

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Imagining Cuba: Emigration, Tourism, and Imperialist Nostalgia
in the Work of Spanish Women Writers and Photographers
(1992-2015)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Jennifer Linda Monti

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor María Teresa de Zubiaurre, Chair

The year 1992 marked a turning point for Spain. The Barcelona Olympics, the Seville World Exposition, and the Quincentennial of Columbus' first voyage to the Americas kickstarted a renaissance for the Iberian country, as it entered into a globalized economy. Though the 1992 celebrations were criticized by many for their problematic glorification of Spain's colonial history, this particular year also gave birth to a newfound interest in Cuba, one of Spain's most precious colonies, lost in 1898. Literary texts, films, documentaries, photographs, and art focused on the Caribbean island began circulating in Spain in an unprecedented manner, as artists and the public alike showed a growing enthusiasm towards Cuba, its history, and its culture.

By analyzing novels, theater, a tourist guidebook, a film, and two photographic series, this interdisciplinary and transatlantic dissertation studies the image of Cuba promoted through the work of Spanish women writers (Carme Riera, Magrarity Aritzeta, María Teresa Álvarez, Ángel Aymar i Ragolta, Isabel Segura) and photographers (Cristina García Rodero, and Isabel Muñoz) between 1992 and 2015. I maintain that though conceived with good intentions, the literary and cultural productions discussed herein offer a simplistic, stereotypical, and at times fetishizing image of Cuba. Most works fail at openly criticizing Spain's dark colonial history and choose, instead, to grant Spanish women a voice, an agency, and a subjectivity, wishing to rescue them from historical oblivion. While significant, this "gendered choice" is nevertheless paradoxical, for it obscures the role that Western women, alongside men, played in the colonization process and in the oppression of others.

The westernized images of Cuba offered by the writers and photographers in this project, as well as the omission of Spain's colonial actions, support what scholars call imperialist nostalgia—the longing for a past whose brutality has been concealed and forgotten. The works that I study are the offspring of this particular form of nostalgia, which finds its truest expression in the problematic clichés and images used, during the last thirty years, in Spanish literature and photographs focused on Cuba, as well as in Spain's new forms of economic colonialism on the island.

This dissertation of Jennifer Linda Monti is approved.

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*A Julio, Alessandro e Cosimo—
perché senza di voi, niente sarebbe possibile*

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PREFACE

When I first visited Cuba in November 2014 to attend a conference on Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, I did so as a scholar intent on studying Spanish literature, but who happened to have a predilection for the novel *Sab* (1841). I knew little about the Caribbean island and its culture and was extremely curious to witness the Cuban reality with my own eyes. As is oftentimes the case, my brief stay defied all expectations and, more importantly, provided the inspiration for this dissertation.

Through my studies I was familiar with Cuba's history and its canonical literary texts. I was well aware that Spain had occupied the island for centuries, and that it considered it one of its most important (if not *the* most important) colonies. Its geographical position was ideal for trade—as the island sits at a crossroad between Africa, Europe, and the entire American continent, which also favored an effortless exchange of culture and ideas¹—and its wealthy, fructiferous lands were an endless source of income. What eluded me prior to my ominous trip, however, was the strong connection that existed during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries between Cuba and Catalonia, the wealthiest and most industrialized Spanish autonomy, and the one in search of political independence. As the Catalan economy expanded following its eighteenth-century industrial revolution, Cuba and its virgin market proved to be the ideal site for such expansion. Next to the sterile aspects of commercial trade, Cuba also opened its doors to Catalan emigrants who voyaged across the Atlantic on several occasions to make the Caribbean island their new home. As ideas travelled to-and-fro between the Spanish colony and Catalonia,

¹ Among the most notable exchanges between the two countries is the practice of Spiritism, a nineteenth-century philosophy, science, and religion systematized by the French educator Allan Kardec (Hoppolyte Léon Denizard Rivail) in his book called *The Spirits Book* (1857). According to Ulisses Castillo, Spiritism rapidly expanded in Cuba both in the private and public sector through several institutions and newspapers (5).

they left their mark in the form of architectural constructions, language idioms, gastronomy, history, politics, cinema, photography, and certainly literature.

As I began my quest to uncover Catalan literature focused on Cuba, I came across a plethora of texts that spanned throughout the centuries: soldiers' letters, merchants' notes, newspaper articles, memories, emigrants' diaries, poetry, theater, tourist guidebooks, and novels. What caught my attention, however, was the quasi-inexplicable increase in the production of texts centered on Cuba that surfaced around and after the year 1992, as if this particular date represented a turning-point for Catalonia and Spain. The year 1992 (which was followed by a second important date: 1998), did, in fact, stand as one of the most important dates in post-Franco Spain, as three crucial events took place in the Iberian country: 1) the celebration of the summer Olympics in Barcelona; 2) the World Exposition in Seville; and 3) the quincentennial of Columbus' first voyage to the Americas—which was met with both jubilee and criticism. Though the Olympics and the World Expo (along with Spain's entrance into the European Community in 1986) symbolized the country's metaphorical and economic rebirth after decades of dictatorship, the celebration of the 1492 events were tainted with a different aura. While some viewed the festivities as a way to celebrate Spain's history and past imperial glory, others interpreted it as a resurfacing of colonial values and feelings of imperialist nostalgia. Instead of catapulting Spain into modern Europe, the celebration of Columbus' crossing was anchoring Spain to its questionable colonial past.

As my quest to discover Cuba-related texts continued, I noticed that the accretion of such texts was not solely pertinent to Catalonia, but to Spain's entirety, as well. So, my interest shifted from a close analysis of Catalan texts to a larger analysis of Spanish literature and cultural productions focused on Cuba, for the more I searched, the more I found, and the more intent I

became on uncovering how Cuba and its women were depicted in Spanish literature and photography. Hence, this manuscript includes texts and photographs that originate from several Spanish areas—Catalonia, Aragón, Asturias, the Balearic Islands, and Castille-La Mancha—and that span across a twenty-five-year period (from 1992 to 2015), but that share a common element: Cuba and their representation of women.

It would have been an arduous task to write this dissertation without the support of family, friends, professors, and my current institution, the University of California, Los Angeles. At UCLA it has been a pleasure to work with Jorge Marturano, Jesús Torrecilla, Robin Derby, Barbara Fuchs, and my dissertation chair, Maite Zubiaurre. Maite has shown me nothing but support from the moment I began my doctoral career and has demonstrated that being a mother and an academic is not only possible, but also enjoyable. Thank you for always pushing me away from my comfort zone, making me think outside the box, and reading the numerous versions of my chapters with a keen and critical eye. I also wish to express my gratitude to Barbara Fuchs for allowing me to be a part of the wonderful *Diversifying the Classics* initiative—a meeting I always looked forward to, and that opened the doors to a number of wonderful collaborations. My special thanks also to my mentors from Syracuse University: Alicia Ríos, Kathryn Everly, Myrna García-Calderón, and Gail Bulman. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. And finally, thank you to Raúl Fernández, Secretary of the UC Cuba initiative, whose kindness and infinite knowledge aided me along the way.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the following people in Cuba: Luisa Campuzano, Jorge Domingo Cuadriello, Zaida Capote Cruz, Martha Gómez, and Verónica, who, without previously knowing me, have helped me more than they might realize. I am infinitely thankful for the

numerous phone calls and in-person meetings, but more importantly, I am thankful for your kindness and your scholarly contributions.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support I received from the UCLA Graduate Division and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Because of your generous awards—which include two Dean’s Scholarship Summer Awards, the Dissertation Year Fellowship, and two year-long departmental fellowships—I was able to complete my Ph.D. in five years. I am also indebted to Magnum Photos, which granted me permission to use three of Cristina García Roderó’s photographs, and to Maite Zubiaurre’s online *Wunderkammer*, which gave me access to the image discussed in Chapter 1.

On a more personal note, my gratitude goes to the following people: my parents, Camille and Massimo, who have believed in me since I was a child and emotionally supported me throughout my undergraduate and post-graduate career; my sister, Olivia, who is the best sibling and aunt I could have asked for, and who makes the miles between us a mere product of our imagination; Stefano, who has helped me more than he knows; mia nonna, Dida, che mi ha insegnato il valore e l’importanza dell’educazione, e mi ha sempre tenuto la mano. Tra le infinite cose che ho imparato da te, la forza e la perseveranza sono le più importanti. My lifelong friends, Arianna, Benedetta, Serena, and Luca, whose friendship I cherish dearly; the many friends I met along the way, from Syracuse, to Middlebury, to Los Angeles; and Andrew, my Ph.D. companion from afar. Y finalmente, gracias a mis adorados Julio, Alessandro y Cosimo, porque sin vuestro amor y apoyo nada sería posible.

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Introduction

Cuba in the Spanish Imaginary

*Detrás de las atenciones, de la gentileza
y de la afabilidad del habanero,
se descubriría su pensamiento político,
distanciado totalmente de la Corona.
Yo, sin embargo, bien porque ello fuese
una verdad que ya esperaba
o bien por un engaño de la edad,
puedo decir que fui feliz en Cuba...*

—Eulalia de Borbón, *Cartas a Isabel II*

During the past few years, Cuba has received an increasing amount of international news coverage and attention from the media due to its newfound dialogue with the United States during the Obama administration. When I began this project in 2016, the relative ease with which Americans could reach the Caribbean country generated the widespread anxiety—exploited to its maximum by numerous travel agencies and organized tour groups—that one should visit Cuba before it changed forever.² In January 2015 Democratic Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois stated: “[Americans] will not only take money to spend, they will take new ideas, new values and real change for Cuba. [...] We’ll see a dramatic change in Cuba if there is more travel, trade and business between the two countries” (qtd. in Rodríguez Milán). Lifting the embargo and allowing a more unrestricted flow of people and capital between the United States and Cuba would have certainly helped the economy of both countries—though few would have imagined how the dialogue between them would later be hindered during the Trump administration. Affirmations as the one by Senator Durbin, however, are problematic, as they seem to imply that change in Cuba can only be reached with the help of the United States. They

² See Louis A. Pérez’s online article, “Visit Cuba, Before It Changes!” (2016).

might also spread the belief that the Caribbean island has opened its doors to foreigners, capital, and new ideas for the very first time. In fact, the reality is quite the opposite. Thousands of tourists and travelers have been visiting, exploring, and studying Cuba for decades, and emigrants from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas have reached Cuban shores over the past centuries in search of prosperity or of political refuge. These historical facts show that Cuba has never been (neither before, nor after the Revolution of 1959) in a situation of complete cultural isolation. It also underlines the existence of an ongoing dialogue between Cuba and the rest of the world.

The recent changes in the relationships between Cuba and the United States raised several questions on how the island would react to a more open circulation of ideas, information, and cultural production. To deal with these questions, one must imagine the future and identify the challenges and difficulties it may bring. But this is just a part of the task at hand. Thinking about Cuba in the twenty-first century also means revisiting the past to observe how these same questions were answered by previous generations of writers, scholars, travelers, and even immigrants. What did cultural exchange in Cuba entail before the Revolution of 1959? With which countries was Cuba openly dialoguing? How did this interchange evolve during the different stages of the Revolution? Thus, one must turn to transnational studies, which emphasize the interactions between members of various nations that happen beyond the forms of official exchange.

In this doctoral thesis I look specifically at the relationship between Cuba and Spain through the lens of culture and gender studies. To do so, I study the works of several Spanish women writers and photographers between the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century: writers Carme Riera (1948—), Margarida Aritzeta (1953—), Àngels Aymar

i Ragolta (1958—), María Teresa Álvarez (1945—), Isabel Segura (1954—), and photographers Cristina García Rodero (1949—) and Isabel Muñoz (1951—). The project analyzes Spanish female production on Cuba during the past three decades because during this time Spain experienced a formidable boom in interest towards Cuba—an interest that is discussed and unraveled throughout the project. By using theoretical texts that center on gender, memory, tourism, transnational and transatlantic studies, imperialist nostalgia, and emigration, and by examining the analogy that most authors create between the perceived “femininity” of Cuba as a colony and Spain’s “masculine” power as the metropolis, I propose that the recent Spanish literary and photographic interest in Cuba emerges as a form of imperialist nostalgia following the five-hundred-year anniversary of the European discovery of America (1992) and the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Spanish-American War (1998).

The year 1992 marked a turning point for Spain. The Barcelona Olympics, the Seville World Exposition, titled “The Age of Discoveries 1492-1992,” and the quincentennial of Columbus’ first voyage to the Americas kickstarted a renaissance for the Iberian country, as it entered into a globalized economy and waved goodbye to its grim dictatorial past. In recognition of Spain’s stellar year (as 1992 came to a close,) Madrid was declared the continent’s cultural capital (Miller-Clark 16). Though the 1992 celebrations were criticized by many for their problematic glorification of Spain’s colonial history (Surwillo, 2014; Rodrigo y Alharilla, 2007; López García, 1992; Fuentes, 1992; Grant, 1991), this particular year also gave birth to a newfound interest in Cuba, one of Spain’s most precious colonies, lost in the Spanish-American war of 1898. Literary texts, films, documentaries, photographs, and art focused on the Caribbean island began circulating in Spain in an unprecedented manner, as artists and the public alike showed a growing enthusiasm towards Cuba, its history, and its culture. Though apparently

genuine, this interest, as this dissertation shows, carried along a series of misconceptions, stereotypes, and overall latent neocolonial attitudes that prove(d) to be quite problematic.

By moving through different centuries (twentieth, and twenty-first), different Spanish enclaves (Catalonia, Asturias, Aragón, Andalusia, and Castille-La Mancha), and different examples of cultural productions—novels (Carme Riera, *Por el cielo y más allá* [2002]; Margarita Aritzeta, *L'herència de Cuba* [1997]; María Teresa Álvarez, *La indiana* [2014]); theater (Àngels Aymar i Ragolta, *La indiana* [2007]); cinema (Antoni Verdaguer, *Havanera 1820* [1993]); a tourist guidebook (Isabel Segura, *La Habana para mujeres* [2003]); and photography (*Baracoa, Cuba* [2010]; *Danza cubana* [1995]; and *Ballet nacional de Cuba* [1995]), this interdisciplinary and transatlantic dissertation studies how Cuba is incorporated and represented in the works of Spanish female writers between 1992 and 2015. This project wishes to shed light on a number of texts and cultural productions about Cuba that have been written by Spanish women during the past twenty-five years, but that have oftentimes been overlooked by critics. However, it also asserts that, though conceived with good intentions, the literary and cultural productions discussed herein offer a simplistic, stereotypical, and at times fetishizing image of Cuba. Most works fail at openly criticizing Spain's dark colonial history and choose, instead, to grant Spanish women a voice, an agency, and a subjectivity, wishing to rescue them from historical oblivion. While significant, this “gendered choice” is nevertheless paradoxical, for it obscures the role that Western women, alongside men, played in the colonization process and in the oppression of others.

The westernized images of Cuba offered by the writers and photographers discussed here, as well as the omission of Spain's colonial actions, support what scholar Renato Rosaldo calls imperialist nostalgia—the longing for a past whose brutality has been concealed and forgotten—

and that goes hand in hand with one of the tenets of postmodernism, namely the emphasis on the “crisis of cultural authority, specifically of the authority vested in Western European culture and its institutions” (Owens 166). The works that I study are the offspring of this particular form of nostalgia, which finds its truest expression in the problematic clichés and images used, during the last thirty years, in Spanish literature and photographs focused on Cuba, as well as in Spain’s new forms of economic colonialism on the island. According to Rosaldo, the entire idea of imperialist nostalgia revolves around a paradox:

A person kills somebody, and then mourns the victim. In more attenuated form, somebody deliberately alters a form of life, and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention. [...] In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of ‘innocent yearning’ both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination. (108)

Though a number of the authors studied in the project are more critical than others when discussing Spain’s colonial involvement, the imperialist and neocolonial gaze is never completely absent from the texts and photographs discussed herein. Moreover, the selected literary pieces and photographs help demonstrate that the feeling of longing for Cuba does not solely belong to Western (Spanish) men—who have historically been the observing subject of the Western gaze—, but also to Western (Spanish) women, who use their perceived historical and economic superiority to speak about Cuba and its people in neocolonialist fashion. More specifically, this manuscript addresses how and why these Spanish women authors and photographers decided to incorporate Cuba in their novels, theater pieces, tourist guidebooks, and photography, while also exploring the types of female characters they create and the possible explanations behind such choices. To borrow Maryellen Bieder’s concept, this dissertation looks

at both “woman as text [...] and woman as author” (1992 301), with the former referring to female protagonists and fictional subjects, and the latter to female authors and female photographers. By critically analyzing the female characters (as well as women authors and artists) that come to life in the literary texts and photographic productions studied in this thesis, I center on whether or not they abide to the strict gender rules of their time, as well as on the way the authors and photographers make use of them to speak of Cuba and its ongoing (colonial / neocolonial) relationship with Spain.

The authors and photographers studied here use their female literary characters and photographic subjects, as well as their own voice as women, to discuss Cuba’s past and present relationship with Spain in a way that has oftentimes been overlooked by critics. They make use of their female protagonists to comment upon crucial issues such as slavery, dictatorships, sexual tourism, and national independence, and work to include women into these stereotypically male themes. In the epilogue of *Por el cielo y más allá*, for instance, Carme Riera openly criticizes Catalonia’s role in the slave trade, and urges today’s generations to take responsibility for their past. Nevertheless, this project also shows that numerous novels and cultural productions that are imbued with social, historical, and political criticism, ultimately give into the Eurocentric stereotypes and clichés that have plagued Cuba for centuries. This is especially true for the two photographers studied in Chapter 4 (Cristina García Roderó and Isabel Muñoz), who more often than not offer either a primitivized or sexualized representation of Cuba and Cubans.

