera,

La cátedra fue una escuela pero también fue un centro de promoción de arte joven… porque muchos participantes… tuvieron exposiciones fuera de Cuba por primera vez debido a la Cátedra… Es decir, que no solamente era traer hacia dentro. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

[Cátedra] was a school but it was also a young art promotion center ... because many participants ... had exhibitions outside Cuba for the first time because of the chair... That is, it was not only to bring in. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

The transnational orientation of Cátedra helped young artists to demystify any form of power, in particular, the authoritarian Cuban state and the fascination with the artistic scene abroad. It did so by shortening the distances between members (students) of Cátedra and international guests, creating forms of collective collaboration between them, and forging a dialogue concerning the potential of art to enable public spaces of free expression. Precisely, such conceptualization of the role of art is connected to what Bruguera calls “arte útil” (useful art). As an example, she posits the work of one of the international members of Cátedra, Spanish visual artist Nuria Güell. During her stay in Havana, Güell’s work

\textsuperscript{112} In the interview with Finkelpearl, Bruguera explains what she understands as “arte útil” (useful art), and uses Güell’s project as one example. Ultimately, the cátedra became a transnational art project intended to create “dinámicas antiautoritarias.”
consisted of selling internet to Cubans after posting an announcement: “Se lo daba a personas que respondían a cambio de conocer sus métodos de supervivencia cotidianos para vivir en Cuba. Este proyecto muestra el estado y condiciones de vida en Cuba en este momento específico; funciona en un nivel simbólico. Lo hace a uno pensar, lo hace sentir, pero, al mismo tiempo, se está produciendo algo verdadero. La gente realmente usaba Internet” (interview with Finkelpearl) [She gave it to people who responded in order to know their daily survival methods to live in Cuba. This project shows the state and conditions of life in Cuba at this specific time; it works on a symbolic level. It makes one think, feel, but at the same time, something real is occurring. People really used the internet] (interview with Finkelpearl).113

In conclusion, Catedra as a long term project served as an ethical as much as an aesthetic impulse for young artists in creating “arte útil” (useful art), in the sense of transcending Duchamp’s gesture of (dis)functional displacement, the estrangement before quotidian objects emplaced in artistic space (Bruguera’s web site). It motivated a reverse gesture: the intervention of art in an extremely regulated social space, in the daily sites of communal life. Indeed, artistic interventions of this sort constitute a menace to the State that has put all its power to control the social space (Manzor 2015; Fuscó 2015). As Manzor reminds us when analyzing the political in the Cuban theater company El Ciervo Encantado:

113 Furthermore, the catedra became a “transnational rumor.” Bruguera considered “rumor” a relevant part of the documentation of the catedra as a work of art: “La gente conoce este proyecto de boca en boca, mediante el rumor, que es uno de los elementos que hemos asumido como su documentación como pieza de arte. Generalmente los miembros les hablan a otros, que desean entrar en el debate, sobre el programa (personal interview).” Such intentions trespassed national frontiers, since the catedra became an artistic-pedagogical experiment that prompted the attention of art promoters like the commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Tom Finkelpearl, who records extensively Bruguera’s experiment in his book on pedagogical projects stemming from art.
Public space in Cuba is a highly regulated and disciplined field, in which everyone knows his or her normative place. Even when we look at the masses in the Plaza de la Revolución for the First of May festivities (International Labor Day) or in front of the US Interests Section in Havana, it seems clear that everyone follows a script that admits no deviation or improvisation. Everyone knows what can and what cannot be said in the public sphere (*El ciervo encantado* online).

Such ethical and political irreverence is distinguishable in Martiel’s work since his early performances in Cuba, and would mark his future transnational trajectory, as I analyze in the following section.

**To Where My Feet Do Not Reach**

Martiel graduated with high honors from the “San Alejandro” National Academy of Arts, after which he was accepted to *Cátedra*. On Martiel’s website we can find two of his performances curated by Bruguera: *Integración* (Integration) and *Iniciado Social* (Social Initiated), in which the violence against the human body becomes anathema to the government’s effects on Cuban citizens, like the restriction of expression and movement, and the ordinance of obedience. But it is in 2010, with *Lazos de Sangre* (Blood bonds) and *Prodigal Son* that Martiel’s performances put the skin at the center of his work: the skin, the very border or bridge between our bodies and others. Hence, not only the body, but its surface, underscores the potential of sensations to involve others in the politics of the abject body, as it is through our skin that discursive detachments or attachments are felt in daily life (Ahmed 2006).

In *Lazos de Sangre*, Martiel bends in front of the sea, sees his blood leave his body through two catheters placed in his forearms. The blood flows, blending with the seawater

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114 About his time in the *cátedra*, Martiel affirms that it helped him “a enfocarme en el espacio o el contexto de lo que yo estoy viviendo, y como yo puedo expresar, a través de mi trabajo, lo que estoy sintiendo, que no tengo otra vía para expresarlo” (personal interview).
that turns red creating a visual contrast with the blue beyond. The act might be interpreted as a ritual, a tribute to Yemayá (goddess of the Waters in the Afro-Cuban religion), but this rituality cannot be detached from the sociopolitical context, in particular, from migration and the innumerable deaths in the middle of the Florida Straits. The theme of migration is also foregrounded in *A donde mis pies no lleguen* (Where My Feet Might Not Reach), in 2011, in which the artist’s anesthetized body navigates inside a boat adrift in a river.

![Figure 2 A donde mis pies no lleguen (Where My Feet Do Not Reach). Havana, 2011.](image)

I choose this performance for two reasons; the first one is related to the connotation of the very title. *Where My Feet Might Not Reach* may be understood in reference to longitude as well as to depth; that is, the text might be interpreted as the announcement of a journey of

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115 Franko B’s performance *I’m Not Your Babe* uses his blood for an existential claim: “stark portrait of the existential self, in which Franko B uses his own drawn blood as a symbol of carnal reality and suggests the natural destitution of the body as a fundamental of existence. Standing before us as a mute body-object, achromatic and cadaverous, his performance is an act of cleansing, stripping the flesh of identity (*LUX* online).” Martiel, on the other hand, provides space for affects as much as for a politics of identity and the differentiated histories behind subject positions.
longer duration that cannot be made by foot; but it might also trigger a connection with an experience of immersion in the waters, the depth of the unreachable bottom.

The second reason is related to affects, to what a body can or cannot do: the contact of an array of matter (human body, objects, substances) upon which the performance itself rests: the body adrift opens the possibility of multiple encounters, the unconscious human body exposed to the sun, the wind, the ocean and/or the rain, without a goal. Zero destination, open potentialities. To be adrift is the intermezzo, the non-place of “pre-personal intensities” (Massumi), dismissing the preponderance of the human. But, in addition to considering that realm of heterogeneous matter where the human is just one more element, we must pose the question of the social, “for some bodies—we can call them statistical outliers, or those consigned to premature death, or those once formerly considered useless bodies or bodies of excess—discipline and punish may well still be a primary apparatus of power” (Puar 2012, 63). In the case of Where My Feet Might Not Reach, notably, the intersection of race and citizenship:
Eu acho que o discurso racial deve ser transcendido na arte, isso indicaria que a sociedade está evoluindo para uma maior compreensão e menor diferenciação entre humanos. Porque a posição crítica de intelectuais que abordam a questão é a rebelião contra as políticas que têm justificado, se alastrando e perpetuando o racismo. Não se pode virar as costas para as coisas que acontecem, você não pode transcender o que é ainda latente e que afeta certos grupos humanos. É importante visualizar da arte certas questões, para criar uma consciência de mudança coletiva. Atualmente, existem artistas que trabalham com questões raciais, que têm um discurso interessante, incluindo o trabalho de Hank Willis Thomas, Bayete Ross, Glenn Ligon, entre outros. (Varela for Arte/Ref online)

I think that racial discourse must be transcended in art; this would indicate that society is evolving towards a greater understanding and less differentiation between humans. Because the critical position of intellectuals who approach the issue is the rebellion against the policies that have justified, spread and perpetual racism. You cannot turn your back on things that happen; you cannot transcend what is still latent and affects certain human groups. It is important to visualize certain issues of art to create a consciousness of collective change. Currently, there are artists working on racial issues which have interesting voices, including the work of Hank Willis Thomas, Bayete Ross, Glenn Ligon, among others]. (Varela for Arte/Ref online)

Martiel’s commentary on the discourse about race in art connects with Puar’s reflection on the impossibility to elude “how societies of control, tweak and modulate bodies as matter, not predominantly through signification or identity interpellation but rather through affective capacities and tendencies (Puar 63). Such performance of the body adrift elicits analysis (or at least consideration) on how affects work in tension with the political and symbolic order: what to make of a body, and in particular a black body moving adrift towards the unknown? An abandoned body in a boat triggers the question of illegal emigration, an escape valve that releases socio-political pressure on the Cuban State, an option by which the State gets rid of those who become disaffecteds, non-allies, or discontents. But it also points to the racial question: blackness as an undesired body that is put to sleep. This is connected not only to the present, but also to the past and the future: a black body, like four centuries ago, navigates in “the middle passage” (the journey made by the slave ships across the Atlantic Ocean). Martiel’s body as captured in the photographs
(documentation) becomes pure Bersognian duration (past and future in a present that ceases to be so), like the trace: past in the present-future, absence-presence. Moreover, the trace casts light on death in life and life in death in a spatiality endowed of meaning, a racial history of enslavement, and enforced displacement that intersects with present displacements, not only in relation to current Cuban rafter migration and death in the vicinity of the middle passage (Florida Strait), but because of the Nation-State’s rejection of the black body. As such, the black body abandoned at the mercy of the natural elements in a state of numbness might point to the status of black people in Cuba as not full-citizens, never fully part of the Nation.

This notion of being in-between life and death in a political sense, may be linked to Afro-Caribbean religions. For Haitians, for example, the figure of “the lifeless state of the zombie represents a loss of the inner self—the soul—and a disconnect from the community and its spirit” (West, 5). If for the Haitians such a state is the result of evil (in the self or from an external source) that leads to alienation of the person from the community (West 2013), for Martiel the origin of such alienation does not come from religious practices, but ironically from the very atheist Marxist State. The possible dialogue with zombie Haitian narratives might not be as forced as Martiel’s performances have been qualified as ritualistic, not only in terms of the sacrifice of his own body that reminds us of the Viennese Activists, for example, but in a religious sense as in Lazos de Sangre. In

116 Please refer to the essays by Derek Walcott for more information on the middle passage and its linkage to the history of trauma on the Caribbean islands.
117 According to Martiel: “los activistas vienenses, Lela Prent, María L, Tania Brugueras, Bela LLL, han sido artistas que de alguna manera han influido mi trabajo, o son artistas que puedo tener como referente. Pero a mí lo que me interesa es el momento actual que estoy viviendo y cómo yo puedo expresar las cosas que más me interesan, o las cosas que me disgustan, o las cosas que me afectan y… esa carga política y social siento que hay mucho en la historia del performance que no la tiene porque… sobre todo lo que es el performance occidental es una cuestión como más meramente, como más puramente el dolor o más puramente la experimentación con el cuerpo… que pudo haber evolucionado en el camino” (personal
any case, the (dis)placed/rejected body in transition (in the middle of the river) on its journey toward nowhere, makes visible the trace of a violent history that in the present translates into exclusion from relevant positions (political, economic, etc.) or ordinary jobs within the new dollarized economy.

Furthermore, Martiel’s performance itself and its documentation defy the erasure of blackness in both the realms of life and art, and affirm black agency.\textsuperscript{118} Indeed, the intersection of migration and racialization will become a repetitive motif throughout Martiel’s career. If the \textit{Where My Feet Might Not Reach} performance reflects on the Cuban migration experience, its documentation might elicit other readings in connection with Caribbean histories of migration to the U.S. In the case of the precarious Haitian boat exodus over the years, its differentiated fate with regard to the Cuban exodus must be noted, as citizens of the latter country received a special refugee status that granted them immediate welcoming in the US. Furthermore, Martiel’s 2016 presentations in Italy played again with the imbrication of migration and black/foreign racialized bodies as statistical outliers. In \textit{Mar sin orillas} (Sea without Shores), the artist introduced himself in a glass box filled with blow flies, “an insect that feeds itself exclusively on decaying meat (Martiel’s website).” Such vision came to the artist in allusion to “the more than 4,700 people coming from Africa and the Middle East who, during 2016 alone, drowned in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach Europe (same source).” Once again, Martiel makes us

\footnotesize{interview) [The Viennese activists, Lela Prent, Maria L, Tania Brugueras, Bela LLL, have been artists that have influenced my work in some way or are artists that I can have as a reference. But what interests me is the current moment that I am living and how I can express the things that interest me the most, or the things that disgust me, or the things that affect me and ... that political and social burden I feel is not present in the history of performance because ... above all, Western performance, is a matter of more merely, more purely pain or more purely experimentation with the body ... that may have evolved along the way] (personal interview).

\textsuperscript{118} I thank Elizabeth Langley for the suggestion on reading Martiel’s body in \textit{Where My Feet Might Not Reach} in connection with the figure of the zombie and Haitian cultural history.
think of the undesirable migrant in European societies as matter, “decaying meat,” disposed of its human condition in a contemporary world indifferent to the human tragedy of millions.

Interestingly, Where My Feet Might Not Reach was produced by Contemporanea Cuba & Norway Embassy and with the collaboration of Immigrant Movement International, Bruguera “artist” project in partnership with Creative Time and the Queens Museum of Art, in New York, from 2010 to 2015. After cátedra, Bruguera initiated an activist long-term project in the U.S. that aimed at “engaging the local community through public workshops, events, actions, and partnerships with immigrant and social service organizations” (Bruguera’s website) to work for and with

[119] los derechos de los inmigrantes. La idea del proyecto es tratar de cambiar a través del arte la imagen del inmigrante, que no sea como una carga social o que sea visto solamente como unos brazos en una fábrica, sino que sea un sujeto político con opciones políticas y con posibilidades políticas (Valencia, “Interview…”). [immigrants’ rights. The idea of the project is to try to change through art the image of the immigrant, not as a social burden or seen only as arms in a factory, but as a political subject with options, and political possibilities]. (Valencia, “Interview…”).

The insistence in a more interventionist art has taken Bruguera to work with migrants in New York, a work in which the idea of community is established based not in national, ethnic or racial origin, but in their condition (and sometimes undocumented status in the U.S.).[119] A similar approach has led Martiel to conceive of performance art as a political tool, increasingly adapting it to the contexts in which he moves and lives. In effect, I asked

[119] Bruguera’s statement about this project states: “As migration becomes a more central element of contemporary existence, the status and identity of those who live outside their place of origin increasingly become defined not by sharing a common language, class, culture, or race, but instead by their condition as immigrants” (artist’s website).
him about how he conceptualizes the violence he exerts upon his body in each of the performances, to which he responded:

Yo trabajo la violencia más que nada como una forma de denuncia, como cuestiones en que me veo involucrado u otras personas que están involucradas sea por temas de migración o por temas sociales y lo que me interesa más que nada es hacer reflexionar sobre esa… o no tanto reflexionar, sino mostrar el mal que estamos viviendo y que algunos cuerpos están limitados por ser de un color diferente, o por venir de un país diferente… (Valencia, “Interview…”)

[I work violence more than anything as a form of denunciation, as issues in which I am involved or other people are involved, whether due to migration or social concerns, and what interests me more than anything is to reflect on that… or not so much to reflect, but to show the evil in which we are living, and that some bodies are limited for being of a different color, or coming from a different country… (Valencia, “Interview…”)]

Martiel’s response captures the inclusiveness of his artistic proposals, as his work has gone beyond the notion of national identity, and national migration, to create bonds with migrants from different corners of the world. This approach appears in tandem with his own physical mobility, a result of both errancy and his inclusion in global circuits of exhibition, which somehow sheds light on a privileged position with regard to ordinary migrants as I touched upon in the prior chapter, and will analyze in relation to performance art later on. For example, Bruguera establishes sites of residence according to the scholarships and funding she receives from previously arranged projects with institutions (as in the case of the art-activist project: International Immigrant Movement). In 2016-17, for example, she lived in Boston as part of a scholarship from Harvard, to be followed by another project with the city of New York and then another one in Europe. This funding-based errancy somehow enters into contradiction with her idea of art as service in a pure sense, disconnected from economy.