The relationship between gender and nation has been studied at large by critics, though diverging opinions have flourished throughout the decades. Traditionally (Mosse, 1985; Hobsbawm, 1990; Anderson, 1991; Kedourie, 1993; Smith, 1995), nation-forming practices have been observed through the lens of masculinity—for it was believed that only those countries that

possessed “masculine” values, such as vigor, strength, fraternal camaraderie, and intelligence, could become self-ruling nations. The notion of nation-forming must not be confused with the idea of nation itself, which, in fact, is usually interpreted as a woman and mother who cares for her metaphorical children. Hobbes’ and Rousseau’s eighteenth-century political philosophy on the birth of nations remains applicable to this day, despite its anachronistic nature. Well into the 1980s and early 1990s critics (Hobsbawm, 1990; Kedourie, 1993; Smith, 1995) eliminated women from the nation-forming equation by following a traditional approach that relegated them to the private sphere of the home and placed men in the public sphere of the squares. Gender relations and plural sexualities, in the eyes of these scholars, were simply irrelevant. Only recently have studies discussed the idea of a gendered nation (Nandy, 1983; Meaney, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Johnson, 2003; Daigle, 2015; and Poska, 2016), which analyzes the importance of both men *and* women in social and political history and attributes an active role to women in the biological, cultural, and symbolic reproduction of nations (Yuval Davis 2). Far from being a “trope of ideal femininity, a fantasmatic female that secures [...] an all male history” (Goldberg 63), women are being recognized for their vital historical role. In her book *Gendered Crossings* (2016), for example, Allyson Poska illustrates the crucial role that Spanish emigrant women played in the formation of new Spanish settlements in Patagonia, and later in the outskirts of Bueno Aires and Montevideo. Believed to be the upholders of religion, family values, and morality, women were enticed by the Spanish Crown to emigrate alongside men in order to create stable and enduring settlements overseas—which made them active contributors in Spain’s colonial projects.

The relationship between women and colonial possessions goes beyond women’s participation in historical acts of colonial expansion. Oftentimes, colonies have been

metaphorically associated with traditionally feminine values, as Geraldine Meany explains in “Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics:” “A history of colonialism is a history of feminization. Colonial powers identify their subject people as passive, in need of guidance, incapable of self-government, romantic, passionate, unruly, barbarous [...]” (233). In order to remain under the dominating power of the metropolis, colonies needed to embody the same passivity and weakness that patriarchal societies believed to be the perfect female qualities. Silence and obedience were not just a woman’s duty; they were also the duty of foreign subjects. This dichotomy not only created a clear distinction between the dominator and the dominated, but also instilled a crushing sense of inferiority among those colonies who sought independence. José Martí’s famous essay “Nuestra América” (1891), which was used by Fernando Ortiz as the starting point for his famous anthropological essay *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y del azúcar* (1940), reflects on this division and vehemently invites the people of the colonies to celebrate their history, their economy and their lifestyle against the “gigantes de siete leguas” (11), that is to say, against foreign colonial powers. Only by demonstrating what he calls “virile qualities” will colonies put an end to their continuous pretending and imitating of Western culture, and finally start creating—for only through creation can colonies reach their independence.

The notions of pretension and imitation that Martí criticizes in his work, and which he urges to abandon, tie in well with what American postmodernist art-critic and activist Craig Owens (1950-1990) discusses in his numerous essays. Owens believed that women, in order to speak for themselves and represent themselves in a male-dominated society, were forced to assume typical masculine positions, or to “become” men by changing their appearance or their name—hence why “femininity is frequently associated with masquerade, with false representation, with simulation and seduction” (168). Women, Owens further contends, have

been excluded from Western representation only as subjects, but not as objects—for the representations *of* women are hardly lacking (ibid.). However, what happens when we analyze how women represent other women? And, for the scope of this dissertation, when Spanish women speak of Spanish and Cuban women? This manuscript, which finds inspiration in Owens' notion of masculine personification and position, and of women masquerading as men, shows that the majority of Spanish authors and photographers studied herein convert their female (and feminist?) gaze into a male gaze when describing Cuba and Cubans.

Cuba's history has always been closely tied to Spain's, as the island has been a Spanish destination for centuries. This relationship started as an act of imperial expansion and colonization at the end of the fifteenth century, as the Spanish monarchy sought ways to enlarge its territories, increase its richness, and spread its Catholic faith. The first settlers were those who accompanied the conquistadores on their voyage across the Atlantic in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, as well as missionaries whose role was to spread the Christian faith among the indigenous people. With time, however, Cuba began to occupy an increasingly important economic role, as well. The island's geographic location at the crossroads of maritime routes made Cuba a focal point in the Caribbean (and throughout Latin America). According to Alejandro Portes, Cuba was not just a landing spot for ships sailing from Europe (xi), but also a place that was destined to thrive and grow due to the increasing commercial activities between the two sides of the Atlantic. Its economy was strengthened by plantation production (centered on sugar, tobacco, and coffee) and through the hard work of the millions of slaves that every year reached Cuban shores. Due to its stable economy, Cuba soon became a country that witnessed a growing number of immigrants and travelers from all regions of Spain—who were leaving their

home country either because of dire economic conditions, in search of virgin or fertile markets, or due to political reasons (especially during and after the Spanish Civil War).³

Over the centuries the Spanish population that reached Cuban shores changed significantly. The first three centuries (sixteenth to eighteenth) were characterized by rigorous restrictions on who could emigrate from Spain to the country's American colonies. Initially, freedom to cross the Atlantic was granted solely to Old Christian families from the Spanish kingdom and, in some cases, to Catholic foreigners (Martínez Shaw 251). The mentioned restrictions excluded anyone who came from regions in Europe that were in direct conflict with Spain, and it even affected populations who did not believe in monarchic principles. While these limits technically extended to Jews and Muslims as well, “their relatively low demographic and social profiles, which were in many cases influenced by their religious conversion, kept most of them off the official records” (Cervantes-Rodríguez 58).⁴

The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) marked the turning point for European and Spanish immigration to Cuba, as well as for the up-to-then unquestioned practice of slavery. The period between 1791 and 1810 in Cuba is generally known as the “French period,” since the Revolution in the neighboring island of Saint Domingue (and particularly in the Western part of the island—modern day Haiti) brought many merchants and landowners to Cuban cities.⁵ What began as an exodus of wealthy plantation owners and affluent families, soon took on the shape of a mass

³ The Spanish Civil War took place between 1936 and 1939. As Franco won the war and established his dictatorship (1939-1975), many of those who had fought to defend the Spanish Republic were imprisoned, executed, or forced into exile. Mexico, Argentina, and the Caribbean (especially Cuba and Puerto Rico) were the main countries chosen for exile by Spanish intellectuals, writers, and artists.

⁴ For further information on the exclusion of certain religious and slave groups, see Julio Carreras, *Historia del estado y el derecho en Cuba* (1985); Rigoberto Méndez-Paredes, *Componentes árabes en la cultura cubana* (1999); Raanan Rein, *Árabes y judíos en Iberoamérica: similitudes, diferencias y tensiones* (2008); and Abdeluahed Akmir, *Los árabes en América Latina: historia de una emigración* (2009).

⁵ The Spanish monarchy ceded Saint Domingue to France in 1795 with the Treaty of Basel. France remained in possession of the entire island from 1795 to 1802.

exodus that included artisans, agricultural workers, professionals, slaves, and free ex-slaves, with numbers reaching approximately 34,000 people.⁶ The Haitian Revolution, however, also marked a watershed in the history of Spanish immigration to Cuba because its independence and the abolition of slavery quickly instilled a sense of fear among European colonial powers and among the White and Creole population that lived in the neighboring islands of the Caribbean.⁷

Threatened by a darkening or *Africanization* of society, Spain and its representatives in Cuba promoted a *Hispanicization* of the island by imposing the Spanish language, culture, values, and “color” above all others.⁸ As the Dominican sugar market collapsed following the Revolution, Cuba quickly became the largest producer of sugar, tobacco, and coffee in the Caribbean, and one of the largest producers of such products on a global scale. This booming market was made possible not only through the exploitation of slaves from Africa (and subsequently the Chinese Coolies), but also through the introduction of cheap labor from Europe.⁹ Poverty-stricken

⁶ See Carlos Esteban Deive, *Las emigraciones dominicanas a Cuba (1795-1808)* (1989). Deive’s study traces the flux of emigrations from Saint Domingue to Cuba between 1795 and 1808, that is to say from the Treaty of Basel to the year Saint Domingue officially returned under Spanish power. For further information on the trajectory of the Haitian Revolution, see John Edwin Fagg, *Cuba, Haiti, & the Dominican Republic* (1965), David Geggus (ed.), *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (2001), and Ada Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (2014).

⁷ Cuban historian Julio Le Riverend states that “[e]n Cuba, durante aquellos años, muchos esclavos de diversos ingenios y fincas cafetaleras se sublevaron y, como ha ocurrido en todas las épocas, los explotadores temían que el ejemplo revolucionario de un pueblo se transmitiera a otro. Debido a esto, acrecentaron la vigilancia, la represión sobre los esclavos y trataron de aislar a Cuba de todo contacto con Haití” (36).

⁸ *Hispanicization* is the name given to the process of imposing the Spanish or Hispanic mores and language on a person, custom, or culture.

⁹ Chinese Coolies were indentured servants from South China who migrated from their home country to a number of independent American countries and colonies during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and specifically until 1874 when the Chinese government banned all departures under labor contracts. Similarly to African slaves, Chinese Coolies were abused, underpaid workers who were employed in the plantations, in construction sites, and who played a central role in the construction of the first Cuban railroad, which began in 1837. For further information on the Chinese presence and immigration to Cuba see Juan Pérez de la Riva, *Demografía de los Coolies Chinos 1853-1874* (1966), Juan Jiménez Pastrana, *Chinos en la historia de Cuba, 1847-1930* (1983), and Mauro García Triana and Pedro Eng Herrera, *The Chinese in Cuba, 1847-Now* (2009).

Spaniards viewed the growing Cuban market as an ideal capital-generator, as their services could be employed in a plethora of occupations.

One of the major tasks that the Spanish crown undertook to extinguish revolutionary fires in Cuba was the so-called *blanqueamiento* (whitening) of the Cuban population, achieved through the reduction of African slaves brought to the island (partly due to the abolition of the slave trade in 1820) and through the increase of White emigrants from Europe—preferably from Spain. Spanish immigrants, who until the late eighteenth century were bound by strict emigration laws, had now much more leeway in the migration process. As Ramón de la Sagra indicates in his analysis of the four Cuban censuses conducted between 1774 and 1827, the White population in Cuba had dropped from 56 percent in 1774 to 49 percent in 1792, and finally to 44 percent in 1827, while the African slave population reached its peak in 1841 with almost 60 percent. However, once the *blanqueamiento* “method” bore fruit, social and racial demographics shifted once more, with Whites representing approximately 70 percent of the total Cuban population until the end of the colonial years.¹⁰ White immigrants from Europe did not only represent a crucial piece in the *blanqueamiento* puzzle; they also happened to fall on the correct side of the race spectrum, which considered People of Color and Chinese Coolies as biologically inferior human beings, and therefore less suitable for the understanding and employment of new agricultural and construction technologies.

Soldiers and officers of the Spanish militia composed another large group of Spanish immigrants. Manuel Moreno Fraginals and José Moreno Masó (1993) estimate that during the colonial period approximately 700,000 Spanish soldiers arrived to the island, many of whom either married a Cuban or became involved in social and political activities, which allowed them

¹⁰ See Ramón de la Sagra, specifically the table titled “resúmenes generales de los cuatro censos.”

to remain on the island indefinitely (15). This, according to the two scholars, represented a second viable emigration route, one that partially evaded the strict emigration rules imposed by the Spanish government before the employment of the *blanqueamiento* policy. The remarkable detail, however, is that the vast majority of Spanish soldiers arrived during the second half of the nineteenth century. According to the aforementioned critics a maximum of 15,523 Spanish soldiers reached Cuba between 1560 and 1762 (27), resulting in over 600,000 emigrating to the island within the last one hundred and fifty years of Spanish dominion. Even more striking is the fact that between 1868 and 1878,¹¹ roughly 208,000 Spanish soldiers reached Cuban shores (99), with approximately 200,000 more arriving between 1895 and 1898 (Núñez Florencio 600).

Alongside soldiers, government officials, African slaves, Chinese Coolies, those who fled Saint Domingue during the Haitian Revolution, and a handful of immigrants from other countries in Europe (Italy and France, in particular), the largest number of immigrants who landed in Cuba between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries is comprised of Spanish civilians who, perhaps unknowingly, were strongly contributing to Spain and Cuba's *blanqueamiento* project. Between 1882 and 1936 over four million Spanish civilians sailed to the Americas, with roughly 40 percent migrating to Cuba (Yáñez 1995 116). While historians generally speak of a male migration, the number of Spanish women who migrated to the Americas is quite surprising. Among the scholars who studied this phenomenon are Konetzke (1945), Borregón Ribes (1952), Mörner (1975), Pérez Murillo (1988a), Maluquer de Motes (1992), Losada Álvarez (1995), and Altman (2001, 2012). Records show that between 1493 and the year 1600, 10,118 women migrated to the American colonies (Martínez Shaw 58). Rosario Máquez Macías reports that between 1765 and 1824, 15.77 percent of emigrants were women, for a total of 2,718 people.

¹¹ The Ten Years War took place during this decade and was followed by the Little War of 1879-1880.

While this number is small when compared to the male emigration of the time (14,513 men), it is nevertheless compelling that women were not completely absent from the migration process, and that several of them were leaving Spain unaccompanied. Out of the total number of women emigrants analyzed by Márquez Macías, 1,043 (43.49 percent) were single, 1,220 (50.88 percent) were married, 135 (5.63 percent) were widows, and 320 (11.72 percent) did not state their civil status (138).

Female emigration from Spain to the Americas was not exclusively dictated by male-driven wishes to seek a better life across the Atlantic. Women also played a political and moral role in the Spanish monarchy's political, social, and cultural plans in its overseas colonies. As Alyson M. Poska explains, Spanish women were to 1) serve as moral exemplars and as perpetuators of the idealized Catholic vision of how a woman should behave; 2) reproduce a Hispanicized and Christianized way of life by teaching "native women to cook, clean, sew, and perform other household duties in a Spanish manner" (7); 3) exploit their reproductive potential to allow for the growth of the Spanish community in the colonies; and 4) use their religiously sanctioned marriage to put pressure on their husbands, therefore lowering the number of male predators among the indigenous populations (6-7). Though female emigration from Spain might not have reached the numbers of its male counterpart, it was certainly charged with a political, social, and cultural role, granting it a centrality that history seldom cares to admit.

As Cuba failed at becoming independent during the wave of revolutionary movements that crossed Central and South America between 1803 and 1825, Spaniards viewed their *siempre fidelísima perla* ("forever faithful pearl") as a territory that would eternally remain a colony. In 1898, however, the country of Cuba gained its freedom from Spain's rule, which had governed it for nearly four centuries. While Cuba's independence represented a turning stone for the newly

born country and its people, it also generated a sense of insecurity and doom in Spain for the loss of its last colonies and its old imperial glory.¹² Mary Louise Pratt rightly states that after the loss of their American colonies, the main European powers, as well as the new Latin American nations were forced to undergo a process of re-imagination, though not in the same way: “For the elites of Northern Europe, the reinvention is bound up with prospects of vast expansionist possibilities for European capital, technology, commodities, and systems of knowledge. The newly independent elites of Spanish America, on the other hand, faced the necessity for *self*-invention in relation both to Europe and the non-European masses they sought to govern” (110). Despite their differences, elites on either side of the Atlantic initially faced a nebulous present, and an even more unclear future.

The new political, economic, and cultural situation in Spain gave birth to an important generation of writers, known today as the *Generación del '98* (Generation of '98), who revealed Spain's decadence and identity crisis in their work. This generation, formed mostly by well-known male figures such as Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Pío Baroja, and Azorín, has received much attention from critics and readers alike. And while there is less criticism on the works by Spanish women during the *Silver Age* (1868-1936), recent scholars such as Maryellen Bieder (1990; 1992; 2008), Roberta Johnson (1995; 1999; 2009; 2012; 2013), and Maite Zubiaurre (2002; 2003; 2004; 2012) have begun rescuing these authors from the oblivion to which they were confined. Bieder, for example, criticizes the “disappearance of women authors” from scholarly texts, as well as the fact that the “twentieth-century canon includes no women's names and no novels that center on a female characters in the decades that

¹² In 1898 Spain did not solely lose Cuba. It also lost Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam. See Juan Bosco Amores's book *Cuba y España, 1868-1898: el final de un sueño* (1998), as well as Aurea Matilde Fernández's text *España y Cuba 1868-1898. Revolución burguesa y relaciones coloniales* (1988).

separate Emilia Pardo Bazán from Carmen Laforet” (301);¹³ while Johnson underlines the importance of the Spanish modernist novel written by women, less obsessed with a traditional past, and more interested in imagining “a future in which new social configurations would be possible” (2003 3). In 2012 Maite Zubiaurre and Roberta Johnson also published an anthology titled *Antología del pensamiento feminista español*, which analyzes how feminist thoughts and ideas took shape and developed during Spain’s tortuous history. The anthology covers nearly three centuries (from 1726 to 2011), and provides its readers with a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis. Some of the main figures that are discussed throughout the text are Emilia Pardo Bazán, Carmen de Burgos, María Zambrano, and Rosa Montero. Although the mentioned critics have tried to remedy the disregard that numerous Spanish women writers faced and continue to face, while others have focused their attention on specific texts about Cuba, there is no comprehensive scholarly work to my knowledge that studies the presence and the representation of Cuba in the cultural production of such a vast number of Spanish female writers and photographers. This dissertation wishes to bridge this gap.

With millions of Spaniards that emigrated to the American continent in general, and to Cuba, in particular, a strong connection between the Caribbean island and the European country is inevitable—as one must also consider the four hundred years of Spanish colonial rule in Cuba, which was among the last colonies to gain its independence from Spain. The linkage between the two countries continues to this day, though not in the form of physical colonial presence. Instead, today we witness a Spanish neocolonial economic presence in Cuba, as the island represents an

¹³ Maryellen Bieder has written extensively on Spanish women writers of the twentieth century. Of particular importance are her articles “Feminine Discourse / Feminist Discourse: Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer” (1990) and “Woman and the Twentieth-Century Spanish Literary Canon. The Lady Vanishes” (1992), as well as the book she edited with Kathleen MacNeerney, *Visions and Revisions: Women’s Narrative in Twentieth Century Spain* (2008).

extremely profitable venue for businesses and companies to invest capital in a fertile market with a large potential. The emergence and growing importance of the field of Transatlantic studies over the past decade is not overlooked in the project, for the dissertation is, at its core, a transatlantic dialogue between the two countries. The four chapters that comprise this manuscript do not study Spanish and Cuban cultural productions as two separate entities, but as part of an ongoing historical dialogue that crosses the Atlantic in both directions. According to Francisco Fernández de Alba and Pedro Pérez del Solar “los estudios transatlánticos son un marco conceptual que permite estudiar las relaciones y la circulación de discursos, personas, capitales y mercancías en el circuito atlántico, y cómo este hecho afecta ambos lados” (105). The three levels that, in the authors’ opinion, comprise this discipline are: 1) technologies, methodologies, and ideologies that travel from one shore to the other, and are changed and adapted in the process; 2) texts that focus on the crossing of the Atlantic, and all the elements the trip entails; and 3) authors who have made the trip and who have included the new cultures, traditions, and characters into their work (106). This project will focus on the second and third point, for these two exemplify the type of cultural productions that are discussed herein.

The research questions that guide the manuscript and that wish to fill the aforementioned scholarly silence are: 1) Given the strong relationship between Cuba and Spain, why is there such a shortage of literary and cultural criticism when compared to the numerous historical, sociological, and economic texts that have appeared over the years? 2) Why have the works centered on Cuba and produced by Spanish female authors and artists received little critical attention and recognition when compared to the ones by their male counterparts?¹⁴ 3) How is the

¹⁴ Some of the most prominent male Spanish writers who travelled to and / or wrote about Cuba are Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Federico García Lorca, Manuel Altolaguirre, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Luis Cernuda, Pedro Salinas, Vicente Aleixandre, Josep Pla, Juan Goytisolo, and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán.

role that Spanish women played in the transatlantic voyage to the Caribbean island represented in the various Spanish novels, theatre, photography, and film studied in this manuscript? And 4) How are Cuba and women portrayed in the cultural productions discussed herein, when taking into consideration imperial nostalgia and new forms of colonialism?

The centuries long dialogue between Spain and Cuba is a reality that cannot be overlooked. My aim throughout this project is to use said dialogue as a starting point to study the aforementioned Spanish female writers and photographers, to analyze how Cuba and women are (re)presented in their works, and to discuss the role that women played (and still play today) in this ongoing cultural interchange.

I. Previous Studies on the Spain-Cuba Relationship

The relationship between Spain and Cuba has existed for centuries and has been studied from a myriad of points of view that range from economic, to political, from sociological to anthropological to literary. There is, in fact, quite a vast bibliography that focuses on the interconnections between the European and the Caribbean country. Jorge Domingo Cuadriello has worked extensively on the Spanish republican exile to Cuba (2009; 2013), as well as on studying the lives of the thousands of Spaniards who emigrated to the Caribbean island between the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century (2004). Francisco Castillo Meléndez (1983), Paloma Jiménez del Campo (2003) and Julio Antonio Yanes Mesa (2006) have studied the emigration to Cuba and literary production of *canarios* (Spaniards who come from the Canary Islands); José Antonio Vidal Rodríguez (2002) and Mónica García Salgado (2014) have focused their studies on the presence of Galicians in the Caribbean island; while others, such as Joan Ferrán Oliva (2013), Ernesto Chávez (2013), Irina Fontanet Gil (2013) and many more have zoomed in on the Catalan emigration to Cuba, as well as on the numerous

Catalan associations and organizations that were born on the island throughout the years. Despite such a vast collection of historical, political, and cultural texts, there is a shortage of academic research that focuses on the role that women played in this interconnection. Scholars such as María Dolores Pérez Murillo (1992), Raquel Vinat de la Mata (1999), and Blanca Sánchez Alonso (2000) have briefly written about the topic, although their studies are far from being comprehensive. And while a number of articles have been written on single works that focus on Cuba (Glenn, 1999; Piñol, 2000; Ferrán, 2005; Bakhtiarova, 2007; Colmeiro, 2009; Cornejo Parriego, 2011; Ramón García, 2012), few comprehensive texts on a more general and inclusive literary dialogue between Spain and Cuba have been produced throughout the decades. Two of the more recent critical productions are *Cuba en la literatura catalana* (2002) and *Monsters by Trade* (2014). The former, an anthology that Àlex Broch edited with Isabel Segura, focuses on several Catalan texts set in Cuba and written between the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century. The latter, a critical book written by Lisa Surwillo, demonstrates the role that slavery and the slave trade played in the formation of modern Spain by analyzing a sampling of nineteenth and twentieth century Spanish texts. Nevertheless, while the two mentioned works are quite comprehensive, neither of them focuses on women authors in particular.

Little attention has also been devoted to the artistic and cultural contribution of Spanish women either in Cuba or upon their return to Spain. A number of literary and cultural critics (López Mondéjar, 2005; Parreño, 2005; Aguirre, 2009) have invested their attention on the writers and photographers analyzed in this dissertation, although their studies have seldom focused on these women's approach to Cuba. The scarcity of scholarly works regarding this theme is what awakened my interest. By analyzing novels, essays, a film, a theatre piece, a

tourist guidebook, and photography—through the lens of gender and gender studies—my dissertation breaks away from a strict literature-based and canon-based project.

An important part of my doctoral thesis concentrates on the unique relationship between Cuba and Catalonia. As the lyrics of many *habaneras* illustrate, the relationship between Cuba and Catalonia goes beyond the sole theme of emigration, exile, and travel.¹⁵ The connection between the two lands is deeply rooted in their interwoven history and culture. Although Catalan emigration to Cuba is small when compared to the millions of newcomers who left the other (less industrialized) areas in Spain, the deep mark it left in Cuba, and the great influence that the Cuban culture had upon the many who returned to Catalonia (as well as on future generations of Catalans) is a fact that cannot be overlooked. Several critics have analyzed this relationship mainly from an economic and cultural point of view (Aymar Ragolta, 1993; Fradera et al., 1995; Cabré Massot, 2013), yet few academics have centered on the literary bond between the two territories and cultures.

Despite the lack of attention by critics and readers, the last few decades have experienced a boom in Catalan cultural productions (novels, films, television programs, short stories, etc.) focused on Catalonia's (past and present) relationship with Cuba. As critic Lisa Surwillo puts it, "in recent years there has been somewhat of a cottage industry producing literature and films that explore the place of Catalan imperialism and Afro-Cuban slave labor in the constitution of modern Catalonia" (167). So, what makes this tie uniting the Caribbean country and Catalonia so unique? Why do Catalan writers, photographers, and film directors keep producing works that

¹⁵ *Habaneras* are nostalgic Spanish songs that link (as their name underlines) Spain to Cuba's capital city, and that "speak of outlandish women left behind in the distant tropical paradise of the Caribbean, and of the brave and powerful men" (Bahktiarova, "The Iconography" 233). As Peter Manuel explains in *Caribbean Currents* (1995), Cuban *habaneras* charmed European audiences and made their way into operas like *Carmen* (1875) (21). See also Xavier Febrés, *Les havaneres: el cant d'un mar* (1986).

center on Catalonia's past connection to Cuba? Scholars have suggested several answers to these questions. In his article entitled "Cuba en la literatura catalana contemporánea" (2004), Àlex Broch addresses the Cuba / Catalonia connection, and offers a number of reasons that, according to him, have made Cuba so popular in late twentieth and early twenty-first century Catalan literature.¹⁶ He mentions tourism, history, and what he calls "un flujo común, unos personajes que participan de las dos geografías y las dos historias" (63), which refers to the migratory fluxes to and from Cuba throughout the centuries. While overall agreeing with this theory, I believe that this relationship runs deeper than the aforementioned migratory flux, as it takes root in the tightly interlocked history shared by the Caribbean country and Catalonia. Critic Galina Bakhtiarova suggests that this ever-so-strong connection lays in the nostalgic approach of Catalonia's colonialist activity in Cuba. According to her, with the island's independence in 1898, the Spanish region lost its shot at becoming a colonial empire and hence, a nation. Bakhtiarova speaks about a "reivindicación de Catalonia para inscribirse en un modelo europeo de relación con el mundo colonial" ("Americanos" 52), which also explains the numerous and nostalgic *habaneras* that exist in popular Catalan culture.¹⁷ The nostalgia that Bakhtiarova speaks about is, in fact, present in many Catalan texts that focus on Cuba, and that has flourished in the last decades. A third scholar, Jaume Martí-Olivella (2001), attributes Spain and Catalonia's recent interest in Cuba to two historical phenomena: "The nostalgic reinscription [*sic*] of the Spanish imperial subject and the touristic commodification of the island as an erotic and 'archeological'

¹⁶ See also the aforementioned *Cuba en la literatura catalana* (2002), an anthology that Àlex Broch edited with Isabel Segura.

¹⁷ Bakhtiarova dedicates an article to the presence and importance of *habaneras* in Catalan culture and popular imagery, especially after Cuba's independence of 1898 and during Franco's dictatorship, when the Catalan language and traditions were prohibited. The scholar states that "the recurrent motives of the *habanera* such as a desired mulatto woman left behind in a distant tropical paradise, the sea and ship—an emblem that brings prosperity to the hard-working nation—arguably served the need for a self-fashioning of Catalonia as a seafaring nation with a place of its own in Spanish colonial enterprise" ("Transatlantic Returns," online, n.p.).

paradise” (162). While his idea of nostalgia resembles what Bakhtiarova initially proposes, Martí-Olivella focuses on tourism, and on the different types of tourists that visit Cuba each year.¹⁸ According to Spanish writer and novelist Manuel Vázquez-Montalbán (who Martí-Olivella cites at length in his essay), “Spaniards in Cuba today are divided basically between tourists and industrialists. Tourists, themselves, are composed of two ‘espeleo-logies:’ searchers of sex and searchers of revolutionary archaeologies” (441). One could argue, therefore, that a certain type of tourism has contributed—together with imperial nostalgia and history—to the escalating number of Spanish and Catalan cultural productions focus on the Cuba of today and of the past centuries.

Despite the compelling theories that these academics propose regarding the Catalonia-Cuba connection, none of them zoom in specifically on the role of women. Though they make an important and valid case for their arguments, alongside history, nostalgia, and tourism, we must add the Catalan involvement in the slave trade between Africa and the Caribbean. Furthermore, the slave trade, which played a crucial role in Catalonia’s accumulation of capital and in the development of a metropolis like Barcelona, represents an indissoluble tie between Catalonia and Cuba, as well as a momentous aspect of Catalonia’s past that is oftentimes forgotten or overlooked.¹⁹ As Jennifer Ruth Hosek rightly states, “Writing the past is part of the ‘forgetting’

¹⁸ Bakhtiarova’s proposes that recent Catalan literature and film looks nostalgically at the region’s past while maintaining a critical outlook—through the creation of new versions of traditional myths. On the other hand, Martí-Olivella does not propose a critical reinterpretation of Spain’s colonial past, but rather asserts that “filmic consumption of Cuban otherness allows Spaniards to visually recover their own identity and historical property” (163).

¹⁹ A vast number of critics have written on Catalonia’s involvement in the slave trade, as well as on the urban and economic boom that derived from it. Some of the most important and comprehensive scholarly texts include, among others, Herbert Klein’s *The Middle Passage. Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (1978), Josep Maria Fradera’s text “La participació catalana en tràfic d’esclaus (1789-1845)” (1984), Jaime Aymar Ragolta’s article “La huella americana en Barcelona” (1993), Christopher Schmidt-Nowara’s article “National Economy and Atlantic Slavery: Protectionism and Resistance to Abolition in Spain and the Antilles, 1854-1874” (1998), Tate Cabré Massot’s article “El legado cubano en Catalonia y la nueva aristocracia creada a partir de la llegada de capital desde Cuba (ss. XVIII-XX)” (2013), and Laura Surwillo’s *Monsters by Trade* (2014).

of certain histories that is critical for national building, and so it may be expedient to forget this history insofar as political and social pressures do not dictate otherwise” (8). The act of recognizing Catalonia’s involvement in the slave trade (and the subsequent wealth that was generated because of this activity) is what has allowed writers and artists, such as Carme Riera, Antoni Verdaguer, and Àngels Aymar i Ragolta, to rediscover Catalonia’s past and to analyze it with a somewhat critical eye.

Though this dissertation focuses on a handful of Spanish writers and photographers who have been active during the last three decades, the number of those who travelled from Spain to Cuba (and who wrote about their stay on the island) over the past centuries is certainly greater. Two of the most notable Spanish women who travelled to Cuba during the nineteenth century, and who carefully documented their voyage through letters and memoirs are the Condesa de Merlin (1779-1852)—who published *Mes douze premières années* anonymously in Paris in 1831, and *Viaje a La Habana* in 1844—and the Spanish Princess Eulalia de Borbón (1864-1958), the first member of the Spanish royal family to visit Spain’s most beloved colony. Following her travels, Eulalia de Borbón published her impressions and memories about Cuba in two texts: *Memoires of a Spanish Princess* (1937) and *Cartas a Isabel II* (1949). Eva Canel, a nineteenth-century writer and journalist from Spain also travelled and ultimately settled in Cuba, where she published in renowned newspapers such as *Diario de la Marina* and *Unión Constitucional* before founding her own weekly publication, named *La Cotorra*. After returning to Spain in 1899, Canel continued working on a number of publications focused on Cuba, which include novels, theater, and essays.

Unlike the travel narratives published by Merlin, Borbón, and Canel, Spain’s twentieth century witnessed a different type of publication, one focused on exile and expatriation, or, in

Caren Kaplan's words, on "the lived experiences of people who have been legally or socially expelled from one location and prevented from returning" (28).²⁰ The voluntary or forced political exile that thousands of Spaniards underwent during the years of the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) has been the topic of study of numerous scholars and critics. Many of them (Colmeiro, 2009; Domínguez Prats, 2012; Elizalde Frez, 2012; Fox, 2004; Herrman, 2001; Johnson, 1986; 1995; 2013; Lough; 2009; Pérez, 2009; Ramírez, 2009; Rodrigo, 2004; Ugarte, 1998; Zubiaurre, 2002) have, indeed, focused on the exile of several Spanish women, both from a historical and a literary point of view. Perhaps the most notable Spanish female exiles who resided in the Caribbean island is María Zambrano, though there are several other women who are worthy or praise for their work in and on Cuba. Four women who deserve mentioning are Concha Méndez, Zenobia Camprubí, María Teresa León, and Silvia Mistral, who all resided in and wrote about Cuba during the span of a decade (1940-1950 circa), despite their experience being extremely different.²¹ The first three women, especially, should be studied for their literary production on Cuba, as they are oftentimes shadowed by their respective husbands (Manuel Altolaguirre, Juan Ramón Jiménez, and Rafael Alberti), and relegated to the shadows. The list of Spanish authors who wrote about Cuba goes on to include texts such as Anna Murià's *Crònica de la vida d'Agustí Bartra* (1967), Teresa Pàmies' *Gent del meu exili* (1975) and *Quan érem refugiats* (1975), as well as more recent texts such as Àngeles Dalmau's *Habanera* (1999), Teresa Costa-Gramunt's *Estampes de Cuba* (2001), and Isabel Segura's anthologies *Viatgers catalans al Carib: Cuba* (1997) and *Viajeras a La Habana* (2008).

²⁰ See also Mary McCarthy, "A Guide on Exiles, Expatriates and Internal. Émigrés" (1972).

²¹ See, respectively, María Zambrano, *La Cuba secreta* (1948); Paloma Ulacia Altolaguirre, *Concha Méndez: memorias habladas, memorias armadas* (1990); Zenobia Camprubí, *Diario I. Cuba (1937-1939)* (1993); María Teresa León, *Contra viento y marea* (1941) and *Memoria de la melancolía* (1977); and Silvia Mistral, *Exodo. Diario de una refugiada Española* (1940).

By using the mentioned academic production as a starting point, this dissertation branches away from what has already been written about Spain's relationship with Cuba, and focuses, instead, on what has yet to be discussed. Specifically, it looks at the work of a number of Spanish women writers and photographers from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century (Carme Riera, Margarida Aritzeta, Àngels Aymar i Ragolta, María Teresa Álvarez, Isabel Segura, Cristina García Rodero, and Isabel Muñoz,) and centers on their representations of Cuba and on the role that they bestow upon their female characters. Although various critics have produced critical texts on the works of specific women authors who have engaged with Cuba and its relationship with Spain, to my knowledge, a book that analyzes the literary and cultural production of such a vast number of Spanish women writers and artists, and on their incorporation and representation of Cuba, has yet to be written.

II. Chapter Organization

In the first chapter of my dissertation, "Journey to the Past: Nineteenth Century Catalan Women and their Voyage to Cuba," I investigate the presence and importance of female characters in the 1993 Catalan film by Antoni Verdaguier, *Havanera 1820*, and in Carme Riera's 2001 novel, *Por el cielo y más allá*, as well as their involvement in the (illegal) slave trade between Africa and Cuba. The central question that guides the chapter is: What role do women play in *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá*, especially in relation to the slave trade? *Havanera 1820* denounces the oftentimes forgotten historical reality of how many slaves from Africa were brought to Cuba and to the Caribbean aboard Catalan ships—especially after the slave trade became illegal in 1820. Similarly to Verdaguier's film, *Por el cielo y más allá* also focuses on the journey of a Catalan woman to Cuba during the nineteenth century, although it maintains slavery as a central element of the text. Riera presents her readers with a historical

novel that aims not only at entertaining them, but also at guiding them towards a reflection on Catalonia's involvement in the slave trade, and on the origin of much of its wealth.