The topic of migration and Martiel’s own wandering in the U.S. returns for example, in the 2014 event *Eviction*, an open public space performance in New York state.
According to the documentation of the event in his website: “Willets Point, known locally as the “Iron Triangle,” is an industrial neighborhood in Corona where there are many car repair shops, junkyards, waste processing sites and similar small businesses. A proposed redevelopment of Willets Point would include the building of commercial and residential spaces. This gentrification process would displace more than 1,700 employees, mostly Hispanic immigrants that would be deprived of their livelihood.” The gentrification topic sheds light on our previous theoretical statement on biopolitics, or the exercise of power and control over the body of specific populations, which obliges us to work with affects in dialogue with identity politics. In Eviction, Martiel lays down on one of the streets of Willets Point covered with dirt and waste. The contact of Martiel’s body with other matter, ultimately becoming an expendable object, lets us reflect on that immigrant community as a waste of sorts: “a tweaked and modulated body” (Puar), particularly when the performance includes the displacement of Martiel’s body as he is dragged “for several blocks and placed outside the neighborhood” (Martiel’s website).

Gentrification was also the underlying theme of another 2014 performance, Sentence. Martiel chose an African-American neighborhood in Overtown, Miami, for his artistic event.
Puar’s “diffuse networks of control” (163) is instrumental in understanding gentrification, by which “racialized communities and neighborhoods, once cordoned off as degenerate” are supplanted, because of their dysfunctional intimacies (Roberts 1997; Razack 2002), by
middle/upper classes, who leave suburbia for the inner cities. The degenerate space is transformed into a “recovered space” (Haritaworn 2012) by the new and “improved social mix” that substitutes the “dangerous and pathological populations” (idem). To this we must add the intervention of global art venues like Miami’s Art Basel, an annual event that is taking over to the Overtown area with the expansion of its circuit of galleries, and cultural and entertainment offerings. As George Yúdice eloquently observes:

The centerpiece of the Overtown Redevelopment Plan is the Promenade, where a bustling after-hours club scene has already taken root. The Plan describes the Promenade as a “24-hour environment where people can be entertained, work, and reside—a place that celebrates Miami’s diverse popular culture and music scene” … the Plan seeks to transform the area into a “celebrated place’ of street culture, ethnicity, and artistic diversity. This vibrant street life is what makes city living attractive, exciting and decidedly different from a passive suburban lifestyle” …The developers’ rendering of the Promenade makes quite evident the middle-class, largely white, albeit multiculturally decorated space. (NACLA online)

We can assert, then, that the space for the consumption of cosmopolitanism (i.e. multicultural restaurants/services) is also invigorated by global art conveners and venues in conjunction with entertainment industries, urban planners, city developers, retail and real estate companies that are transforming Midtown Miami (Yúdice for NACLA online). In this sense, Martiel’s performance Sentence is self-referential, as it puts art and creative industries at the core of the discussion on gentrification. In fact, the performance utilizes a public transit area as to integrate itself and the black body into the urban landscape of cement and shopping dwellers. As such, Sentence in particular sheds light on urban, cultural, socioeconomic policies as well as on global economic agents’ collaboration for

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120 Supposedly in search of more economic services and to consume the multicultural “other” through their exotic food (Haritaworn 2012).
the sake of a supposed common good by which “others,” namely black bodies, are excluded from that “communality.”

The second photograph documents the performance *Simiente* (Seed). The event did not take place in an open public site, but at Chicago’s Defibrillator Gallery in 2014. The blood was donated by immigrants from different parts of the world, according to a tag published on his website. Life and death are presented as mutually referential through the fetal position of the body and its encounter with blood, which takes us back to the idea of birth (blood in this case as a giver of life). Yet, blood as if it were escaping from the body, is the image of death. In an interview, Martiel talks about “death” as being on the same timeline as life, inseparable; two sides of the same coin: “Although I understand it this way, in my work I remain on the side of life. My works come from my life experiences and the experiences of others” (interview for *The Miami Rail*).

Oppressive experiences, like location and exploitation of those considered “statistical outliers,” emerge in Martiel’s performance on the surface of the body. The work of affects might enable different sensations. Before considering blood’s provenance and the racialization of the body, we should explore blood itself, the surface and its viscosity, as if attracting and sticking the bodies surrounding him. The public in the gallery (mostly white and young) observe quietly, some are standing taking photographs while others are sitting on the floor. They seem as if trapped by a tactile sight, less than a meter from the blood line. The blood symbolically both divides and attracts the artist from the observers (like in the blow flies in the glass box performance).\(^{122}\)

\(^{122}\) The “clean” civilized West feed by the work of migrants. We might look also to Western historical exploitation of natural resources in the African, Asian, and Latin American colonies, which continue today with transnational mining enterprises, and other forms of economic operations, including arms trafficking. The West might be read, then, as the “devourer” (the blow flies).
But why cover himself with the blood of immigrants? Martiel’s intersectional strategy makes us reflect on different subject positions, in this case based on race, ethnicity, and national origin. It speaks to forms of oppression to which his performance is a political reaction. The presentation of migrants as sources of life but leaven to death denounces capital machinations that exploit certain bodies, confining them to death worlds involving indentured servitude, deplorable life conditions, and human trafficking. On the other hand, Martiel’s black body, bathed in blood, reminds us of the many assassinations of black males on U.S. streets as a result of police repression.

**Estrangement and Affects in the Gallery Space**

The cooptation of performance artists by museums and galleries is inevitable in the case of artists like Martiel, who in the later years has put his energies into the multiple art events (exhibitions) he is invited to take part around the globe. In an interview for this research, Martiel informs that “en Estados Unidos yo no he hecho más ninguna pieza en espacio público, porque me he visto ocupado haciendo piezas para otro tipo de espacio… yo creo que el espacio público debería ser más explotado de lo que es” (Valencia, “Interview…”). [In the United States I have not done any more performances in public spaces, because I have been busy making pieces for another type of space ... I believe that public space should be more exploited than it is]. Traditional art centers are attracting performance artists as a way to endow their halls and show rooms with “live” art: “People want to be taken to a new place,” Donna De Salvo, the Whitney’s chief curator and deputy director for programs at MoMA told the *The New York Times*. In 2009, according to the newspaper, “MoMA added performance art to its department of media” (online).\(^{123}\) “In the age of the digital and

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\(^{123}\) The *New York Times* article adds: “In February, MoMA opened its first Media Lounge, a system of modular units on the second floor that presents the museum’s collection of single-channel videos. The lounge
the virtual and the mediated experience, there is something very visceral about watching live performance,” De Salvo added (Pogrebin 2012). Yet, that “visceral” constructed space of performance art might lose its intensity as performance is increasingly included in catalogues of events at art centers. I am referring to the anti-hygienic gesture of performance art, to its unfiltered potential in outdoor sites. As Martiel himself recognizes, in the open space “no hay filtro..., las personas dicen lo que piensan... las personas reaccionan. Porque en el espacio de la galería siempre hay como un mal y un bien, o sea el público está mirando y tú estás haciendo la pieza. Pero en el espacio público hay como mucha más libertad” [There is no filter..., people say what they think... people react. Because in the space of the gallery there is always an evil and a good, the public is watching and you are doing the piece. But in the public space there is much more freedom]. Martiel’s words show how he perceives the gallery space as one that controls and modulate affects. He recalls an anecdote in the U.S. that expounds on this situation:

Hay personas como que no entienden la propuesta [curadores e instituciones], o que incluso entendiendo la como que quieren proteger demasiado el cuerpo. Y me pasó por ejemplo en Ohio, en una pieza que hice en una Universidad. Era una pieza donde estaba dentro de un tanque que había que soldar desde el exterior y que creó todo un conflicto porque primero había que garantizar... bueno, estaban cuidando al artista, me estaban cuidando a mí, entonces eso es algo que te pone en conflicto con el modo en que se maneja el performance dentro del espacio. Entonces llegamos a la conclusión de que se iba a acomodar algo en el techo para cubrirlo y proteger estéticamente la pieza, pero el otro tema era que si yo me iba a quemar. Entonces querían que no entrara con ropa normal, sino con una ropa antifuego o algo así. Sentí que había toda una maquinaria del miedo que ellos tenían ante la pieza, que estaba como ya influenciándome a mí... decidí que lo iba a hacer desnudo... A veces [las galerías y las instituciones] le prestan más atención a la integridad del espacio que a la integridad física porque no entienden que la pieza tenga que ser de un modo, o que tenga que ser con elementos reales y no con elementos de artificio. Para mí mi trabajo es bastante conceptual y me interesa mucho como de donde vienen lo material, cuál es la procedencia de los materiales. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

invites viewers to select artworks through an iPad and experience them with historically accurate display technology” (Pogrebi 2012).
[There are people who do not understand the proposal [curators and institutions], or even understanding it as wanting to protect the body too much. And it happened to me, for example, in Ohio, in a piece I did at a university. It was a piece where I was inside a tank that had to be welded from the outside and that created conflict because first they were concerned with safety issues; they were taking care of me... There are conflicts with the way in which the performance is managed within the space. Then we came to the conclusion that something was going to be arranged on the ceiling to cover it, and aesthetically to protect the piece, but the other issue was if I was going to get burned. So they didn’t want me not to wear normal clothes, but fire-retardant clothes or something. I felt that there was a whole machinery of fear that they had before the piece, which was already influencing me ... I decided that I would do it naked... Sometimes [galleries and institutions] they pay more attention to the integrity of the space than to physical integrity because they do not understand that the piece has to be performed in a certain way, or that it has to be with real elements and not with elements of artifice. For me, my work is quite conceptual and I am very interested in where the material comes from, what is the origin of the materials]. (Valencia, “Interview…”)