Despite being two different types of cultural productions, *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá* recreate a story that is uncannily similar. The film and novel both unite history and fiction and create problematic female protagonists. Although readers and viewers might initially believe that Verdaguer and Riera conceive revolutionary female characters that break away from the chains of nineteenth century patriarchal society, the outcome is quite the opposite. In both cases the author and the director shy away from a positive representation of women: by abiding to gender and class stereotypes, they focus, instead, on the more pressing topic of slavery. Women are not given a marginal role in the novel and film, and are transformed into tacit accomplices of the slave trade and slave treatment of the time. These two cultural productions show that while White Western women were oftentimes subjugated by their husbands and male family members, they eventually became the subjugators of their own slaves, and bended—like many men—to the authority of the whip.

With the first chapter focusing on the transatlantic journey that numerous Catalan women undertook to be married off to rich landowners and slave-owners in Cuba (a journey that, in most cases, did not imply a return to the motherland), the second chapter, entitled “Yearnings, Failures, and the Reconstruction of Memory: Rewriting the Gender of Spanish *Indianos*,” centers on the historical figure of the *indiano* in three Spanish texts written by women: Margarida Aritzeta's novel *L'herència de Cuba* (1997), Àngels Aymar i Ragolta's theatre piece *La indiana* (2007), and María Teresa Álvarez's novel *La indiana* (2014). Though the three texts are not always laudable for their literary qualities, they are revolutionary in the way they speak about Spanish *indianos* and for the gendered spin they bestow upon this quasi-mythical figure. Instead

of celebrating the ventures of these young Spanish men who sailed across the Atlantic in search of fortune and glory, the three authors focus on their failures and debacles, granting the women in their stories a more positive outcome. They become the heroines behind the patriarchal curtain and are the ones who—despite having to navigate in a sea of men—experience a positive outcome. As women exit the private sphere to which they have been confined in civil society (Pateman 4), they also challenge the ground rules of nationalism and nation building, which would have citizens believe that women were never granted a space in the national arena (Yuval-Davis 3). The attention that the three authors give to their female characters, however, also constitutes the problematic aspect that encompasses the three texts. The authors appear, once again, to be facing a dilemma: defending women or condemning slavery. While Riera and Verdaguer chose to denounce slavery in Chapter 1, Aritzeta, Aymar i Ragolta, and Álvarez choose to critically speak about the condition of women, thus foregoing the opportunity to reprobate slavery and the role that many *indianos* (both men and women) played in such tragedy.

The third chapter, “Desexualizing Havana: Gendered Tourism in Twenty-First Century Cuba,” studies *La Habana para mujeres* (2003), a tourist guidebook written by Spanish historian and writer Isabel Segura. My analysis initially focuses on the sex tourism industry, which has been discussed in length by a number of scholars (Cabezas, 2009; Daigle, 2015; Enloe, 1989; Schwartz, 1997), and contrasts it with the scope behind Segura’s text. In *La Habana para mujeres*, in fact, Segura denounces the sex industry and sexual tourism that has plagued and continues to plague Cuba, and offers a tool for Spanish (female) tourists to overcome the evident sexualization that many women (whether they be foreigners or locals) face on a daily basis. Segura also presents her readers and travelers with a text that wishes to break away from the common stereotypes of beautiful *mulatas*, virgin beaches, and Castro’s socialist paradise, and

that focuses, instead, on the literary and cultural contributions of Cuban women of the past and present, who are oftentimes overshadowed by their male counterparts, or simply ignored because of their gender. By writing a book that is not only for women, but also about women, Segura detaches herself from the eroticized and sexualized aura that has encompassed Cuba for centuries and that, sadly, is still one of the main attractions in the island. This chapter proposes that *La Habana para mujeres* presents readers and travelers with the means to discover Cuba's history and culture (as well as its evergreen connection to Spain) in an unconventional way. It does not promote a type of tourism filled with exotic locations and tourist traps, but rather offers a cultural and literary journey through Havana where (local and tourist) women take center stage—its ultimate aim being the desexualization of tourism in Cuba and the promotion of the island's gendered culture.

The fourth and final chapter, "Photographing Cubans: Rethinking the Gendered Lens" moves away from literature and analyzes the work of two Spanish female photographers: Cristina García Rodero (1949—) and Isabel Muñoz (1951—), both of whom have conducted photographic shoots in and on Cuba. Similar to the writers and works that occupy the previous chapters, the photographers who take center stage in this last section of my dissertation have received some attention from critics (Coixet and Mayrata, 2009; Fontanella, 1981; 1992; 1995; Parreño, 2005; Rivas 2010) although no scholar to my knowledge has focused exclusively on their work on Cuba. Cristina García Rodero is the author of several photography books, such as *España oculta: Public Celebrations in Spain, 1974-1989* (1995) and *Transtempo* (2010). However, for the sake of this project I am most interested in a photo shooting she carried out in Baracoa, Cuba, which has solely been published online, on Magnum Photo's website. The photos, shot to celebrate the five-hundred-year anniversary of the town of Baracoa, the first

Spanish settlement in Cuba, zoom in on the culture and folklore of everyday life in the Cuban town, while maintaining an undeniable artistic vein. The second artist I study is Isabel Muñoz, an international photographer and renowned author of numerous books—*Tango* (1993), *Flamenco* (1993), and *Isabel Muñoz* (2012), among others. In Cuba she shot a series of photos titled *Danza cubana* that can be found on Muñoz’s personal website, but that have not all reached the press. This series closes in on the oftentimes unnoticed, yet fundamental details that compose the many (sensual) forms of Cuban dance. My interest in this chapter centers on the idea of the “gendered lens”, that is, on the notion that there is a woman behind the camera. Who is being photographed, and how? What portrayals of Cuba do García Rodero and Muñoz offer to the public? And finally, how does being Spanish impact their work—if it does, in fact, impact it, at all? What this chapter aims to uncover is the reasoning behind the photo shoots and the representations that each photographer presents to the public. I argue that similarly to the texts analyzed throughout my thesis, García Rodero and Muñoz also give in to stereotypical depictions of Cuba, of the Cuban population, and of women, by inserting traces of imperialist nostalgia, exoticism, eroticism, and primitivism into their work.

Chapter 1

Journey to the Past: Nineteenth Century Catalan Women and their Voyage to Cuba

*Bisogna che la donna
abbia la forza e il coraggio
di liberarsi d'ogni influenza sociale,
ossia maschile,
per trarre dal suo essere vergine
dei valori sin qui ignoti e soffocati.*

—Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna*

Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion

—William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 20*

I. Introduction

Cuba and Catalonia share a connection that goes beyond the sole theme of emigration, exile, and travel. The linkage between the two lands is deeply rooted in their intertwined history and culture. Although Catalan emigration to Cuba is relatively small when compared to the millions of newcomers who left the other parts of Spain, the mark it left in Cuba, and the influence that the Cuban culture had upon the many who returned to Catalonia (as well as on future generations of Catalans), is a historical reality that cannot be overlooked.²² In the last three decades, Catalan writers, artists, filmmakers, and photographers have produced a considerable corpus of artistic works dealing with this connection with the Caribbean island.²³ However,

²² While Catalans were one of the first groups of Spaniards to leave their home country for Cuba in mass, the emigration from Catalonia steadily decreased between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. As Jordi Maluquer de Motes's studies show, in 1859 the Catalan (and Balearic) population in Cuba amounted to 22.6 percent of the total number of peninsular immigrants; in 1899 the percentage dropped to 7.9 percent, to eventually become a feeble 5.8 percent in 1935 (65; 133).

²³ When using the terms "Catalan writers," "Catalan literature," and "Catalan filmmakers," I am not solely referring to the Spanish region of Catalonia, but rather to the concept of *Països Catalans*, that is, to the geographic conglomeration of areas influenced by the Catalan language and culture. This area includes Catalonia, the Valencian

despite the number of fictional and historical texts that link Catalonia to Cuba, an aspect that has been oftentimes overlooked is that of gender. Although many women emigrated to Cuba during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century (doubtlessly under different circumstances), academics, writers, and film directors alike have frequently relegated these women to the shadows, making them nothing more than a passive and complicit accessory to male emigration.

The historical Catalan presence in Cuba during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as the cultural institutions that flourished on the island throughout those years, has caught the interest of a number of Catalan writers and television / film directors during the past few decades. The emigration of Catalans to the Caribbean island in the nineteenth and twentieth century has been captured in several novels, television programs, and films from the 1990s and early 2000s.²⁴ The chapter focuses on the 1993 film *Habanera 1820* and on the 2001 novel *Por el cielo y más allá*. While both works are rich in themes, as well as in historical and cultural references to the time period in which they are set, I am most interested in analyzing the role that women play in both pieces. Specifically, I will study how the female protagonists are portrayed, as well as their connection to the historical events that happened during the years in which the stories take place—slavery, the illegal slave trade, and the increasing number of independence movements in Cuba.²⁵ Both works concentrate on the nineteenth century relationship between

Community, the Balearic Islands, the Western Strip of Aragón (also known as *La Franja*), Andorra, the French area of Roussillon, and the city of Alghero, located in the Italian island of Sardinia.

²⁴ See, for instance, Eduardo Mendoza's novel *La ciudad de los prodigios* (1986); Margarida Aritzeta's novel *L'herència de Cuba* (1997); Jordi Sierra i Fabra's *Cuba: la noche de la jinetera* (1995) and *Regreso a La Habana* (2007); Ángeles Dalmau's novel *Habanera* (1999); Ferràn Torrent's work *Living l'Havana* (1999); Rafael Argullol's *Davalú o el dolor* (2001); Teresa Pamies' *Gent del meu exili: inoblidables* (2001); José María Merino's work *El heredero* (2003); and Àngels Aymar i Ragolta's theatre piece *La Indiana* (2007). See also *La ciutat cremada* (1976), a filmic production by Antoni Ribas; and the Catalan documentary *Cuba, sempre fidelíssima* (2005). The works by Aritzeta and Aymar i Ragolta will be analyzed and discussed in detail in the following chapter.

²⁵ This chapter will focus solely on the two aforementioned works. A number of novels, theatre pieces, memoirs, and more, have been written on the relationship between Spain and Cuba—many of which will be discussed in the following chapters (see note 24). I chose to pair up *Habanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá* in

Cuba and Catalonia (specifically from an economic and political perspective), and both works (apparently) give women a central role.

By adopting the themes of politics and economy as a starting point, the analysis moves to the study of the female characters present in the two works, paying particular attention to their characterization, to the way they interact among each other, and to the role they occupy in Cuban society. Finally, it creates connections between politics, economy, gender, and the institution of slavery, raising questions and unveiling anxieties that continue to exist in present-day Catalonia. The chapter proposes that the two aforementioned works make use of female protagonists to speak about Cuba, Catalonia, and the latter's involvement in the slave trade to reveal how the power of slavery and the thirst for wealth can corrupt even the strongest and most independent women.

Unlike many fictional works that focus on the emigration to Cuba of low-class Spanish men and women who abandoned their home country in search of wealth or of employment opportunities, *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá* present readers and viewers with a different reality. The novel and film focus on the practice (common among nineteenth century Catalan families) of marrying off young women to distant (and rich) relatives in Cuba in order to provide for their future. While most historical and fictional texts almost completely ignore the presence of women in Spanish emigration of the past centuries, Riera and Verdaguer make women the main characters of their stories, granting them a voice and a position that they have oftentimes been denied. However, as we shall see, the role bestowed upon these women, and the power they display towards their slaves, is what makes these characters problematic. This

this chapter because of the time period in which these works are set. Both the novel and the film bring their readers and viewers back to nineteenth century Cuba, which allows Riera and Verdaguer to speak about slavery and the women's social and political situation under a different light when compared to the works that take place in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

chapter wishes to elaborate on the main female characters of *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá*, and to analyze the vices and virtues with which they are imbued.

II. The Catalan Footprint in Cuba: Historical Emigration and Cultural Integration (1780-1980)

The relationship between Catalonia and Cuba has been studied at large from a historical, political, cultural, and socio-economic standpoint, both in Cuba and in Spain—although it still remains one of the less analyzed connections between a Spanish autonomy and the Caribbean island. Some of the scholars who have investigated the topic are Jorge Domingo Cuadriello who has worked extensively on the presence of Catalan (and Spanish) immigrants in Cuba before and after the Spanish Civil War;²⁶ Ernesto Chávez (2013) and Joan Ferrán Oliva (2013) who have specifically focused on the cultural and historical connections between Cuba and Catalonia; Jordi Maluquer de Motes (1992), whose research focuses on Catalan emigration to Cuba, as well as its involvement in the slave trade; and others, such as Lluís Costa i Fernández (2013) who has studied how Catalan nationalism was introduced to Cuba through an impressive number of Catalan newspapers and journals. Notwithstanding this scholarship, the amount of critical and academic studies that center on literature and other cultural manifestations that connect Cuba to Catalonia is limited. More recently, Lisa Surwillo has published *Monsters by Trade* (2014), which analyzes a number of literary works that concentrate on Spain, Cuba, and the slave trade. Despite this comprehensive study, few academic texts have turned their attention to the female characters that appear in Spanish literature and cultural production that speaks about Cuba, as well as to female emigration from Spain to the Caribbean island.

²⁶ Two of Domingo Cuadriello's most accomplished works are *Españoles en Cuba* (2004), and *El exilio republicano español en Cuba* (2009).

Catalan interest towards Cuba began in the eighteenth century due to the island's strong and growing market. As critic Joan Ferrán Oliva notes, although during that time Cuba was still a colony, its economy was stable and, in many cases, did not depend on the metropolis. Cuba's production and commerce of sugar was independent from Spain, which, at the time, did not have the resources, the internal market, or the international trading connections to sell the final product, and which made the Caribbean island the only eighteenth-century colony that could compete with France and England in quality and prices of sugar (55). By the early nineteenth century, Cuba was the world's largest sugar producer and Spain's most fructiferous American possession.²⁷

After the Catalan defeat of 1714, the region managed to quickly strengthen its economy and become—along with the Basque Country—one of Spain's economic motors, as well as the only Spanish enclave that experienced an industrial revolution.²⁸ Due to the stagnant economic situation in the rest of the Peninsula, many Catalan traders began to look outside of the nation's borders for either virgin or stable markets, which represented a source of income that Spain and most European countries could not offer.²⁹ According to Oriol Junqueras, “Cataluña y Cuba se

²⁷ After being pushed aside from the tobacco market because of Spain's monopoly on the production and resale of such product, the Cuban oligarchy sought autonomy from the metropolis through the production and vend of sugar. Cuba possessed sugar refineries that could compete with the major European producers of the time, which did not only benefit the *criollo* families in Cuba, but also the Spanish economy as a whole. For additional information, see Manuel Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio. Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, vol. 1 (1978); Manuel Moreno Friginals and José Moreno Masó, *Guerra, migración y muerte* (1993), and Jordi Maluquer de Motes, *Nación e inmigración: los españoles en Cuba (ss. XIX y XX)* (1992).

²⁸ This event refers to the Catalan defeat during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714). The Catalan army, which was fighting to support the Habsburg dynasty's claim to the Spanish throne (against the Bourbon dynasty led by Philip V), was officially defeated on September 11, 1714 with the Siege of Barcelona. This day became a Catalan holiday in 1886, and although being suppressed during Franco's dictatorship, it was successfully re-established in 1980. In her article “Pensamiento político y opinión en Cataluña en el siglo XVIII” (1996), Rosa M. Alabrús i Iglesias traces an outline of the political and social situation in Catalonia following the 1714 defeat. She states: “La dramática realidad de la Cataluña, y sobre todo de la Barcelona de 1714 ha planteado a la historiografía el reto de conjugar la postración catalana de este momento con el despegue económico catalán a lo largo del siglo XVIII apoyado sobre una bases tan difíciles, la dicotomía entre la ‘desfeta política’ y la ‘embranzida econòmica’” (83).

encontraron porque eran las dos zonas económicamente más dinámicas de toda la monarquía española. Cuba y Cataluña constituían las dos puntas de lanza de la modernización agraria e industrial” (25). Not surprisingly, the first Catalan emigrants to Cuba were merchants. As María Dolores Pérez Murillo explains, many Catalan merchants started looking to Cuba and Havana for possible markets due to Mexico’s anti-Spain policy, particularly strong between 1828 and 1829 (1992 148). She goes on to say: “También era coyuntura favorable a la inmigración cubana la crisis política emancipadora en la que se encuentra inmerso el continente suramericano, independencia que orienta irremediabilmente a los peninsulares, comerciantes y realistas, hacia el mercado cubano, más seguro y prometedor, dada la fidelidad de la Isla a la Corona española” (ibid.).

Catalan emigration to Cuba, therefore, comprised a small percentage of the total number of people who left the Spanish Peninsula, being labeled by historian Pierre Vilar as an emigration “individual, de qualitat, no massiva, que indica, sobre tot en los ports, una corrent econòmica més que demogràfica” (135). One exception can be made for the decade of the 1820s, following the extenuating war against the French (1808-1814). Between 1821 and 1830 Catalans represented approximately 72 percent of Spanish emigrants, with many of them trying to escape the economic depression that had hit their home country and that was partly due to “un Gobierno que ha intentado prescindir de la burguesía y de los campesinos y satisfacer los deseos de la aristocracia y de los grandes propietarios” (Vicens Vives 155). As Carlos Martí wrote in 1918,

²⁹ According to María Dolores Pérez Murillo, between 1800 and 1835 an astonishing 58.2 percent of Spanish emigrants (from the Peninsula) were Catalan, which translates into approximately 2,475 people who emigrated from Catalonia to Cuba (1988b 122). However, these numbers are not exhaustive, nor do they necessarily represent the actual amounts of Catalan immigrants in Cuba. As Maluquer de Motes points out, “la documentación sobre los embarques no es exhaustiva ni tampoco [...] representativa. Están ausentes de esos registros [...] los emigrantes de las Islas Canarias, que constituían el conjunto más numeroso, los miembros de las tropas coloniales que decidían permanecer en la isla una vez cumplido el servicio, los desterrados por motivos políticos y sociales y los inmigrantes ilegales” (63).

“fue en esta época [el siglo XIX] cuando el sentimiento cubano se exteriorizaba y en esta época que se creía a Cuba que era el Nuevo Eldorado al extremo de que había un modismo que decía que se encontraban las onzas de oro a puntapiés” (10). While many Catalans did, in fact, work tirelessly to accumulate capital by running small businesses and investing their money in upcoming construction projects or in the stock market, one of the strongest and most lucrative commercial activity between Catalonia and Cuba was based on the trafficking of slaves, which continued during the years when slave trade became illegal (starting in 1820), and up until slavery was officially abolished in 1886.³⁰ However, as Robert Whitney explains in his article, “War and Nation Building: Cuban and Dominican Experiences,” although “various labor systems emerged after slavery, [...] most of them could hardly be classified as ‘free’” (363).

Historical documents show that due to the impressive production of sugar and tobacco, between the years 1761 and 1860 Cuba’s population increased from a mere 150.000 to 1.3 million, and that approximately 800.000 slaves from Africa were brought to the island during said period (Whitney 362). However, what is oftentimes overlooked or ignored is that this crossing took place, on various occasions, on Catalan vessels, which, towards the second part of the 1810s, played an even more active role in the transportation of slaves than countries such as England, Holland, and Portugal. Many of the slave ships that left Africa stopped in Catalonia before sailing to Cuba; or, as a second possibility, Catalan passenger ships directed to Cuba

³⁰ In the year 1817 Great Britain and Spain signed a treaty that impeded Spanish merchants and vessels to continue their slave trade north of the Equator; it also stated that it should be completely abolished by May 30, 1820. The treaty declared that “from and after that period it shall not be lawful for any of the subjects of the crown of Spain to purchase slaves, or to carry on the slave trade on any part of the coast of Africa, provided however, that a term of five months, from the said date of the 30th of May, 1820, shall be allowed for completing the voyages of vessels which shall have cleared out lawfully previously to the said 30th May” (cit. in Jameson 23-24). This treaty, however, did not abolish slavery on the island. Slaves who were already present in Cuba at the time of the decree could still be lawfully sold and bought by Cuban plantation owners. For a more comprehensive study on slavery and slave trade in the Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico, see Christopher Schmidt-Nowara’s article, “A Second Slavery? The 19th-Century Sugar Revolutions in Cuba and Puerto Rico” (2011).

made a stop along the African coast to “pick up” slaves who were brought to the Caribbean island illegally.³¹

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), the famous German geographer and explorer, was one of the first intellectuals and critics to study and expose the Catalan involvement in the legal and illegal slave trade between Africa and Cuba (1836). More recently, historians such as D. R. Murray (1971), Herbert Klein (1978), Philip Curtin (2015), and more, have continued in von Humboldt’s footsteps. However, the disparity regarding the total number of slaves that reached the island during the first decades of the nineteenth century is striking. For instance, Klein believes that between 1819 and 1843 132,747 slaves were brought to Cuba (209-227); Curtin states that the numbers reached 512,000 between 1817 and 1865 (qtd. in Fradera 1984:121); Murray calculates that roughly 400,000 people were enslaved in Africa and reached Cuban shores between 1819 and 1865 (131-149); and Fradera reports that between 1821 and 1845 fifty-six Catalan ships were captured by the English forces patrolling the seas—ships that contained approximately 8,000 African slaves (1998: 11). Such disparities, according to Fradera, are due to a lack of official Cuban or Spanish documents (1984: 125).³²

³¹ In his article “La participació catalana en el tràfic d’esclaus (1789-1845)” (1984) Josep M. Fradera points out that between 1789 and 1820 (when the slave trade to Cuba was still legal) approximately 147 Catalan slave vessels reached Cuban shores (134). The numbers significantly increased between 1816 and 1819, as the legal slave trade was (supposedly) coming to an end. As the author writes, “Aquesta integració [del comerç català en el tràfic d’esclaus] s’ha produït en dues fases: la primera, del 1790 fins al 1796, la presència català té un pes relativament petit; en canvi, del 1810 fins a la ilegalització del 1820 guanya en importància” (124). For further information on Catalonia’s involvement in the slave trade throughout the centuries, see, among others, Joaquín Miret y Sans, *La esclavitud en Catalunya en los últimos tiempos de la edad media* (1917); Josep M. Fradera et al., *Catalunya i Ultramar. Poder i negoci a les colònies espanyoles (1760-1914)* (1995); Roser Salicrú i Lluch, *Esclaus i propietaris d’esclaus a la Catalunya del segle XV* (1998); Enrique Sosa Rodríguez, *Negreros catalanes y gaditanos en la trata cubana, 1827-1833* (1998); and Josep Hernando’s comprehensive and ambitious text *Els esclaus islàmics a Barcelona: blancs, negres, llors i turcs. De l’esclavitud a la llibertat (s. XIV)* (2003). For a case study on the triangular trade between Catalonia, Africa, and Cuba, see Michael Zeuské and Orlando García Martínez, “*La Amistad de Cuba: Ramón Ferrer, contrabando de esclavos, captividad y modernidad atlántica*” (2009).

³² The scholar states: “Sense cap estadística oficial cubana o espanyola, per raons òbvies, les fonts disponibles són només dues: la documentació anglesa, generada pels comissionats a l’illa i sovint reelaborada pel Foreign Office, i el censos demogràfics cubans” (125).

In his book *The Black Atlantic*, English scholar Paul Gilroy proposes ways to rethink modernity, making (slave) ships the first chronotope of his theory: “Ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. [...] Accordingly they need to be thought of as cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of a triangular trade. They were something more—a means to conduct political dissent and possibly a distinct mode of cultural production” (16-17).³³ Ships were the first means that brought Catalan and African cultures and traditions to Cuba, as well as the instrument that triangularly connected Europe, Africa, and the American colonies. Catalonia greatly contributed to the revitalization of the Spanish economy, as well as to the development and advancement of its own market and industrialization process. As César Yáñez illustrates, “las décadas centrales del siglo XIX, las mismas que asistieron a la industrialización, son las de mayor intensidad en la historia colonial de Cataluña: creció el comercio, la emigración adquirió cotas impensables para la etapa anterior y [...], a decir de algunos contemporáneos, Cuba y Puerto Rico parecían más colonias catalanas que españolas” (2006 687). The slave trade played a central role in Catalonia’s economy, as well as in its hope of gaining independence from Spain and becoming a sovereign nation.

While the first groups of Catalan emigrants to Cuba were mainly male merchants and traders, by 1850 the migrant population from this specific region of Spain had expanded to include people from different social and economic backgrounds, as well as different genders.³⁴ According to Blanca Sánchez-Alonso, Spanish emigration was most common among young (approximately between the ages of 10 and 30), unskilled, single men who did not have legal

³³ When employing the word “chronotope”, Gilroy refers to Bakhtin’s idea of “a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented” (426).

³⁴ A compelling article regarding the immigration of women to Cuba is that by Raquel Vinat de la Mata, “Inmigración femenina en Cuba: un século atrás” (1999). While not focusing on the migration of Spanish women, it nevertheless presents an interesting study on the number of female immigrants in Cuba who came to the island from different countries in North, Central, and South America, as well as from the Caribbean.

responsibilities towards a wife and children, and who were attracted by the possibility of becoming wealthy.³⁵ Between 1882 and 1914 roughly 70 percent of all Spanish emigrants were men. Among the various Latin American destinations, Cuba was more enticing for male emigrants than, for instance, Brazil, which, in fact, experienced a much higher female emigration when compared to the Caribbean island. Sánchez-Alonso believes that this disparity took place because Brazil subsidized family immigration, while Cuba did not (733). With time, however, the number of Spanish women immigrants to Cuba increased, particularly between 1840 and 1860, and then again during the first decades of the twentieth century.³⁶

When speaking about Catalan emigration to Cuba, historians generally refer to three waves that begin in 1780 and end in 1928, approximately. The first migratory flux took place between 1780 and 1860. As the first Catalan merchants left their homeland in search of more fructiferous markets, many of their connections (family members, friends, business partners) in Spain quickly followed. However, as Junqueras points out, while 60 percent of Spanish immigrants in Cuba were generally employed as servants, only 38 percent of Catalans chose this occupation (35). The remaining 62 percent sought better paying and less demanding professions, which indirectly underlines the different social classes that were migrating from Spain to Cuba, and the different reasons that propelled the crossing. Numerous Catalans in Cuba worked as fishermen, bakers, rope-makers, and sailors, while others were sons and grandsons of doctors, notaries, and lawyers who emigrated to Cuba for commercial reasons (Pérez Murillo 150).

³⁵ Pérez Murillo explains that married Catalan men who wished to emigrate could only do so under previous consent of their wife, and by stating that their intention was not to abandon their home indefinitely. In fact, unlike single men who did not have a time limitation when it came to emigration, married men could only remain abroad for a period of two or three years, period that could be prolonged should the wife express her consent (147).

³⁶ Jordi Maluquer de Motes's study shows that between 1846 and 1862 the number of Spanish women immigrants in Cuba increased from a mere 8,208 to 25,739 (35). Numbers decreased during the second half of the nineteenth century due, mostly, to the Ten Years War (1868-1878), to the Little War (1879-1880), and to the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898).

The second period encompasses the years from 1860 to 1900, when Catalan immigration declined because of the sugar production crisis, and due to the three wars the involved Cuba: The Ten Years War (1868-1878), the Little War (1879-1880), and the War of Independence (1895-1898). Ferrán Oliva explains that due to the new technologies that were being imported from Europe to the Antilles to increase the productivity of the sugar industry, many plantation owners were forced to replace their slaves (who, in many cases, were not taught how to operate the new machineries) with salaried workers.³⁷ In the midst of technological advancements and the initial crisis of the sugar business—a situation that worsened between 1868 and 1878, when the first war of independence in Cuba took place—a number of Catalan tradesmen decided to leave Cuba to either search for more productive markets, or to return to Spain with the capital they had accumulated on the island.³⁸ By 1898 only 6 percent of all Spanish immigrants in Cuba were Catalan, compared to the 16 percent of 1860. In fact, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the island witnessed the arrival of an increasing number of immigrants from the Spanish autonomies of Asturias and Galicia (Junqueras 73), as well as from the Canary Islands.³⁹

³⁷ The need for salaried workers also depended on the drastic decrease of African slaves in Cuba after the slave trade became illegal, as well as on the steady decline of Asian workers / immigrants. As Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz wrote in *Contrapunteo Cubano de tabaco y del azúcar* (1940), “[E]ntonces hicieron falta braceros baratos, y España, a medida que se acababan las posibilidades de la trata clandestina y no teniendo otros obreros esclavos que traer, ni más chinos ni yucatecos, importó trabajadores blancos de sus propias tierras europeas” (85).

³⁸ Catalans were not the only group who left Cuba during this period. As Maluquer de Motes points out, “Durante el quinquenio 1895-1899 los retornos a España superan a las salidas, lo que resulta perfectamente coherente con el fenómeno de la repatriación motivado por la Guerra de Independencia cubana y el fin de la soberanía. Las cifras de ese periodo incluyen, desde luego, a los militares y a los funcionarios” (49).

³⁹ For Canarian emigration to Cuba, see, among others, Manuel Hernández González, “La emigración canaria a Cuba en la primera mitad del siglo XIX” (1997); Paloma Jiménez del Campo, *Escritores canarios en Cuba: literatura de la emigración* (2003); Julio Antonio Yanes Mesa’s book, *El caso de la emigración canaria a Cuba, 1920-1935* (2006); and Teresa Machado Hernández, “La emigración canaria en Cuba. Consecuencias económicas y socioculturales” (2007). For studies on Galician migration to Cuba, see Xosé M. Nuñez Seixas’s article, “Inmigración y galeguismo en Cuba (1879-1939) (1992); Carmen Pereira-Muro, “Emigración, nacionalismo y literatura: los gallegos de Cuba en la obra de Rosalía de Castro y Fernando Ortiz” (2008); and Mónica García Salgado’s book chapter, “Construcción de una identidad: gallegos en Santiago de Cuba (1909-1940) (2014). Lastly, for Asturian emigration to Cuba see, among others, Juan Carlos de la Madrid Álvarez’s book, *El viaje de los*

Finally, the third wave of Catalan migrants arrived between the year 1900 and 1928, a period that observes the highest number of Catalans living in Cuba. The island's independence did not negatively affect Catalan merchants, although it did leave Spain in a destitute situation, which forced millions of Spaniards to abandon their country in search of better lives. The decades between 1880 and 1930 witnessed “el mayor de los trasvases humanos de España en América, [...] que supera con creces todos los siglos anteriores de conquista y colonización” (Guanche 8).⁴⁰ The economic crisis that hit the United States in 1929, and the years of Cuban political and economic instability in the 1930s pushed many Catalans (and Spaniards) to return to Spain.⁴¹ A brief spike was visible during the triennium of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and during the first years of Francisco Franco's dictatorship, although the Catalan refugees and exiles did not significantly alter the number of Catalans living in Cuba.

With the increasing number of immigrants from Spain during the first decades of the 1800s, newcomers began creating associations, known as *casinos* and *colonias*, based on their area of origin: Asturias, Catalonia, Galicia, and more. Such organizations did not solely help the immigrants already present in Cuba; they also represented a point of contact and a support

emigrantes asturianos a América (1989); and Enrique Collazo Pérez's article, “Empresarios asturianos en Cuba, 1840-1920” (2002). A comprehensive publication that contains essays on Spanish immigration to the Americas based on region of origin is that edited by Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz and titled *Españoles hacia América: La emigración en masa, 1880-1930* (1995).

⁴⁰ For a more comprehensive study on the emigration of Spaniards to Cuba during this time period, see María del Carmen Barcía Zaqueira's article, “Un modelo de inmigración ‘favorecida’: el traslado masivo de españoles a Cuba (1880-1930)” (2001).

⁴¹ The economic instability of these years was partly produced by a new law that the Cuban Government passed in 1934 against foreign workers. According to the Spanish newspaper *Faro Villalbés*, on May 28, 1934 the Cuban Government, headed by Ramón Grau San Martín, approved a “nueva legislación a favor del trabajador Cubano,” which required that the following criteria be obliged to by Cuban companies: “50 por ciento de nativos; 30 por ciento de naturalizados y 20 por ciento de extranjeros, exceptuando de esta ley a los que trabajan en el servicio doméstico en casas particulares” (2). Moreover, companies also had to obey an internal ranking: “Extranjeros solteros; casados; casados con descendientes; extranjeros casados con cubanas y por último extranjeros casados con cubanas y con descendencia cubana” (*Faro Villalbés*). While all immigrants were affected by this 1934 law—as well as by the Constitution of 1940, which contained an article against foreign immigration—it is worth noting that it had a strong racial component to it. Said law was, in fact, primarily directed against Antillean immigrants (Haitians and Jamaicans, especially) who were competing for jobs against the local population.

network for the potential emigrants in Spain. In addition, these institutions fostered and maintained the native region's culture and language alive by teaching classes to and organizing events for the many immigrants who each year reached Cuban shores. The first organization on the island, founded in 1840, was precisely Catalan. It was called *Sociedad de Beneficencia de Naturales de Cataluña*. According to Ernesto Chávez, the *Sociedad de Beneficencia* was “la primera sociedad de carácter regional de origen hispánico no sólo en la isla de Cuba, sino en el continente americano” (77), as well as the first step towards protecting the Catalan culture in Cuba. Although this society was originally created as a way to help the elderly and the sick, in 1872 it opened its doors to any native Catalan on the island, regardless of their age and physical condition. María del Carmen Barcia Zequeira and Alejandro García Álvarez stress the importance of such network for the thousands of immigrants, since these *sociedades* contributed “al fortalecimiento de los inmigrantes establecidos en los espacios cubanos” while being “una importante vía de atracción para aquellos coterráneos que pensaban labrarse su futuro en [Cuba]” (47).

Extremely proud of their culture and history, Catalan immigrants in Cuba strove to keep their customs and language alive through a number of cultural, literary, and mass-medial institutions.⁴² The *Sociedad de Beneficencia* was the first step towards fostering and protecting the Catalan culture on the island, and it soon adopted Catalan as its official language: as of 1924

⁴² Other important cultural institutions that emerged between the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century were La Luz (a ludic center founded by Catalans and Cubans, which in 1901, after Cuban independence, became known as El Liceo), the Centro Catalanista, the Grup Nacionalista Radical Catalunya (1907), and the Bloc Nacionalista Catalunya (1911), alongside newspapers and radio programs. The first Catalan newspaper, *Lo Català*, was established in 1861, and published both in Spanish and in Catalan, although it only counted five weekly publications. In fact, despite the large number of Catalan newspapers and magazines that were published between 1861 and the end of the century, only a small number of them could count on enough readers to guarantee their survival. Some of the most important publications were *Lo missatger català* (1881-1886), *L'Atlantida* (1881-1888), *L'Almogàver* (1882), *Montserrat* (1888), *La opinió catalana* (1897-1898), and *La llumanera de Nueva York* (1874-1881), published in Catalan in New York City and then shipped to Cuba, and considered to be “la primera sólida experiencia periodística de interconexión entre Cataluña y América” (Costa i Fernández 195).

the annual journal of the institution was published exclusively in Catalan. Moreover, in 1923 and 1944 the *Sociedad* celebrated the *Juegos Florales de la Lengua Catalana*, an event where writers, scholars, and literature aficionados could produce and present their compositions in Catalan.⁴³ By 1947, the *Sociedad de Beneficencia* was one of the most important associations of Spanish origin in Cuba, both socially and economically (Chávez 80). However, in the years that followed the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the *Sociedad* went through a phase of decline and decadence, due to three main reasons: 1) because after 1959 many foreigners (including Catalans) left Cuba due to their political convictions and to their opposition to Fidel Castro; 2) because Castro's government ended its subsidies towards all institutions that were not public; and 3) because of the institution's internal conflicts that began to undermine the organization's solid foundations.⁴⁴ Despite its years of stagnation, the *Sociedad de Beneficencia* never completely vanished. However, it was not until the decade of the 1980s that it experienced a period of renaissance with the voluntary donations of old members and their families, who were interested in bringing back the institution's formal glory.