As Martiel corroborates, institutional spaces modulate affects by controlling the materiality of the event, that is to say, the material components that are supposed to enter in contact with each other, involving the human body. Martiel’s performances connect the body to a realm of objects, substances of different origins integrating the human into a heterogeneous assemblage, a politically transient alliance. The capacity of this assemblage to provoke, to affect audiences in different forms, starts with the differentiated features of the elements within it, each one with a capacity and propensity to diminish or increase the other’s capacities. The exposure of Martiel’s naked body to such intensities definitely contributes to the potential of such an encounter, including the encounter with the audience.

It is relevant to note the recurrence of the naked body in Martiel’s performances outside Cuba; on the island, probably because he used to perform in streets and public sites (the public space is under strict surveillance), nudity was not an usual practice. After his

124 Martiel presented in 2009 the performance El cuerpo del silencio (The body of silence), in the outskirts of the Alejandro Garcia Caturla Elementary Art School, Havana, Cuba. Martiel walked nude through a rosebush causing wounds to his body. This is the first documented performance, at least in which Martiel used nudity.
performances were in demand by institutions in the U.S. and Europe, the naked body became a sort of attraction, as nudity poses an estrangement in our daily contact with others that cannot be deemed as an insignificant act. In an interview for Creator, the artist emphasizes that

El desnudo siempre fue y será para mí una liberación. Desnudarse es quitar filtros, jerarquías de poder, prejuicios en relación al cuerpo propio y al de otros. En un momento inicial fue la vía que tuve para aceptar mi cuerpo en una sociedad que ha estigmatizado al afrodescendiente. Contradictoriamente también es vulnerabilidad, pero a veces uno tiene que aceptar su fragilidad. Es parte de la condición humana. (Creator online)

[Nudism was always and will be a liberating force for me. To undress is to remove filters, hierarchies of power, prejudices in relation to one’s own body and that of others. In the beginning it was the way I had to accept my body in a society that has stigmatized the Afro-descendant. Contradictorily it implies vulnerability, but sometimes we have to accept our fragility. It is part of the human condition]. (Creator online)

The institutional space comes with an ideological and moral charge connected to social norms and order.125 If the institutional site generates expectations of behavior from the audience as well as actors/performers, Martiel’s nudity attempts to foreground the contestatory ontology of performance art, bringing to the fore not only the body as site where the violence of society is registered, but also the body as a site of resistance. As an embodied time-based practice, performance art is relevant for the “bodily entanglements” in its own production and the “sensate lures’ in its reception” (Hurley and Warner 99).

Looking at performance art we might “explore impulses and responses that social conventions shape but do not circumscribe” (Hurley and Warner 99). In other words, there is always a virtual potential in performance art to trigger impulses that cannot be subsumed

125 In effect, the very announcement of Martiel’s performance on CIFO website warms the audience beforehand: “nudity.” There is redundancy in the word, as the pictures of Martiel’s naked body are already on display for the curious visitor of the website who might wonder about going or not to the event. Such non-fortuitous coincidences suggest more research on the generation of affects within closed spaces.
by the regulatory sphere of the social. In Martiel’s case, the black naked body opens itself up to that social, regulated sphere as if getting rid of its restrictive nature. In effect, Martiel’s proposals do not underestimate such a display of blackness. Because of the compelling material production of the event that prompts the audience to get involved/participate, it is impossible to elude completely the estrangement posed by the display and the closeness of that “other” body. Martiel explores that anxiety produced by the closeness to the “stranger” (with respect to traditional white audiences in the U.S and Europe).

I had the opportunity to attend one of Martiel’s performances in Miami during Art Basel, one of the most important, transnational art festivals celebrated in the U.S. The event was scheduled as part of CIFO’s gallery exhibition *Toda percepción es una interpretación: You Are Part of It*, that presented pieces belonging to Ella Fontanals-Cisneros private collection. Martiel’s performance at CIFO was announced for 11:00 am, on December 1st 2016, on a handful of online sites. It was advertised as “a participatory performance by Cuban-born artist where his body replaces the fourth leg of a table. A meal, prepared by an undocumented Haitian chef will be placed on the table for spectators to consume” (Myartguides.com).

Among the pieces gathered by Fontanals-Cisneros collection for display includes *Condecoración Martiel*, a video that registered every detail of the surgical removal of a piece of the artist’s skin. The dissected skin was then introduced in a golden medal, hence

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126 I wonder to what extent such performances trigger that interrogation in affective/effective ways in the expectable white, trained/connoisseur audience, who are familiarized with unconventional, non-representational art forms.

127 The site presents itself as “the ultimate guide to the contemporary art world born to be the answer to the contemporary art audience’s growing need of being guided in a more and more complex worldwide reality.”
the title of the video-performance. I averted my gaze from the screen, when the scalpel started peeling, while sensing a sort of ripping. The video-performance made me feel bodily discomfort. After watching it, any person unfamiliar with Martiel’s work would wonder about the extremes of *Basamento*, the scheduled event for that day. Despite the very unpredictable nature of performance art, an art based on the contingency of the moment by irrupting into our daily lives, breaking precisely with expectations, the video foreshadowed our next experience.\(^{128}\) The inclusion of photographs of a 2015 version of *Basamento* in different announcements of CIFO’s event, also contributed to such a foreshadowing. Consequently, the notion of estrangement as an affect enabled by performance art seems to be challenged by the reach of documentation, which also generates bodily affects and predisposes the viewer before the event.

At the entrance of the gallery of Martiel’s performance, a big screen continually reproduced images of an immigrant’s hands preparing the dishes, as a voiceover (the cook’s) commented on personal experiences as a Haitian immigrant in the U.S. The voice emanating from the screen was loud enough to be heard; it had an insistent tone, like a ghostly presence whose phrases were repeated over and over to be noticed; the voice of the Haitian immigrant ghost, the living dead of Miami society, the ones who construct, build, and cook, is consumed like the dishes on a white table by a non-black audience. I looked around for people’s responses, reactions, to Martiel’s performance: everyone was either chatting, eating, or moving around. What follows is a brief piece about the reaction that *Basamento* provoked in one of the audience members:

\(^{128}\) Previous websites announcements, also included photographs from an earlier version in 2015 of *Basamento*. 
I start watching a video, on a screen by the door. A middle-aged black woman is speaking—that’s the voice I hear.
She speaks of her heritage. Why and when she came to America.
She speaks of the white folks. Not with hate, not with anger. Just speaks. Natural.
She worked hard and opened her own business.
She, a middle-aged black woman, came to America and succeeded.
Meanwhile, people still eat around the table.
People watch.
The table is set as an offering....
There’s tension in the air. The people eat around the table, while the naked black man still holds the table. Sometimes he moves, slightly, a leg, the other leg. He changes the shoulder that holds the corner of the table.
Will the man ever free himself?
Expectations. (Berriz for Cuban Heritage online)

“The naked black man,” says the observer/journalist. Indeed, there lies the political effect: the audience cannot dismiss the social fact, the race, the gender, and the nudity of the artist.
In the observer’s words, that combination sounds like an explosive mix: “there’s tension in the air.” At any moment, the black man will rebel against the indulgency of the white audience, that eats and converses while he supports the table—“offering.”

I felt guilty, like that observer, I could not eat, I could not avert my eyes from Martiel’s expression: he looked stoic, but extremely serious, with anger. There was more to add to Martiel’s sacrifice, as recalled by the journalist: the video, a performance within a performance, and the audience to increase the intensity of the scene. Gazes, curiosity for the free exotic meal, mouths tasting and talking, stomach noises, devouring the “offering,” Martiel’s sweat, cameras flashing, images from the video, a casual encounter with the Haitian woman/cook that smiles timidly, while joining discretely the audience—the only Haitian immigrant in the room.