III. Emigration, Gender, and Race in Antoni Verdaguer's *Havanera 1820*

⁴³ According to the Generalitat de Catalunya, "los Juegos Florales fueron la plataforma de difusión más importante de la literatura catalana del tercer cuarto del siglo XIX y el eje sobre el cual gravitó buena parte de la producción literaria 'renaxintista'" ("Juegos," online, n.p.). The first *Juegos Florales* were celebrated in Barcelona in 1859, and they soon became one of the most important cultural and social events in Catalonia. Starting in the twentieth century the *Juegos* were celebrated outside of Catalonia (in a number of European and American cities) primarily because of the dictatorships of Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco, which interrupted the event's yearly celebration. The last *Juegos* to be celebrated in exile were held in Munich in 1977. Since 1992, with the changes made to the format of the event, the *Juegos Florales* have been integrated to Barcelona's poetry week.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that the post-1959 government's lack of support affected all non-public institutions in Cuba. While the new leaders did not openly attack such establishments, they did cut all type of economic support. This included renowned centers, as well—such as the *Ateneo*, which had received the support of publicly known figures like Fernando Ortiz. The revolutionary government created a number of public institutions that promoted a new set of national cultural policies, while the remaining foundations either disappeared or were given a new purpose (as in the case of the *Centro Gallego*).

The last decades have experienced an undeniable growth of Catalan and Spanish texts and works centered on Cuba, especially during the years leading up to, and following, the years 1992 and 1998, a date that served as a reminder of the Spanish-American War of one hundred years prior, during which Spain lost its last colonies, including *la siempre fidelísima perla* (“the forever faithful pearl,” as Cuba was known in Spain.) Recent scholars have proposed that the ongoing connection between Catalonia and Cuba could depend on their intertwined history (Broch), on the Catalan feeling of nostalgia for having lost its shot at becoming an independent nation (Bakhtiarova; Martí-Olivella), or on the newfound interest towards Cuba’s revolution of 1959 (Vázquez-Montalbán). However, what the mentioned scholars overlook is the undeniable relationship between slavery, colonialism, and gender, which is visible in the works analyzed in this chapter. This study of *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá* wishes to bridge the gap between two apparently separate topics and offer a new interpretation on this connection.

The question that follows is: Can the feeling of regret for what could have been (but, indeed, was not), or the attraction towards Cuba’s socialist government be considered a strong enough propeller to legitimize the boom of Catalan cultural productions centered on Cuba? Recognizing Catalonia’s involvement in the slave trade (and the wealth that it generated) is what has allowed many writers and artists to rediscover the Catalonia’s past and to analyze it with a critical eye. However, it is also the element that has allowed a modern-day colonization (or neocolonization) and a cultural re-appropriation of the Caribbean island. Catalonia’s involvement in the slave trade is a topic that has been discussed by critics and artists alike over the past decades. Although Catalonia is hardly known for having played an active role in legal and illegal slave trading activities, the realization that much of its wealth came, in fact, from this enterprise is what has led various writers and scholars to address this fact in an objective and

direct manner. Aside from Carme Riera and Antoni Verdaguier, whose productions are analyzed in this chapter and who grant slavery (and Catalonia's involvement in it) center stage in their novel and film, other critics, such as the aforementioned Galina Bakhtiarova (2007; 2009) and Àlex Broch (2002; 2004), and Josep María Fradera (1984; 1995; 1998), have also written about the rediscovery of a not so pleasant past, and what this has entailed from a literary, social, and cultural perspective.

After the first wave of Catalan merchants left Spain in search of better markets in Cuba, a different kind of emigrant followed. The newcomers were not solely businessmen who sought opportunities to increase their commerce, but also members of the lower social classes, women who were being married off to rich plantation owners in Cuba, and religious exiles who wished to free themselves from the stigmatization of their Jewish descent.⁴⁵ Antoni Verdaguier's 1993 cinematographic production, *Havanara 1820*, presents its viewers with the story of Amèlia Roig (Aitana Sánchez-Gijón), a middle-class woman from the small Catalan town of Canet, whose hand is given in marriage to a rich Catalan landowner, Ton Massana (Abel Folk), who resides in Cuba.⁴⁶ Amidst intrigues, violence, and slave rebellions on the island, viewers experience a harsh criticism towards the Catalan involvement in the slave trade, and towards the myth of Catalan identity, based on "trabajadores duros, racionales y diligentes, opuestos al Otro castellano que

⁴⁵ I will discuss the topic of religion and exile more in depth in my analysis of *Por el cielo y más allá*.

⁴⁶ Throughout the chapter I will not be quoting directly from the movie, but rather from the literary adaptation of its original script, titled *Havanera*, and published in 1993 by Jaume Cabré et al. As Jaume Fuster, one of the scripts co-editor, writes in the Afterward of the adaptation, the result of this cinematographic to literary transformation is "un híbrid de narració tradicional i guió cinematogràfic que es pot llegir de manera autònoma, sense necessitat de recórrer a la pel·lícula per entendre'l" (193). While there is no official explanation (to my knowledge) for the publication of a literary adaptation of the script, it is curious that *Havanera 1820* has been presented to the public under three different mediums: television, cinema, and literature (the book, in fact, was presented during the Catalan holiday of Saint Jordi, known for the numerous books and red roses that are sold throughout the day). A possible interpretation for such a wide divulgation could be the necessity to remember and come to terms with Catalonia's past involvement in the slave trade, and to accept that most of its wealth was generated precisely from such a condemnable activity.

maltratava y abusaba del mundo colonizado” (Bakhtiarova 2007 44). Spectators soon realize that many Catalans are as guilty of brutality towards and of subjugation of the Other as the more well-known Western colonizing powers.⁴⁷

Ton Massana, the story’s antagonist, is a Catalan merchant who built his fortune in Cuba through slavery, and who is willing to recur to illegal activities in order to maintain his wealth and his position in Cuban society. He is one of the main benefactors of the illegal slave trade from Africa to Cuba, a traffic that he orchestrates with a number of seemingly respectable men: the businessman Francesc Valeri (impersonated by Xabier Elorriaga, who believes in the ideals of the French Revolution and in technological advancements, but who bows to the power of money), and Ton Massana’s best friend and merchant Alfons Rovira (Fernando Guillén Cuervo), who belongs to a respectable family of Catalan tradesmen, but is enticed by the possibilities of greatly increasing his family fortune. During Amèlia’s voyage to Cuba aboard the ship symbolically named *El Català*, the vessel makes a detour toward a French colony along the African Coast, where a group of recently captured slaves is awaiting them. The ship’s captain (opposed to the slave trade) is thrown overboard, and the principal instigator, *el siciliano*—who also serves as the scapegoat for the entire operation—is hung. Amèlia is horrified at the sight of slaves being loaded onto the ship and “stowed away” below deck as if they were merchandise. However, being the only woman aboard, and trusting in her friend Alfons Rovira, she initially keeps silent.

⁴⁷ The Catalan participation in the slave trade is quite paradoxical, given their position as a political and linguistic minority in modern Spain. As Paul Freedman writes, “Catalans comprise a highly self-conscious polity with certain autonomous rights within the present Spanish state. [...] However] at various times in modern history, notably under the Franco regime, the Catalans have been harshly treated by the Castilian-controlled Spanish government in the name of political and cultural unity against ‘separatism’” (4). As Fradera points out, by 1810 the Spanish and Catalan presence in the international slave trade between Africa and the Antilles had increased drastically, while the British and Danish one had almost completely disappeared as early as 1805 (1984 122).

Upon her arrival to Cuba, Amèlia meets her husband, who shows no interest in her. In fact, he decides to spend their first night as a married couple with Consuelo (Ikay Romay), the mulatto slave whom he has abused for years. Unlike the silent and obedient character that viewers encounter in the first scenes of the film, the Amèlia that is born after witnessing her husband making love to his slave is completely different: she is strong, assertive, and not afraid to speak her mind. On the morning that follows the incident, Amèlia openly confronts her husbands and asks why he made her leave her hometown if he already has everything he needs:

AMÈLIA. ¿No en tens prou, amb això d'aquesta nit?

TON. No sé de què em parles.

AMÈLIA. Ho saps molt bé... Has passat tota la nit amb la Consuelo. [...]

¿Per què m'has fat venir de Canet si no et faig cap falta?

TON. No és cert; m'agrades molt, Amèlia... però a Cuba la vida és diferent. T'ho hauràs d'acostumar.

AMÈLIA. No sé pas si em ve de gust fer-ho.

TON. No estàs obligada a estimar-me, però respecta el meu sistema de vida. En el fons no ets més que la garantia de un pacte comercial. Per això t'han casat amb mi. (Havanera 99-100)

Amèlia is nothing but a commercial good to Ton—similarly to his slaves—of which he can dispose as he pleases. Nevertheless, Massana reminds Amèlia that she is his wife, and that she must behave as such. This assertion triggers Amèlia's response: “¡No! ¡I mai em posaràs les mans a sobre! [...] No sóc una esclava, jo” (*Havanera* 100), which she yells in front of the slaves as she carelessly leaves the breakfast table.

The hatred that both Amèlia and Consuelo feel towards Ton Massana is what unites them. After viciously raping Amèlia in the garden, Massana makes Consuelo his wife's personal servant. Regardless of his intentions to spite Amèlia, the relationship between the two women is what allows them to devise a plan to murder Massana. After killing his friend Alfons Rovira in a duel, Massana hides in *El Català*, which is anchored offshore the port of Havana and quarantined due to a fake case of malaria—a strategy conceived to hide the group of slaves on board from British authorities on the island. Massana orders for Consuelo to bring him clean clothes, and, possibly, in order to take advantage of her away from his wife's judgmental eyes. As per the plan that the mulatto slave and Amèlia devise, Consuelo is to kill Massana, forever granting herself and Amèlia the freedom they are longing for. After being stabbed in the stomach, Massana knocks over an oil lamp, which causes the ship to catch on fire. Consuelo is able to free the slaves below deck and escape, while Massana and his helper, known as *el Cremat* (a nickname that ironically translates to “the Burned”), are consumed by the flames. The last scene of the film shows Consuelo and Amèlia joining hands and looking into each other's eyes, while *El Català*, which symbolically represents the wealth and prosperity of Catalonia—achieved, partly, through illegal slave trade activities—burns in the background. The closing, unspoken, and cathartic lines (that curiously do not appear in the literary adaptation of the script, but that close the cinematographic production) read: “A pesar de algunos esfuerzos, el tráfico de esclavos siguió existiendo, ilegalmente, durante muchos años. Las revueltas de esclavos fueron cada vez más frecuentes, hasta el día en que la esclavitud fue abolida... ¿para siempre?” (*Havanera 1820*).

While discussing the active presence of Catalan businessmen and landowners in the slave trade, *Havanera 1820* also focuses on slavery and slave rebellions in Cuba. The *cimarrón* (“runaway slave”) Chato Trinidad occupies a salient role in the film, as he rebels against his

masters, kills them, and arranges an underground organization of ex-slaves whose mission is to fight for the freedom of all slaves on the island. The Spanish authorities in Cuba eventually capture him and hang him—as he pronounces his last words in defense of freedom and liberty for all. Alongside Chato Trinidad, Amèlia and Consuelo are apparently the characters that best embody the anti-slavery movements at the time—an unusual choice, according to Bakhtiarova, given men’s central role in emigration and slave-trade. The two women, however, are not placed on the same level throughout the film: they occupy contrasting social positions and are moved by different ideals. While Consuelo loathes Ton Massana for the years of abuse and for marginalizing her among the other slaves (who view her as a traitor for being the master’s favorite), Amèlia despises her husband for the humiliation he has caused her and for his constant demonstrations of amorality. Not only does he abuse of Consuelo night after night; he also forcefully takes his wife’s virginity against her consent, to which she spitefully exclaims: “Ets tan poca cosa que només pots aconseguir los coses que vols per la força” (*Havanera* 144). However, the plan that Consuelo and Amèlia contrive, despite resulting in the freedom of a number of slaves, and in the symbolic destruction of *El Català*, is not imbued with morality and abolitionist ideals. On the contrary, both women act for personal revenge against a spiteful man who holds them as his prisoners, and to whom they are both invisible. In the book *Lesbian Philosophy: Exploration* (1986), Jeffner Allen proposes that men use rape as a way of taking revenge over other men and as violation of another man’s property (40). The despicable act of rape becomes “a monologue by men about an invisible woman” (41). Ton Massana places Amèlia and Consuelo on the same level, since both women become invisible to him. They are treated as his property, of which he can dispose when and how he pleases.

Ella Shohat also studies the themes of rape and rescue phantasy that permeate a number of European (or Western) cinematographic productions. Many of her findings can be applied to Verdaguer's film, which follows the typical Western racial convention that presents "the White woman as the desired object of the male protagonists and antagonists [and] Third World women [...] as sexually hungry subalterns" (64). Furthermore, "While the White woman has to be lured, made captive, and virtually raped to awaken her repressed desire, the Arab/Black/Latin women are driven by a raging libido" (ibid.). Such is the case in *Havanera 1820*, where Amèlia and Consuelo's sexual experiences with Massana are portrayed quite differently. If on the one hand Amèlia kicks, screams, and tries to avoid being raped by her husband (who forcefully violates her in the garden and injures her), Consuelo is represented (at least initially) as if she enjoys making love to her master. One should also take into consideration the numerous scenes throughout the film that show the slave completely naked, while Amèlia's most risqué close-up involves a see-through nightgown.⁴⁸ It appears that instead of breaking away from the stereotypes of the frigid European woman and the lusty slave—therefore presenting new female characters that detach themselves from how society of the time would have pictured them—the film strengthens the dichotomy between White / Black woman and caters, once again, to what the male gaze longs for.

Although Amèlia and Consuelo are presented as independent and assertive female characters, viewers quickly realize that both women, in fact, lack freedom, and are constantly subjected to judgmental masculine eyes. *Havanera 1820* is imbued with erotic scenes, as it is

⁴⁸ A similar sexualization of slaves also takes place in *Por el cielo y más allá*, when one of the characters, the plantation owner Joaquín de Fortaleza, reminisces about the numerous sexual encounters he had with his slaves: "Entre la larga lista de las que había poseído, sólo las negras, que además solían ser de su propiedad, aceptaban sin remilgos las obscenidades que le apeteciera soltar. Con las blancas, perteneciesen o no a la categoría de las honradas, e incluso con las mulatas, había tenido que llevar mucho cuidado y no se había atrevido siquiera a pronunciar ciertas palabras" (170).

openly and shamelessly speaks to male desire. As previously mentioned, the mulatto slave Consuelo appears completely naked in a number of scenes. On a looser note, the relationship between Consuelo and Amèlia can be interpreted as an oblique reference to lesbianism and female mingling (especially intriguing when comprised of women from different social backgrounds and of different ethnicities), which consequently awakens male libidinousness in both the film's characters and the film's viewers. Female (lesbian) desire and the mingling of women of different races has been a central element in the male gaze for centuries. Interestingly enough, in 1936 the nudist magazine published in Barcelona by Jordi Riera and entitled *Biofilia: Revista mensual de culto a la vida* featured a drawing of two naked women (one mulatto and one white) on its front cover (Figure 1). The women are portrayed as they lustfully look into each other eyes and adorn each other's bodies with flower necklaces. The color of said flowers creates a contrast with the women's skin: the mulatto woman, on the left, wears a light-pink garland, while the white woman, on the right, lets her body be adorned by darker blossoms. The interaction between the two women is also worth noting. While both subjects are naked (their bodies exposed to the lustful gaze of (male) readers / voyeurs), they are clearly not equal: the white woman leans back on a large, green leaf with her right arm partially elevated, passionately looking into her counterpart's eyes; the mulatto woman, instead, is depicted during an act of subservience, as she adorns the white woman's (her mistress'?) body. The noticeable presence of tropical flowers and plants, the sea, and another partially naked woman carrying a jug of water above her head increases the feelings of exoticness and eroticism by transporting viewers to a distant tropical and (supposedly) sexual land. The potential lust generated by this interracial union is what increases Ton Massana's desire to possess both his mistress and his wife, notwithstanding the psychological and physical violence that he must exert in order to do so.

According to scholar Roberto Novoa Santos, each act of love (whether it be a caress, a kiss, or sex) is tinted with violence and with a desire to destroy, for it is always “preciso [...] atrapar la presa, atraparla violentamente, sojuzgarla; es preciso luego comérsela y tras de comérsela, digerirla. Esta es la única forma en que una cosa externa del mundo la podemos incorporar a nuestra propia entraña” (18). Consuelo must abide to Massana’s repulsive desire because she is his slave, and Amèlia is forcefully raped because she is his wife.