129 The journalist adds: “Of course, everybody is waiting for something to happen at the end. That can’t be all. The naked black man holding a table while people around feast and stare can’t be all… Martiel is more than that” (online).
Much has been discussed in recent years about the nature of live performance art, documentation and digital performances. Mathew Reason reminds us of Peggy Phelan’s articulation of ephemerality in terms of disappearance, as ephemerality “describes how performance ceases to be at the same moment as it becomes” (1), whereas documentation reinforces such a concept. Documentation sheds light on the ephemerality, in its very goal to preserve an event, yet it posits further queries and analysis. Up to what point might we consider documentation a repetition of the performance, as it is through documented images that past events are continually watched, known, evaluated, and having an impact on people? (Jones 1997). Feminist performance art, for example, has left “resonances, traces and fragmentations” (Reason 2). I recall now Ana Medieta’s performances from the 1970s and ‘80s, of which not only photographs/videos but the very traces of her body on certain presentations remain as part of museum collections, like her drawings Untitled (Body Tracks) 1974 at Hayward Gallery.\(^\text{130}\) Traces, and fragments, as reproductions, shed some light on the original act, but are not “absolute representations of the thing itself,” affirms Reason (3).

Auslander further complicates the discussion when arguing that “the crucial relationship is not the one between the document and the performance but “the one between the document and its audience” (9). According to him, authenticity should be determined not by the criteria of ontology, but from the phenomenological point of view, that is: “the relationship to its beholder rather than to an ostensibly originary event” (9). Consequently, he proposes a more radical posture:

They may not even depend on whether the event actually happened. It may well be that our sense of the presence, power, and authenticity of these pieces derives not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event but from perceiving the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artist’s aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience. (9).

This approach proves valid when we review the online writing material on Martiel’s performances, critics and chronicles based on the documentation material. Furthermore, how do we approach Martiel’s planning of documentation ahead a performance, in order to use it for future exhibitions as surrogate of the artist?

Para mí es super importante la documentación. Yo no hago ninguna pieza si no tengo una buena cámara y una buena fotografía. Y luego eso yo lo monto en mi sitio web porque es algo que tengo y que sé que de algún modo va a ser beneficioso para los artistas (fotógrafos)… Por ejemplo, a mí me invitan a exposiciones a las que no puedo ir personalmente o a las que les interesa un video, una fotografía y una pieza y lo que yo hago es… imprimir la fotografía y exponerla. En muchas exposiciones en las que yo no he participado físicamente, al final ha estado la fotografía de la pieza. Porque es como… llega el punto que… o sea se convierte en una obra como independiente de lo que fue el performance. (entrevista personal)

[For me the documentation is super important. I do not do any pieces if I do not have a good camera and a good photographer. And then I put it on my website because it is something I have and I know that in some way it will be beneficial for artists (photographers) ... For example, I am invited to exhibitions that I cannot go personally or to those who are interested in a video, a photograph and a piece and what I do is ... print the photograph and exhibit it. In many exhibits in which I have not participated physically, in the end there has been the photograph of the piece. Because it's like ... the point that ... it becomes a work independent of what the performance was.]

(Valencia, “Interview…”)

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131 According to Martiel: “Por lo general cuando yo pienso en un performance es lo primero, pienso en la idea y luego pienso en la documentación, del modo que la quiera. Actualmente estoy pensando mucho más en el video que antes pensaba un poco más en la fotografía. Tengo de los dos, pero no me he dedicado a editar video, ahora estoy como más enfocado en cómo contar la historia a través del video que es al final lo que queda y que es mucho más fiel siento, actualmente, que la fotografía. Entonces es como, para mí es sumamente importante porque es lo que hace que el trabajo pueda trascender y por lo general lo que hago es trabajar con fotógrafos y así, pueden ser artistas o pueden ser fotógrafos profesionales”[Usually when I think about a performance, documentation comes first, I think about the idea and then I think about the documentation, the way I want it. I'm thinking a lot more about the video ... I used to think a little more about photography. I have both, but I have not dedicated time to editing video, now I am more focused on how to tell the story through video that is, in the end, what is left and it is much more faithful, I feel, than photography. Then it's like, for me, it's extremely important because it's what makes the work transcend and what I usually do is work with photographers: they can be professional artists or photographers] (personal interview).
The imbrication of the live event and video (a performance in itself made intentionally for the video platform) brings to the discussion, as we verified with Basamento, how new technologies participate in the situated, time-based experience. The relation between Martiel’s body and the video-performance brings to the fore the anxiety over the disappearance of every lived moment. In this case, such anxiety is connected to a socio-political issue. The edition of the video emphasized repetition: it went over and over the motion of the Hatian immigrant’s hands and phrases. It almost sounded like a refrain, a recitation. At the same time that such a recorded presence reminds us of the transience of live performances, it also casts light on the ritual nature of our daily actions. Repetition is part of our social existence, always keeping a trace of the past, of the previous movement or action to not forget.

Moreover, repetition produces a sensation of tiredness stemming from the reproduction of the immigrant’s image/voice. It was as if we could feel the exhaustion, a fatigue almost secular, ancient. In generating that sensation, the video-performance offers a glimpse into the escape from colonialism’s devastating outcomes through migration and discrimination, and marginalization in the host societies: nothing less than the everyday reality of concealed violence that escapes our attention because of its repetitive nature, or because of our indifference toward it. Haitian immigrants, or Little Haiti in Miami, are the undesired, racialized community: the “other” immigrants in a city comprised mainly by immigrants. Yet, the exhaustion of the immigrant voice through repetition also puts endurance at the center of life in Miami (or host society): the repetitive phrase rings in our ears like the woman’s mantra, a ritual phrase to transcend the odds. Martiel’s posture under
the table, supporting it stoically, enters in tandem with the video sound and image: the black body resists, endures.

The Haitian woman in the video speaks of an absence-presence, the trace, the immigrant ghost that interrogates the present turned into past again as it foreshadows its own futurity, like the living dead in *Where My Feet Might Not Reach*. In fact, the performance reaches rupture through rebellion and, hence, change: Martiel rises abruptly from the floor of the gallery and, in so doing, lets the food spill, unfit for eating, useless to the indulgent but speechless audience. As Martina Cardoni comments: “I lavori di Martiel fanno sì che non si giri la testa dall’altra parte, che non si faccia finta di nulla, e ci ricordano quello che succede nel mondo una volta in più: verità scomode che destabilizzano la nostra quotidiana inconsapevolezza”[ Martiel's work does not make us turn our heads, so that we do not pretend that nothing is going on, and reminds us of what's happening in the world once more: uncomfortable truth that destabilizes our daily unconsciousness] (*Art in Write Out* online).
Live performance art, according to Amelia Jones, through “its very performativity and unveiling of the body of the artist, surfaces the insufficiency and incoherence of the body-as-subject and its inability to deliver itself fully (whether to the subject-in-performance her/himself or to the one who engages with this body)” (Jones 13). She concludes that live performances do not guarantee total access to any truth more than its own documentation. There is always a lack, she affirms, a “projected desire” onto what we see in the live act or in its reproduction. Presence does not guarantee anything. In any case, performance art showcases the supplementarity of documentation.

I argue that Martiel’s extreme performances, which usually involve the laceration of the body in some sense, counteract that denial of presence conveyed by Jones. The very attempt against the body, surfaces and underscores its materiality as a situated experience of the flesh. Such anxiety over presence, which simultaneously sheds light on the ephemerality of live performance, emphasizes the body at the core of social relations, leaving in it a multiplicity of signals. It is precisely the living through the body that Martiel capitalizes on, to expose it as “vittima e attore allo stesso tempo” (Cardoni) [victim and actor at the same time] (Cardoni for Art in Write Out online).

Therefore, Martiel’s body has become a body of traces itself, in its struggle to resist the fleeting materiality of performance, at the same time that affirms it as a trace or as a “presence in absentia,” as Jones would put it. I advance that Martiel’s body has been transformed into a live archive. In 2016, in Palermo, Italy, for the exhibition CUBA. Tatuare la storia, Martiel had a pest exterminator fumigate his body with insecticide for cockroaches. The piece was a form of protest against “neo-Nazi and xenophobic practices which are increasing in European countries as consequence of the economic crisis and
racist policies generated by right-wing parties against immigrants and non-white minorities (artist website).” For the same exhibition, but at Padiglione d’Arte Contemporanea (PAC), in Milan, a hunting arrow crosses Martiel’s waist. The same year, at Fallsburg, USA, a dried out trunk of a pear tree compressed his legs for 8 hours, and on May 1st, in homage to International Workers Day, he remained standing for two hours at the Y Gallery in New York, with “the collar of a blue shirt stitched to the skin around my neck” (artist website).