Havanera 1820 creates a parallel between its two female protagonists: Amèlia and Consuelo are mistreated, raped, and humiliated by the film’s antagonist, which pushes them to unite and collaborate in order to destroy their master. Nevertheless, regardless of her new established bond with Consuelo, Amèlia maintains a traditional position of power, at least towards her husband’s slaves. As Bakhtiarova points out, “[ella] trata con condescendencia y da órdenes a Consuelo, cuya posición, tradicionalmente marginada, se mantiene” (2007 47). Amèlia acts as the brain behind Massana’s assassination, while Consuelo gets her hands dirty with her master’s blood. Despite her hate towards her spouse, Amèlia would have not killed him herself. She acts in a similar way towards Alfons Rovira, who says to be in love with her. After Amèlia discovers his shameful involvement in the slave trade, Rovira shows himself for who he truly is, and tries to abuse of her, albeit without success. Amèlia, taking advantage of Rovira’s lowly actions, exaggerates the event: she rips her dress and runs, desperately, into the city square, where her husband and a group of men are discussing business. She openly accuses Rovira of trying to force himself onto her, which compels Massana to challenge his friend to a duel. By devising such a scheme, Amèlia partly recuperates her agency as a woman (inasmuch as such

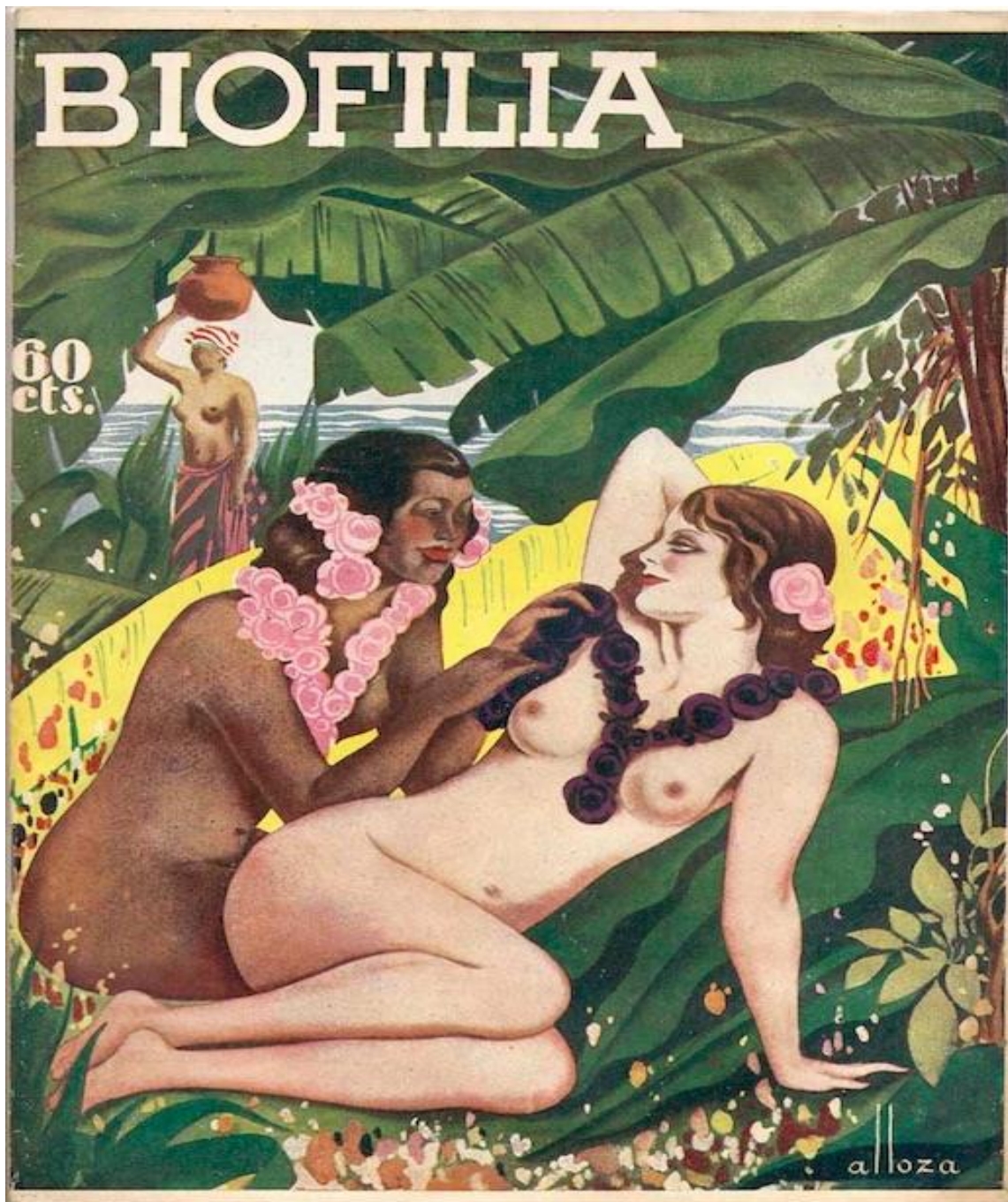


Figure 1. *Biofilia: Revista mensual de culto a la vida*, 1936, drawing by Jordi Riera.
Source: *A Virtual Wunderkammer: Early Twentieth Century Erotica in Spain*,
<http://sicalipsis.humnet.ucla.edu>.

an agency is possible) and sets in motion the plan that will eventually lead to the death of both Rovira and Massana. Consuelo, on the other hand, is not free to think and act on her own, and

possesses little voice throughout the film. She agrees to Amèlia's plan for personal reasons and carries out her mistress's scheme without asking questions, yet she is never able to dissolve the relationship of slave / mistress that binds the two women. Consuelo remains faithful to Amèlia, and although the film ends with the symbolic destruction of the slave trade, viewers do not know whether Consuelo and the other slaves on Massana's plantation will be freed. As Bakhtiarova concludes in her article,

Si bien la balanza del poder se traslada de la tradicional dominación masculina y la unión de dos mujeres que se rebelan contra la autoridad destruye una empresa colonial, la distribución de raza y género evocan, de nuevo, un discurso más tradicional en el que la mujer mulata sigue siendo, por un lado, objeto de fantasía sexual del hombre blanco y, por el otro, sirviente que obedece a su ama blanca. (2007 47)

The third female character of the story that is worth taking into consideration is the Frenchwoman Yvonne Duchamp (Assumpta Serna), Francesc Valeri's mistress and concubine. Despite playing a marginal role when compared to Amèlia and Consuelo, Yvonne demonstrates her ability to concoct plans and play the role of puppet master for her personal gain. Her apparent support of Valeri's commercial plans (focused on the introduction of steamboats in Catalan economy, as well as on the illegal slave trade from Africa to Cuba) comes to an end as he is found guilty for the supposed murder of *El Català's* captain, and for the aforementioned slave trade activities. When Valeri loses his fortune, Yvonne abandons him, stating: "Estàs acabat, Francesc. I si encara et queda una mica de seny, vés-te'n o aniràs a la presó" (*Havanera* 184). To make matters worse, Duchamp packs up the jewels that Valeri had gifted her with, but that, in fact, belonged to the man's family assets:

VALERI. ¿També t'endus [*sic*] això? – li recrimina.

DUCHAMP. ¡I tant! Es l'únic que n'he tret, de las teves ximpleries. (*Havanera* 183)

Yvonne Duchamp is portrayed as an independent woman who is able to outsmart most men around her because unlike them, she does not give in to petty sentimentalism, and continues to focus on her ultimate goal: that of becoming increasingly wealthy.

Although Yvonne Duchamp escapes prison, one must recognize the film's implicit criticism towards the French, whose involvement in the illegal slave trade is made clear. The references to the French power are minimal, but important. The first allusion is made when viewers get a glimpse of the French flag waiving along the shore of the African Coast, in Mauritania, where *El Català* stops to load the slaves that will be brought to Cuba.⁴⁹ Although no Frenchman boards the ship, French authorities are clearly aware of the situation and are contributing to the slave trade for personal gain. The second criticism towards the French is made through the character of the mentioned Yvonne Duchamp, who should supposedly embody the ideals of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, but who ends up betraying her lover and escaping with his money. Hence, while *Havanera 1820* is certainly a cinematographic production that aims at uncovering Catalonia's dirty involvement in the slave trade, it also shows that it was not acting alone, and that other European superpowers of the time were actively contributing to its existence.

Verdaguer's film tries to break away from the traditional scheme of a male-dominated society filled with silenced and obedient women by presenting its viewers with three female

⁴⁹ Although the film does not specify that the African land is, in fact, Mauritania, one can gather this information through the literary adaptation of the cinematographic script. Nevertheless, this detail proves to be historically inaccurate, since the French did not colonize present-day Mauritania until the early 1900s.

characters who at first glance do not seem to occupy the typical position attributed to Western and slave women during the nineteenth century. Amèlia, Consuelo, and Yvonne act independently to subvert the established order: Amèlia to rid herself of her husband, Consuelo to rid herself of her master, and Yvonne to break all ties with a weak man who belongs in prison. The three female characters, in different ways, demonstrate bravery and an agency that must not be overlooked, given the time period and its social impositions. However, despite the women's actions and their will to detach themselves from the men that dominate and control their lives, the film recurs, time and time again, to a sexist and sexualized plot that fetishizes these female characters and complies with a subjugating Western male gaze.

The film also falls short in the reasoning that propels the three women to act as they do. Unlike the runaway slave Chato Trinidad, who has the courage to openly rebel and die for his ideals of liberty and equality, Amèlia, Consuelo, and Yvonne are moved by personal reasons of individual freedom and economic gain. Amèlia does not believe in abolition and in equal rights for all, and Consuelo (aside from liberating the prisoners held captive on the vessel) does not instigate slave rebellions, nor does she sever the ties of inequality with her mistress. Finally, Yvonne reveals where her true interests lay: she is not interested in political or technological advancement (and certainly not in abolition) and is willing to move from bidder to bidder until finding the one who best suits her needs. The three women are portrayed as incapable of fighting for higher political ideals and of moving beyond their personal, and to some extent egotistical, interests. Once more, Amèlia, Consuelo, and Yvonne appear inferior to their male counterparts: not only are they the object of male desire and sexual abuse; they also lack the ability to fight for the greater causes of abolition and liberty. Perhaps unwillingly, Verdaguer presents the film's viewers with a misogynist interpretation and depiction of the aforementioned female characters:

they are belittled, sexualized, and fetishized, and they fail to rid themselves of the traditional and stereotypical qualities attributed to women.

If on the one hand *Havanera 1820* represents a novelty in Catalan cinema for its harsh criticism towards Catalonia's involvement in the slave trade, and for the unusual (apparent) centrality it bestows upon women in order to discuss such theme, it is also a production that perpetuates the power of the White colonizer's gaze, and that maintains a clear distinction between the Western subject and its colonial subaltern. As Shohat states,

The intersection of colonial and gender discourse involves a shifting, contradictory subject positioning, whereby Western woman can simultaneously constitute 'center' and 'periphery,' identity and alterity. A Western woman, in these narratives, exists in a relation of subordination to Western man and in relation of domination towards 'non-Western' men and women. (63)

The film also contributes, according to Martí-Olivella, to Spain's recuperation of its own identity and historical property: "The revision of the Cuban subject by Spain's transatlantic cinema [...] constitutes one of the most prominent examples of performing the postnational condition of contemporary Spain within a traditional nationalist discourse" (164). Through *Havanera 1820* Spaniards (and Catalans in particular) are exposed to their own colonial past. They are also reminded that Cuba, seen today as "a living museum where communism and the imperial past are (con)fused in their spectral reality," (ibid.) was once one of Spain's most cherished colonies. Finally, the film's conclusion leads back to Bakhtiarova's idea of Catalan nostalgia for a colonial empire and a national identity that, ultimately, did not come into existence.

IV. A Criticism of Slavery or a Perpetuation of Stereotypes? Carme Riera's *Por el cielo y más allá*

After analyzing the cinematographic production of *Havanera 1820*, I would now like to focus on a novel by Majorcan author Carme Riera, which has much in common with the Catalan film. Riera's work, originally published in the year 2000 in Catalan with the title *Cap al cel obert* (translated by the author herself into Spanish, and published in 2001 as *Por el cielo y más allá*),⁵⁰ is the second book that closes the cycle dedicated to the crypto-Jews in Majorca, derogatively known as *chuetas*.⁵¹ The first book, *En el último azul* (published in Catalan in 1994 as *Dins el darrer blau*), is set in the Mediterranean island at the end of the seventeenth century, at the height of the Spanish Inquisition. The events described in the novel, which culminate with the *Auto de fe* of 1691, are a mix of history and fiction. The same technique is used in *Por el cielo*, where the main protagonists belong to two branches of the family of Isabel Tarongí, one of the crypto-Jews who was burnt at the stake in the aforementioned *Auto de fe*. However, in this text Riera moves away from her native Majorca and sets the novel in Cuba, establishing a much stronger connection between Catalonia and the Caribbean island.

If in her first novel the historical background was inquisitorial Spain, in *Por el cielo* readers experience Cuba in the midst of political and social instability during the nineteenth century: on the one hand readers get a taste of the independence movements and of the political corruption on the island, and on the other, they are presented with the brutalities associated with

⁵⁰ Throughout the chapter I will refer to this novel with the abbreviated title of *Por el cielo*.

⁵¹ As scholar Baruch Braunstein explains, towards the end of the seventeenth century there were two cycles of persecutions against the *chuetas* in Spain: the first one between 1677-1679, which was known as *La Complicidad*, and the second one between 1687-1691 (when Riera's story takes place), called *La Cremadissa*, which culminated with the *Auto de fe* of 1691 (86-92). According to the *Real Academia Española*, the *chuetas* (spelled 'xueta' in Balearic Spanish) are the descendants of converted Jews. Geraldine Cleary Nichols adds that, to this day, the word *chueta* is oftentimes used as an insult, although anthropologists "use it nonjudgmentally to refer to the bounded community it denominates" (213).

slavery and with the escalating fear among the white Cuban population at the time, generated by the rising numbers of people of color, and by Haiti's recent independence.⁵² To overcome the numerical disparity between People of Color and White people, both the Cuban and the Spanish governments of the time advocated for a plan to whiten the island's population, which aimed at opening Cuba's doors to immigrants, preferably from Europe.⁵³ As the novel suggests, Jews and people of Jewish descent, who faced inequality and even danger in Spain, were among the millions of Spaniards who left their home country in search of opportunities in the Americas. Because they could, in many cases, pass as white, Jews or people of Jewish descent who immigrated to Latin America oftentimes avoided the stigmatization they faced elsewhere.⁵⁴ This is the case of María, the novel's protagonist, and of her Cuban family who, upon arrival to Cuba in the early nineteenth century, changed their last name from Forteza (a typical Jewish name) to Fortaleza, to eliminate all traces of their Jewish ancestry.⁵⁵

⁵² Haiti's independence proved to be a fundamental event in the history of the American continent, since this small island was the first European colony in Latin America to obtain its independence and abolish slavery. The independence movements lasted from 1791 (when the first rebellion against the French government took place) to 1804. In his essay, Laurent Dubois traces the history of the Haitian Revolution, underlining its ties with the French Revolution of 1789 and the importance it held in the history of the Americas, and in world history, as well. The scholar states: "The Haitian Revolution, then, is a vital part of the history of the Americas, of Europe, and indeed of global history—an event crucial to understanding the history of modern politics. A successful slave revolt that led first to general emancipation and citizenship, and then to the creation of an independent black nation-state in the Americas, it represents a signal moment in the history of ideas of universal rights" (274).

⁵³ The intent to "whiten" Cuba is a topic that has been discussed at large by a number of critics, and that demonstrates Spain's and the ruling classes' paradoxical relationship with slavery. Given the impressive amount of slaves that had been forcefully brought to Cuba in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the White ruling class on the island was experiencing an escalating fear of being outnumbered by a growing slave population. What the higher classes began to seek was a "sociedad blanca idílica, que frenase el continuo avance de la población de color y que constituyese el pilar sobre el que había de construirse la nueva Cuba" (Azcona 25). The desire of a whiter Cuba led the Spanish Monarchy to establish a number of decrees and organizations that worked towards this purpose. On October 21, 1817 the Monarchy found the *Decreto de Colonización Blanca*, "por el cual se liberó la migración hacia Cuba, con el objetivo de contribuir al aumento de la población blanca, por ello se autorizó la contratación de trabajadores, peninsulares e insulares, como labradores, artesanos y súbditos de países amigos que profes[asen] la religión católica y lo pr[obasen]" (Hernández Pérez 37).

⁵⁴ For further information on the phenomenon of "passing" among European immigrants, see Matthew Frye Jakobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1988).

The story opens in Cuba, around mid-nineteenth century, with two brothers of the Fortaleza family, Gabriel and Miguel, who gamble their future away in a game of cards: the winner will live his life as he pleases, while the loser will remain in Cuba, marry a relative from Majorca, and share his father's inheritance with his sibling. The unfortunate prize is Isabel Forteza, a distant cousin of the two young men, who must comply with her father's wish of marrying an unknown relative in a distant land because of the family's dire economic situation. Isabel's sister, María, is asked to accompany her sibling to Cuba, for she is unmarried and can no longer be provided for by her brother in Majorca following their father's death.

During the crossing, the ship and its passengers are victims of a plague epidemic, which kills Isabel and leaves María unconscious and nearly dead. Upon the ship's arrival to Cuba, María is mistaken for Isabel and is cared for and nurtured back to health by Ángela, Miguel and Gabriel's sister. However, after discovering María's true identity, Ángela suggests that she speak with her father, Joaquín de Fortaleza, ask him for a small dowry, and enter a convent—a path that María had not been allowed to follow in Majorca.⁵⁶ Ángela's plans are ruined by the astonishing news that María and her father will marry, which not only disturbs the Fortaleza siblings because of the age difference of almost forty years between the spouses, but also because their father's marriage, and the possibility of him having another child, will reconfigure his testament.

The intensity of the story becomes palpable for the readers as Riera introduces political and social elements, which detach themselves from the more fictional details of the first part of

⁵⁵ According to Danielle Rozenberg, there were fifteen Jewish last names in Majorca that everyone on the island was familiar with. Alongside names such as Miró, Tarongí, Valls, and Bonnín, there was also Forteza (18).

⁵⁶ Before leaving for Cuba, the narrator informs the readers that “el confesor le había dicho [a María] que el impedimento más grande que existía para que ella pudiera ser monja era el hecho de descender de aquella hereje [Isabel Tarongí] de manera tan directa, tanto por el lado paterno como materno. Su tatarabuela había sido condenada al brasero por haber abominado de la religión cristiana y retornado a la antigua fe, vieja y caduca” (*Por el cielo* 39).

the book. Joaquín de Fortaleza and his wife are warped into a political conspiracy organized by the Capitán General of Cuba, Rodríguez de la Conca, who, in order to obtain the title of viceroy from the Spanish monarchs in Madrid, accuses Joaquín and María de Fortaleza of trying to poison him during a dinner party at their house. As Joaquín de Fortaleza is mysteriously murdered by a group of thieves, María (whose Jewish descent is uncovered by the Capitán General) is accused of being the head organizer of an independence and revolutionary movement on the island. She is used as the scapegoat for Rodríguez de la Conca's plan, and is sentenced to death by garrote.

Throughout the novel, there are many themes and elements that are worth studying in depth, which include, but are not limited to, emigration, political corruption, and religion. This analysis wishes to focus on two aspects in particular: 1) the role of women – specifically looking at the characters of María, Isabel, and Ángela; and 2) the political and social aspects that tie Catalonia to Cuba—which Riera inserts and develops in her book. Although *Por el cielo* is a novel in a cycle that focuses on the life, hardship, and finally emigration that many Jews from Majorca faced, Riera also approaches a number of other serious issues from that time, which create an even stronger connection between Cuba and Catalonia, and which link this novel based in the nineteenth century to current-day issues.