I mention only four of the 2016 multiple performances Martiel presented around the world, including different cities in Italy and USA, Guatemala, México, Chile, Sweden, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. Such a journey of the body-archive, as container of the traces of previous events, of the subject positions Martiel inhabits throughout his trajectory as both immigrant himself and transnational artist, probably tell a closer story to that truth that performers pursue on site.

**Conclusions**

Thus far I have outlined the politics of the body as repository of socio-economic and political violence. Martiel’s performances engage in an affective connectivity with multiple elements (artificial matter, objects, and so forth) that inflict a violence upon the artist’s body. Through this sensorial affectivity Martiel advances his political stance as to make visible the racialized and nationalized social images that reduce certain bodies to specific grids of meaning, inflicting a violence on them. However, the non-space of the performance as a site of fugue with respect to structures of domination, is permanently coopted by institutions that confine artists to “safe” spaces. In this sense, Martiel’s body becomes a commodity in circulation from one gallery site to the other, marked by the “extreme” resistance of blackness.
I have also explored the use of documentation as performance in gallery sites and its potential for affects intensification and anticipation for the audience, as well as its multilayered interpretation. According to Auslander, “the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such” (5). He refers to the impossibility of photography, for example, to grasp the energy of the audience; however, the reproduction permits the event to acquire new life as it is evaluated indefinitely by new audiences. As consumers of such documentation, he affirms, our concern is “with recreating the artist’s work, not the total interaction” (7). I do not agree with that level of determinacy of the documentation process posited by Auslander, because “there is no stable thing, an “emotion” (or a “feeling” or an “affect”), that exists transhistorically, transculturally, or, indeed, outside of or prior to its cultural expressions” (Gobert 110). In other words, affects are situated experiences of the body, in the space of encounters; the underestimation of the live event in terms of audience undermines the performativity of the event, precisely in its energy charged nature, in producing clusters of sensations/thoughts, and creating its own lines of flight with regard to structures (including feelings) of control, albeit the fleeting nature of the event. I do agree with Auslander in the potentiality of documentation to create new consumers which implies “new recreations of the artist’s work.” Documentation travels, participates in the rumor about the artist and his/her work, enabling and spreading further encounters, which ultimately serves to enrich the “knowledge” about his/her existence beyond frontiers.

Martiel’s performances travel beyond the possibilities of the artist’s body. Documentation creates an image of the artist that expands his marketability in a dense, competitive global scene. Galleries provide art magazines and guides with photographs to
promote audience attendance to artistic presentations. Sometimes, those photographs belong to previous events, but serve as a medium, a vehicle of publicity, more powerful that the written words on the online blogs and articles where the performance documentation is published. Interviews, chronicles and critiques are accompanied by such images of Martiel’s body sacrifice.

The BBC published recently an article on the boom of performance art. The British conglomerate attributed the popularity outside the “real of art:” “in the domain of economics. The perpetual boom of the art market, in the face of rising inequality and a broader economic slowdown, has transformed nearly every sector of artistic creation, from museums and public installations to magazines to art schools” (Farago 2014). The arts, including performance, are being consumed as temporal commodities for the masses. Farago comments that in the past “institutions and collectors only acquired photo or video documentation of performance art. Increasingly, they are now treating performances more like musical scores.” He notes that these institutions even buy the rights to re-stage performances.

The article mentions Marina Abramović’s presentation at MoMA in 2010, with the performance The Artist Is Present. Abramović sat facing visitors for more than 700 hours, while “visitors to MoMA waited in line for up to eight hours to stare into Abramović’s eyes” (Farago).132 Interestingly, the performance was a restaging of an earlier piece, while others consisting of videos and photographs of a 40 year career were exhibited on a separate

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132 Also check MoMA press release: “Abramović will sit in silence at a table in the Museum’s Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium during public hours, passively inviting visitors to take the seat across from her for as long as they choose within the timeframe of the Museum’s hours of operation. Although she will not respond, participation by Museum visitors completes the piece and allows them to have a personal experience with the artist and the artwork” (online).
floor, or restaged by younger performers. The title of a repeated, enduring performance of two weeks, is the promise of “presence,” “to behold the Abramovic in the flesh,” as Elizabeth Greenwood put it for *The Atlantic*. Beyond theoretical implications, the *Artist Is Present* might allow us to reflect on how the market capitalizes on both documentation and the artist’s body as presence. This phenomenon might be connected to the writers’ tours in the previous chapter, where the reader can obtain an autograph, a personal piece of the artist, like a fetish. Abramović’s success at MoMa is not only the result of a rich and historical trajectory, but of vast publicity that used her documentation and the promise of presence vis-à-vis the artist, for a massive audience who has never seen her in person.133

Performance art, as I have shown, has become a seductive attraction for audiences, an object of desire constructed in times of economic decay around the world for the expansion of circuits of consumption, and hence, for profit. In the case of young, emerging figures, like Martiel, documentation has become a vehicle to make his work known, appreciated, and then being invited to international biennials, festivals, solo and collective exhibitions.134 In an interview with the *Miami Rail*, he asserts that “sometimes I discursively transcend the fact that I am black, and sometimes I do not” (Veliz 2015). I bring the racial question into play, as documentation anticipates it. Blackness constitutes a fixed marker in our mental spaces, an indexer of other categories of social dynamics. So, how to avoid the “color” of the body?

133 In effect, the reach of the event expanded to internet. “A daily live feed on MoMA’s Web site, moma.org, has had close to 800,000 hits. A Flickr site with head shots of every sitter has been accessed close to 600,000 times” (Cotter 2010, *The New York Times*).

134 On another note, I found a website where photographs of Martiel’s performances are displayed for sale: https://www.artspace.com/carlos-martiel/segregation-9. The photographs, at the price of 2, 500 dollars each, are announced as “unique work,” and signed by the artist on verso. I will not enter in a discussion about this work; I just want to call attention to the issue of originality and the signature of the artist as guarantee of a “unique” access to the world of the artist like in Abramovic’s *The Artist Is Present*. Yet, such access seems denied, as a barbed wire fence separates him from us, and his eyes look somewhere else.
Martiel inflicts violence on his body as it is captured through documentation, not to create a “community” with the audience. According to Cardoni, his performances convey a form of “non-vivere nel proprio corpo, ma in quello degli altri, in un circolo empatico senza fine. Vivere nel tuo corpo” [Not to live in one's body, but in that of others, in an endless empathic circle. Living in your body]. This extract from an Italian art blog is supposed to convey a cosmopolitan ethical stance, yet it enters in conflict with Martiel’s positioning of his work. Martiel’s performances make us feel that “the stranger” is a subject that cannot be “cut off from the histories of its determination” (Ahmed 2000, 5). He does not create “a community of strangers,” but rather makes us feel through our very skin, the impossibility to embody the lived experience of the other, the foreign, the abject body of globalization.
Final Conclusions

Intermittently throughout its life, one of the most popular segments of *Esta Noche Tu Night* was “el fronterizo” (the border patrol). The segment played with the ambivalence of border discourse and identity. *Fronterizo*, in itself, is a slippery term that resists a fixed meaning: according to the dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish language, it conveys two meanings as an adjective: 1) a person, town, etc., located in the frontier, and 2) something apparently close or near to another. Yet, these meanings may be overlapped with another that belongs to the field of psychology: 3) a disorder related to widespread instability of mood, self-image and behavior, as well as a sense of identity, which can lead to periods of dissociation. The intermingling of all these meanings forces us to reflect on the liminality of diaspora experience, which entangles multiple negotiations of identity—collective, individual, linguistic, and so on (Bhabha 1994; Naficy 1993). It is no coincidence that “el fronterizo” came out in 2010 after the state of Arizona passed legislation against illegal immigration that provoked nationwide debates and protests. It would be naive to not relate “el fronterizo” to marketing purposes, since the show was replicated on the west coast by Spanish Broadcasting System, Inc. (“SBS”), owner of Mega TV. As such, “el fronterizo” might be considered a wink to other immigrant groups in the country for the sake of audiences; “el fronterizo” appealed to the multiplicity of Hispanic identities. Using linguistic stereotyped notions of national origin, the segment simultaneously aimed at ethnic differentiation within the Hispanic community in the USA, and to the commonalities within its diverse population. Recent Cuban émigrés forge bounds and bonds in their everyday life with other Latino groups in the city that manifest
themselves in cultural production. I bring up this TV segment as it leaves open the possibility for new approaches to the study of local television, concerning discursive strategies for identity negotiation and power within the Latino communities. On this issue, further research should be undertaken\textsuperscript{135} as well as new comparative approaches beyond traditional research of communities bonded by a singular national origin. Miami, considered the U.S. Latino capital in terms of media and entertainment industries, constitutes a rich scenario for cultural studies to engage in the different ways television participates in the building of Latino community, and in the interplay of the local and the global from diverse angles.

In this dissertation, I investigated how local television has served the children of the Cuban revolution to resist assimilation in Miami by engaging in a familiarity quest in the midst of overwhelming changes and challenges, to anchor themselves in the idea of community, and to remain updated and connected to events on the island. Diasporic media play a significant role: they facilitate “virtual everyday mediated travel” and strengthening of transnational connections” (Georgiou 2008, 225-227).

By targeting recent Cuban émigrés, América TeVé has found its niche in the city as the number of arrivals has doubled since 2012, a larger segment of which prefers Spanish language TV programming. According to PEW Research Center

Overall, 56,406 Cubans entered the U.S. via ports of entry in fiscal year 2016, up 31\% from fiscal 2015 when 43,159 Cubans entered the same way, according to the latest U.S. Customs and Border Protection data. Fiscal 2015 saw an even larger surge, as Cuban entries jumped 78\% over 2014, when 24,278 Cubans entered the U.S. And those 2014 numbers had already increased dramatically from previous years after the Cuban government lifted travel restrictions.(\textit{PEW} online 2017)

\textsuperscript{135} On \textit{Making a Life in Multietnic Miami: Immigration and the Rrise of a Global City}, Elizabeth M Aranda, Sallie Hughes, Elena Sabogal make an appealing claim about the vacuum in media production to tap other Latino immigrants in Miami.
Hence, I approached Cubannes not only as an affective device but also as commodity, a resource oriented to target such viewers in a city with a dominant Cuban population. However, this increasing pattern is expected to stop after President Obama’s derogation of the “Wet Foot-Dry Foot” hours before the transfer of power to Donald Trump. With English being the chosen first language among the younger arrivals (children and teenagers) once they integrate into the school system, along with the growing number of immigrants from other Latin American nations, it becomes necessary to follow-up on the current catering of América Tevé to Cubans, and eventual switches or nuances regarding audiences.

Equally important would be to go in-depth on the intimate communication dynamics that “el paquete” is fostering as an alternative to the highly regulated public sphere on the island. Moreover, given the increasing intensity and disjunction of media, migratory, financial and ideological flows intrinsic to globalization, linguistic and national communities enter into another dimension of legitimacy not fully determined by the state (Duchêne & Heller 2012). Turkish and Korean soap-operas intermingle within “el paquete” with HBO and Netflix series, as well as with Miami televisual products from different stations, including Univision. “El paquete’s” offer might be more eclectic and “global” than the very options available to Cubans in Miami through Comcast or Direct TV. In addition, the inclusion of products from other linguistic markets is defying conservative

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136 I quote CNN on Obama’s announcement: “The policy, in place for more than two decades, had applied solely to Cubans. Following a mass exodus of Cubans to the United States, former President Bill Clinton in the mid-1990s changed the ‘open door’ policy on Cuban refugees —first established by President Lyndon B. Johnson— to the “wet foot, dry foot” policy that repatriated Cubans intercepted at sea but allowed those who reached land to stay” (CNN online).
conceptualizations on cultural proximity in the consumption of media and entertainment products, and is expanding the transnational dimension of the cultural televisual spatiality already created between the U.S. and Cuba.

During my nights in Cuba in December 2017, I would sit with my sister to watch the latest episodes of “Love and Punishment,” a Turkish soap-opera included in “el paquete.” Suddenly, I heard from the national news program on TV that Turkey was opening a direct flight to Havana, and that new commercial agreements among the two countries were in progress. That was the first time I heard of Turkey materializing economic projects with Cuba. But the uncanny nature of such a coincidence between two realities did not escape me: on the one hand, the Turkish soap-opera, and on the other, Turkish Airlines; one traveling virtually and illegally through “el paquete” to Cuban homes; the latter, making its way to Cuba by virtue of States’ agreements and bringing not images but “actual” people to the island. Yet, which of these realities would have more impact on the daily lives of Cubans? How many really care about the Turkish government and Castro’s deal? Which “reality” would imply a degree of familiarization with a country Cubans need to go through a visa process to visit and most likely would be denied? The televisual transnational spatiality in which I have included “el paquete” is stretching out Cubans’ vision of the current world, allowing them to become “mobile” subjects from home: a home increasingly detached from the State’s desires and interpellations.

By moving away from Cuban State demands and control, from its worn-out paradigms (political, aesthetical and ethical), some Cuban writers and artists raised under the revolution have become errant subjects of today’s world. Scholarly studies on Cuban

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137 What to make of this sort of disparate conditions in today’s globalized world, where some just might aspire to know or obtain the “virtual” (images) of it?
culture produced over the last 20 years have tended to integrate migrant artists and writers and those who remain on the island, as the approach has been an inclusive one that avoids separations among creators of an increasingly “greater” Cuba, to recall Manzor’s redeployment of Ana López’s term. Even though I have not erased the island context to explain the migratory impulses of the children of the revolution (not only physical, but artistically and ideologically speaking), neither did I avoid a comparative approach at certain moments, the focus remained on the children of the revolution in the diaspora. As Glick-Schiller affirms, “it is only recently that the mobilities of disempowered people have been examined through the optic of cosmopolitanism” (406). I turned to those mobile subjects in the novels La Viajera and Livadia, and in the analysis of Martiel’s performances, from what I term “nomadic cosmopolitanism,” which illuminates a relation with the world not based on a moral openness to what is different, but on the affirmation of difference as the impossibility to become or apprehend the other.

Cuban TV writers, producers, and anchors in Miami, and more mobile subjects like Karla Suárez, and José Manuel Prieto (writers), and Carlos Martiel and Tania Bruguera (performers) travel under similar conditions, through university programs, scholarships and artistic residencies granted by Western foundations and governments, or invited to art and literary venues, and so forth. In their different spaces (literature and performance art), Prieto, Suárez and Martiel might be considered privileged travelers, yet they have witnessed circumstances only knowable to migrants from the global south such as job search, legalization of immigration status, suspicion and/or racialization by the locals like the one suffered by J, in Livadia, from the cautious Crimean tenants at the pension house. Studies of Cuban exilic and diasporic subjectivities usually focus on the centrality of the
homeland (physical or imaginary) in the recreation of selfhood, and neglect to bring up questions of otherness in relation to the discourses that circulate globally and in the host societies towards increasing immigration. Portes and Purhmann (2014) have diagnosed the economic and political causes of the transnational affiliation of late Cuban immigrants in the U.S.

If in the U.S. (despite the differences regarding privileges conferred to each migratory wave) Cubans enjoy a preferential welcoming, in Europe immigration policies and racial dynamics in host societies have an impact on the life of Cuban migrants. In this sense, I agree with Berg concerning the children of the revolution in Spain:

It is in this context of territorial nationalism, jealous body politic, antagonistic relations between the government and dominant exile groups, and practices of exclusion in host societies that cosmopolitan ideals exert a certain attraction to people. (303)

Cuban immigrants, particularly of the last two decades who are the object of my study, are not alienated from or de-familiarized with Western discourses and emotions toward cultural “others.”

I stressed the concept of internationalism as key to understanding the transformation of a model of citizenship: from a simultaneous commitment and identification with a socialist cosmos and Third World liberation and anti-colonization movements, to a “New (Wo)Man” of nomadic potential. The nomadic here points to two different yet interrelated phenomena: a mobility that dismantles borders and fixed identities, including linguistics,

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138 Portes and Purhmann (2014) have diagnosed the economic and political causes of the transnational affiliation of late Cuban immigrants in the U.S.

139 Because of the multiple alliances and positionalities of diasporas within transnational spheres, host and original societies, Western States are experiencing the impossibility or inefficacy to control/locate them, to manage their loyalty. In fact, multiculturalism continues to be an ambivalent and polemic discourse and project as it attempts to provide equality and eliminate racism through double edged sword policies that simultaneously coopt immigrants, and create space for further surveillance of multicultural local communities (Puar 2007). This situation feeds into different public discourses of immigrants as pollutants to the national body. For example, Puar describes how white hegemony is consolidated not by the exclusion of the “ethnic” but rather through liberal multiculturalist policies which make apparent the separation of ethnic communities (31). Equally important is the fact that precisely in those multicultural societies, discourses of hate and fear circulate, attached to the objects of these emotions as Sarah Ahmed (2004) reminds us.
and an ethics of affirmation of “what is not contained in the present conditions,” that is to say, “the quest for new creative alternatives” (Braidotti 52). In the novels *Livadia*, by José Maniel Prieto and *La Viajera*, by Karla Suárez, the transcendental “being” in the world of the “New Man” was transformed into a multiplicity of mobile practices encompassing languages, bodily connections that enable different forms of solidarities. As such, the characters experience a process of continuous actualization.

By erasing Cuba as a compelling idea and place, and substituting it with the post-Soviet Russian landscape, while encompassing a nomadic and materialistic subjectivity that impulses the character to cross East and West borders in search of capital accumulation (monetarily and literarily), *Livadia* brings to the fore the decentered socioeconomic dynamics that followed the fall of the communist bloc, and the human/economic fluxes that this phenomenon brought about. I also stressed the nomad as a subject who does not appear in translation; rather, the nomad “travels” fluently between languages, is affected by languages’ intensities and affects them thus contesting linguistic borders and limits, also in defiance of the monolingual agenda of nation-states.

The space of *écriture* within the novel allows an intertextual and self-referential game that sheds light on the self-positioning of Prieto as a cosmopolitan subject/writer within a “world literature” of particularly exquisite demand. However, despite the erasure of Cuba (and probably because of it), the question of origin constantly returns, either as a cipher or a reproach from critics of Cuban literature, and as a marketing strategy by publishing houses and their advertising networks. The same goes for Karla Suárez, as her place of birth and late departure seem to constitute a commodity for publishing houses that present authors from Cuba as revealers of the ultimate mystique of tropical socialism and
its post-cold war avatars (Valencia, “Interviews with Suárez and her French editor”). In addition, within the terms of the market, the novel as genre figures as the pathway to gain the attention of publishing houses and, hence prestige as a writer.

Different from the nomad polyglot subject in *Livadia*, that seems to pursue the Aleph (as the bottommost world) in the space of écriture and language multiplicity, *La Viajera* presents the body at the core of subject relations and the experience of errancy; and, relevant to our discussion on the “New Man,” the nomad is a woman. It is pertinent to note that within the *Proyecto Diáspora(s)* there were no women writers. Such absence—considering the preponderance of the concept over the lyrical “I” in *Diáspora(s)*—should be noted in these conclusions: thinking *a posteriori* about my analysis of *Livadia*, I find intriguing the exquisite literary palate of the nomad J who appeals to women’s letters, but does not “wink” at any woman of “literary” resonance. Furthermore, the space of the writer V (his Siberian lover) is repossessed by the male narrator who writes the draft (what we as readers are supposed to read), and makes of it nothing more than a playful literary game to wonder about all possible explanations of perceived reality (including dreams and parallel dimensions). The world of knowledge (encyclopedic, literary, and even scientific) is amalgamated in a space of resonances stemming from Beckett, Nabokov, Borges—all renowned male cosmopolitan writers—and articulated in the literary artfulness of the author—as annotated by critics—, conforming an erudite male literary universe all together.\footnote{Such imbrication of “saberes” in literary artistry, compelled me to pose a final annotation of “resonance:” the remarkable scarcity of women in literary history under the revolution, the allure of the “New Man of letters,” an allure mitigated in the 1990s by “las novísimas,” also with respect to the transnational sphere. I should also add that the group Orígenes, against which *Diáspora(s)* conceptualized itself, had the imprint of a woman, the Spaniard María Zambrano, and Fina García Marruz figured as one of its prestigious members.}
In *La Viajera* traveling involves mobility of the self and others in contact, an ethical stance toward the world not as universal given, but as a place where difference is not assimilated into sameness. Suárez replaces the transcendental quest of the internationalism of her generation with a situational ethics that involves creative assemblages, that is, emergent solidary unities that efface relations of power for mutual “service” or affect. Suárez puts a woman at the core of globalized human flows. In presenting different ways of being a world traveler, the novel might be considered a vantage point to observe the contradictions/paradoxes of postmodernity, in which post-hegemony, the end of State hegemony and the ubiquity of global capitalism, means neither the total dissolution of national borders nor the embrace of immigrants from the global South by Western societies. As such, the multiple forms in which one may experience “travel” are still connected to structures of feelings and histories resulting from differentiated and asymmetric world power relations. Migrancy in Europe might express a whole different situation from the one experienced by Cuban historical exiles or by the children of the revolution in Miami, who, despite to not being welcomed with the same prerogatives of the former, were granted immediate residency upon illegal arrival.

Carlos Martiel bears testimony with his own body of such different histories of “welcoming” and to the effect of violence by the State on the individual in different places (all the countries where he has lived temporarily or exhibited). Interestingly, Martiel is not the typical child of the revolution, but the offspring of its decay. His straight forward political art might contrast with Prieto’s avoidance of the political, even though Prieto’s erasure of any reference to Cuba constitutes a political literary act like Suárez’s

141 For Deleuze the wasp and orchid create a “becoming” or symbiotic emergent unit.
replacement of the term “migrant,” with the surrogate “traveler,” which cancels the negative ideological load ingrained in the Cuban imaginary under the revolution towards migration.

As an irreverent and interventionist social practice, performance art is part of the history of resistance to dictatorial rule in Cuba and Latin America over the last forty years. Performance art foregrounds the body as a site of State violence, but also of struggle and liberation. Martiel has taken such potential to denounce world histories of colonization and racialization, to contemporary fluxes from the global South to Western societies and the multiple forms of biopolitics that “diffuse networks of control” (Puar 163) perpetrate.

As such, Martiel’s art might be interpreted as “artivism,” making visible intersectional identities as the “byproducts of attempts to still and quell the perpetual motion of assemblages, to capture and reduce them” (Puar 213). That is, Martiel’s performances, by putting at the forefront the body as the site of sacrifice, index the categories in which societies have gridded the subject, particularly those considered “statistical outliers,” like the poor, immigrants, and racial minorities (blacks, in particular). In so doing, he underscores the underlying related systems of domination and power in contemporary transnational mobility of bodies, and their connection to past inhumanity. While Circe-Suárez need the bitácora to record in an affective way unnarrable experiences that shed light on the intense “nature” of mobility and transient alliances with immigrants of an array of provenances, Martiel uses his body as a repository of the ineffable. If Circe’s bodily connections produce alternatives that elicit hope and love in the midst of globalization, bringing to the fore a positive engagement within a globalized world, Martiel’s attention to intersectionality makes visible a fierce ongoing globalization, the
structures of domination that cast light on the violent internal “logic” of modernity and its post era, beyond the hegemony of the nation-states. The body becomes the ultimate recipient of such a violent history, the visible scar: a presence.

Despite Martiel’s intention to work with contexts everywhere he moves, which somehow erases his national identity, galleries and museums in Europe underscore Martiel’s national origin, to function as a motif in relation to audience interest. Furthermore, art websites and pages of artistic institutions in Italy, for instance, do not even mention Martiel’s current place of residency, the U.S. (check for instance Griomat.com). It is as if a Cuba connected to the U.S. loses its enticement: at the end of the day, it is art from contemporary Cuba that is attracting worldwide attention of art collectors and dealers, mainly since the late 1990s. The branding of the place, as art constitutes a commodity, reflects the dialogic relationship between globalization and locality, the “nativist” authentic seal (albeit “contaminated”) claimed by cosmopolitan audiences, art centers, private collectors, and so forth.

The idea of Cuba as a point of departure or as one of the stations in the works studied in this dissertation, contrasts with the reincorporation of Cuba as “the place,” and ultimately, as a commodity by the market. In so doing, the post-national imaginaries that nuance or erase Cuba as a marker of identity are anulled by publishing houses and their promotional endeavors’ quest for origin. Consequently, a Cubannes imposed from without reproduces itself as does the ruinous Old Havana architecture in most of the “selling” images that circulate globally, in particular, after the political rapprochement between Havana and Washington. Self-representing images of authors and artists do not necessarily converge with the expectations of the market (Pérez 2008). A conflicting relation to the
notion of place makes visible the disjunction between works/authors and the market, that is, between the vibrant nomadic and transnational spatialities (non-places) that dislocate questions of national origins and centers in the texts and performances studied here, and the diffuse institutional networks represented by publishing conglomerates that re-capture such fugues.
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