Carme Riera has written extensively on female and feminist issues and on the female prospective within Spanish patriarchal society in her numerous short stories and novels.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Although a number of critics have labeled Carme Riera as a feminist writer, she is very cautious when using the words 'feminism' and 'writer' as if they were interchangeable. According to Riera, believing in feminist ideals, and in equal rights between men and women, does not make a female writer also a feminist writer. She explains to Kathleen C. Glenn: "Yes. I'm a feminist and openly declare that I am one, but I'm not a feminist writer. I'm a feminist *citizen*, and this is more important. As a feminist citizen, I have to advocate feminism, because feminism is a moral question for me. [...] What I would never do is write a pamphlet" (55). It is, therefore, important to establish a difference between being a feminist and being a feminist writer, especially in the case of an author such as Carme Riera, who works very closely with this subject. However, it is also worth pointing out that most Spanish female writers systematically refuse to identify as "feminist writers". Riera is no exception.

However, in *Por el cielo* Riera presents her readers with three female characters that initially demonstrate independence and strength, but that soon come to embody the qualities often associated with nineteenth century middle class women: submission to patriarchal values, meekness, and obedience. This (reverse) transformation is a detail that mustn't go unnoticed. Through it, Riera criticizes Spanish patriarchal society of the time and denounces slavery and the corrupting effects it had on those who benefitted from it—as is the case of María and of her acquired Cuban family.

Among the three mentioned female characters, the two that demonstrate the most agency and independence are María and Ángela, although they use their intellectual capabilities to achieve different goals. Isabel, on the other hand, is a simple chess piece in the hands of men who create and take apart her future. She is also the character who most vividly embodies the characteristics that women should have demonstrated at the time through her interest in fashion and etiquette, her desire to marry and have children, and her unconditional obedience towards her father's decisions. On the contrary, during a conversation with her father, María kindly questions his decision of giving Isabel's hand in marriage, when she, in fact, is the older sibling. Señor Forteza answers:

Dos fueron las razones por las que consideré que no debías casarte con tu primo Miguel. La primera porque nunca has demostrado interés por el matrimonio. De jovencita querías ser monja... Pero eso ahora no importa, sé que lo que te preocupa es el desaire que crees que te he hecho no escogiéndote, como si no tomara en cuenta tus cualidades o pensara que eres fea o tarada... Puedo asegurarte, María, que nada de eso es verdad. [...] Al crecer, superaste los ahogos

que te daban de pequeña, pero ahí encontré el motivo para considerar que los partos serían un peligro para ti y me decidí por tu hermana... Porque si una cosa ha dejado clara mi primo, ha sido que le dé garantías, naturalmente hasta donde sea posible, de que su futura nuera carezca del mínimo impedimento para poder traer hijos al mundo. (37)

The element that stands out is María's desire to understand her father's decision, unlike Isabel, who tacitly accepts his will. The young woman's reaction to marrying an unknown and distant relative, as well as her comments regarding the institution of marriage, might strike today's readers as odd. Isabel only thinks about giving her husband children, about the many elegant dresses she will buy with her future husband's money, and about the slaves she will have at her disposal: "El matrimonio con Miguel de Fortaleza le garantizaba un porvenir en la abundancia, sin necesidad de hacer otra cosa que parir hijos y dar órdenes a las criadas para que se ocuparan de todo, mientras ella se abanicaba o se dejaba abanicar por una sirvienta sentada al fresco" (*Por el cielo* 48). She even hires a French milliner, Madame Antoinette, to teach her how a lady should behave in public, and how to follow the appropriate (French) etiquette. Isabel embodies what were considered to be typical female values at the time, which automatically crush her desires, her independence, and her agency as a woman. It is not by chance that Isabel dies of the plague during her journey to Cuba; she would have been unfit to face and react to the complex family, political, and social situation that awaited her on the island.

Unlike Isabel, María and Ángela represent a different type of woman: they are educated, assertive, and as independent as society allowed them to be. In the one year of correspondence between Isabel and Miguel, neither of them wrote a single letter to their betrothed. On the contrary, the minds and hands behind such heartwarming words belonged to Ángela and María

who, unaware of each other's actions, pretended to be their sibling to communicate a love and a passion that neither Miguel nor Isabel felt towards one another. As the narrator states, "Leer a Isabel no le gustaba en lo absoluto. Menos mal que María se moría por la lectura y se había encargado primero de leerle las cartas y después de contestarlas, porque ella apenas sabía escribir" (58). The cited passage does not only inform readers of Isabel's frivolous interests; it also underlines her lack of basic education, which resonates with the qualities (or lack thereof) that a woman of her time period should possess.

Differently from Isabel, María's character initially breaks away from what society would have expected of her. She does not appear to be interested in marriage and in children, and is, instead, focused on her studies, on her teaching duties in Majorca, and on her writing. Before leaving for Cuba she regrets not having published more poems, which would have consequently increased her chances of being remembered by posterity: "Si al menos, en vez de publicar cuatro poesías en el almanaque de fin de año hubieran permitido imprimir dos docenas, las posibilidades de que alguien leyéndola la tuviera vagamente en cuenta hubieran aumentado" (*Por el cielo* 67-68). Even in Cuba, after marrying Joaquín de Fortaleza and bearing his child, José Joaquín, María's intellectual activities do not cease.

Shortly before giving birth to her son, one of María's poems is published in *El Diario de la Marina*—which eventually becomes the Capitán General's constructed "proof" of María's involvement in the independence movements.⁵⁸ Soon after, she is summoned to the *Liceo Artístico* (presided by the Catalan figure Ramón Pintó), to recite her poem in front of a male

⁵⁸ María's poem reads as follows: "Esposo: / Mi patria son tus brazos / cuando me dan cobijo. / Pero también la tierra, / donde crece la palma, / es mi patria del alma / donde morir quisiera. / Yo me siento cubana / y me siento habanera. / ¡Oh Cuba! Yo te canto / como patria primera, / patria que me libera / de mi peregrinar. / Hoy me siento tu hija, / no me siento extranjera / y por el suelo patrio / quiero siempre luchar" (224). In order to frame María, the Capitán General interprets the poem's last two verses, "y por el suelo patrio / quiero siempre luchar" as a clear reference to María's involvement in revolutionary and independence movements. Moreover, he uses the verses "patria que me libera / de mi peregrinar" as a way of underlining and demonstrating the protagonist's Jewish past.

audience.⁵⁹ According to critic Emilio Ramón García, Riera's novel "subvierte el papel tradicional de la heroína, convirtiéndola en una mujer activa preocupada por la educación, por las letras y cuya ansia de perdurar en la memoria le llevará a publicar algunos poemas en medio de un tumultuoso mundo de hombres que le supondrán desigual fortuna" (2012 123). However, it also shows that Cuban (and Spanish) society was not yet prepared for enterprising and independent women, and that these figures were still "trapped in a male world, barred from discourse" (Ramón García 2008 16). Although María demonstrates a strong interest in culture and education compared to the many women in Majorca and Cuba, her female vulnerability becomes evident when the Capitán General (after Joaquín de Fortaleza's death) uses her a scapegoat for his orchestrated political plan. Without a husband, father, or brother to care for her, María is left destitute and destined to the gallows.

Ángela de Fortaleza, the third female character from the novel, stands halfway between Isabel and María. While not being as inept and passive as Isabel, she is also not as educated and good-hearted as María appears to be. Ángela is calculating, as she wishes to dispose of everyone's life in order to better suit her own interests: she pushes María to enter a convent so that "gracias a las oraciones de su parienta, [consiga] mejorar su situación en el teatro del cielo, a aquellas alturas postergada, probablemente, a un rincón no demasiado cómodo" (*Por el cielo* 123); she ruins María's and her father's dinner party by placing cockroaches in the fruit bowl;

⁵⁹ Ramón Pintó was born in Barcelona in 1803 and died in Havana in 1855. Despite being Spanish, Pintó advocated and fought for Cuba's liberty and independence. Riera based much of María's character on this historical figure who directed the *Liceo de La Habana* and was editor for the *Diario de la Marina*, possibly Cuba's most important newspaper—and certainly its most important publication during the republican period (1902-1925). As Riera writes in the *Nota* that concludes her work, María is "inspirada en el personaje de Ramón Pintó, el fundador del Liceo Artístico y Literario de La Habana, amigo del capitán general Gutiérrez de la Concha, que, pese a todo, le mandará al garrote" (442). Similarly to María's fate, Cuba's Capitán General, José Gutiérrez de la Concha, mandated that Pintó be sentenced to death and killed by garrote, while his accomplices Juan Cadalso and Nicolás Pinelo were sentenced to life in prison.

and she remains quiet, in the background, as her stepmother is unjustly accused of treason, in order to be one step closer to her father's inheritance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ángela's death matches the character's personality: "Ángela, casada con el abogado a quien tanto le atraía la Deleitosa, murió dos años después que su madrastra al caerse de un caballo. No dejó hijos" (*Por el cielo* 433). After years of plotting and scheming to pocket her father's money, Ángela is unable to enjoy it. Death catches up with her, first.

Overall, the female characters that inhabit Riera's novel lack many of the positive aspects that the Majorcan author tends to underline in her works. While Isabel and Ángela certainly embody the more negative and submissive qualities from which women (and men) should stray, María is also not always portrayed under a positive light— especially in regard to slavery. In an interview between Carme Riera and Rosa María Piñol, published in the year 2000 with the title "El folletín era el género idóneo para escribir sobre la Cuba del XIX," the author reflects on the fact that many Catalans who lived in Cuba in the nineteenth century supported independence, but not abolition. The protagonist herself, who personally experienced the isolation and stigmatization derived from being of Jewish descent in Majorca, ends up accepting that her husband's fortune derives precisely from slave work: "Pero pronto [María] acabó por aceptar sin reparos que esta inversión constituía una de las partes más sólidas e irrenunciables del capital de los Fortaleza" (*Por el cielo* 218). To make matters worse, during a moment of rage María bends to the power of the whip and demands that a group of slaves be lashed in order to pay for a mistake that they, in fact, did not commit. Throughout her novel Riera wishes to show how victims "pueden llegar a convertirse en verdugos" (Piñol, online n.p.), and how women themselves (oftentimes subjugated to their husbands, fathers, or brothers) also played an actively oppressing role towards slaves.

The colonial female gaze has been studied by a number of critics (the aforementioned Ella Shohat, for instance), who have focused on understanding how and why White women frequently demonstrated the same oppressive characteristics that their male counterparts adopted towards them. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak believes that the formation of a feminist identity is often associated with the colonial gaze, which gains its power through the oppression of the colonial subject (1988 209).⁶⁰ Laura E. Donaldson tackles the colonialist ideas of gender identity as strict and coherent, demonstrating how gender, in fact, is “a site of conflicting subjective processes [that make] it impossible to ignore the contradictory social positioning of white, middle-class women as both colonized patriarchal objects and colonizing race-privileged subjects” (6). The ideas presented by Spivak and Donaldson are visible in Riera’s novel because although Ángela is the female character that most clearly embodies a felt superiority and colonialist attitude towards slaves, María is not exempt from this fault—despite having grown up in Majorca, where slavery had been abolished in the late 1600s, and having initially criticized her Cuban family’s possession and mistreatment of slaves.⁶¹

Though associated with feminist literature, in *Por el cielo* Riera appears to portray female characters that do not rebel against the established order, and that, in fact, contribute to the oppression of slaves / Others. In her review of the book, Kathleen M. Glenn underlines that many of the characters portrayed are one-dimensional (347), while Rosalía Cornejo Parriego affirms that “la representación de los esclavos no supera los límites costumbristas que convierten a la población negra en objeto de observación, estableciendo un claro paralelismo entre los

⁶⁰ Although in her text Spivak is strictly referring to Charlotte Brontë’s fictional character, Jane Eyre, her analysis of the text and of the idea of Jane as a proto-feminist character is applicable to Riera’s novel, as well.

⁶¹ In discussing the fate of a runaway slave, Ángela tells María: “Les está bien empleado, por tontos. Saben lo que les espera y se escapan... No les compadezcas: los negros son salvajes, no se les puede considerar como a los blancos, ya lo irás aprendiendo. El color de su piel les contamina también el alma. En la Biblia se les maldice, por eso tienen que hacer méritos dobles si quieren ir al cielo...” (142).

márgenes sociales y los narrativos” (10). Glenn’s and Parriego’s words match María’s initial reaction towards Felicitas, the slave who takes care of her after arriving, barely alive, to Havana: “La enferma contemplaba a Felicitas desconcertada, nunca había visto de cerca a alguien tan oscuro” (*Por el cielo* 82).

While agreeing with the mentioned critics, who believe that *Por el cielo y más allá* does not reach the literary achievement of *En el último azul*, Riera’s 2001 novel presents us with a more problematic reality. *En el último azul* makes clear, right from the start, that the crypto-Jews embody the heroes of the story (who are, however, ultimately burnt at the stake) and that the Catholic Church, the Inquisition, and the Catholic Monarchy play the role of villains. However, in *Por el cielo* this distinction is not quite as clear. María’s character, especially, is the most troublesome, for she cannot be considered a villain, yet ends up accepting slavery and perpetuating the colonialist stereotype of slaves’ moral and biological inferiority. Why does Riera change the type of female characters so drastically when compared to her previous and future novels and short stories? This novel does not only push readers to reflect on Catalonia’s slave trade past, and on the role that many Western women also played in the preservation of a colonialist and racist mindset. It also invites people in today’s society to reflect on how marginalized individuals are seldom given a voice and are even more infrequently granted a space. As Riera states during an interview with Pat Farrington, “[l]os personajes, los locos, los homosexuales, los judíos, las mujeres, son estupendos en la literatura, pero, en la vida, ser judío, ser homosexual, ser mujer, o ser negro, realmente tiene desventajas. Entonces, ¿qué pasa? Pues que el sistema siempre acaba por asumir lo marginal, por engullirlo” (83). Hence, although critics have underlined the novel’s lack of multifaceted characters, and its infantile depiction of slaves, Riera masterfully breaks away from the comfort of literature and presents readers with

society as it truly is: a place dominated by corruption and power struggles, where even noble characters like María abide to the dominating (i.e. oppressing) social norms.

As in the case of *Havanera 1820*, *Por el cielo y más allá* presents female characters that ultimately fail in denouncing the institution of slavery as a whole. What is worse is that they end up contributing to its presence and perpetuation. While characters such as María and Ángela initially appear as strong, independent women who try to break away from the confinement and inferiority in which society placed them, Riera avoids creating female protagonists who understand the possible linkage between being a woman and being a slave in nineteenth century Cuba. While the condition of women and that of slaves certainly presents some important and undeniable differences (especially since the novel speaks of white women belonging to the upper-middle class), characters such as the ones mentioned above are unsuccessful at creating a connection between their subjugation to men and the slaves' subjugation to their masters / mistress, and appear, instead, to be moved only by their personal interests. María eventually loses her qualms towards her husband's possession of slaves, and Ángela is shocked when she learns that her neighbor, David S. Parker, is involved in a sex trade comprised exclusively of enslaved white men and women. The narrator of *Por el cielo* recounts that "Al llegar a la verja principal, que abrió un criado alto y asimismo rubio como el cochero, Ángela de Fortaleza tuvo la impresión de que estaba muy lejos de Cuba, porque se le hizo realidad ante los ojos un grabado que había visto de pequeña [...] donde se representaba una villa veneciana de Palladio rodeada de jardines" (103). There is no room for white slavery in Cuba, and the fact that a white servant greets her upon her arrival at David Parker's villa, catapults Ángela into a time and space that does not reflect the oppressing Cuban reality of the time. While Ángela does not abhor the

institution of slavery as a whole, she believes that it should only be applied to certain (inferior, as she says) ethnicities.⁶²

Slavery is considered a central, if not *the* central theme in *Por el cielo*, yet the novel falls short in its depiction of slaves and problematization of the issue. As Glenn and Parriego respectively mention in their book review and article, the slaves that appear throughout the novel are oftentimes presented as one-dimensional characters who demonstrate stereotypical qualities: extreme meekness and docility (as in the case of Felicitas) or extreme violence (as one of the characters, Saint-Simon, explains in detail). A deeper psychological and emotional analysis of the slaves in *Por el cielo* is completely omitted, which in itself is quite paradoxical, given the critical nature of the novel. If on the one hand Riera openly denounces Catalonia's (and Spain's) involvement in the slave trade, and stresses the importance of remembering such a grim part of history, on the other she chooses to not give dimension to these characters and to abide to traditional representations.

V. Ways to Remember

This chapter has focused on two Catalan works of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, and has devoted particular attention to the role given to and played by the female characters throughout. *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá* present a negative image of women in colonial Cuba, depicted as passive, egotistic, and as perpetuators of Western colonial ideas. Riera, who oftentimes creates strong female characters who break the chains imposed by society, opts for more tacit and timid characters with an ambiguous personality. Verdaguer, who unlike Riera, is not known for centering his attention on outcasts and marginalized groups of

⁶² See previous note.

society, also creates female characters that comply with the stereotypical female image of the time, subjugated by the men in their lives and distanced from the social and political reality around them. One could say, in fact, that *Havanera 1820* presents a problematic and misogynist depiction of women, and in particular, of women slaves like Consuelo. The film also caters, though its interracial erotic and nudist scenes, primarily to a male audience.⁶³

The question that emerges is: Why do Riera and Verdaguer decide to take a step back when speaking about gender? Why do they create female characters that easily fit the stereotype instead of breaking away from it? Verdaguer and Riera move away from a positive representation of gender (a recurring theme in the Riera's works, particularly) to focus on the more delicate topic of slavery, which is granted central stage in both *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá*. One must remember that the novel and the film came out between 1993 and 2001, during a decade that not only witnessed the five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus's first voyage to the Americas, but also the one-hundred-year anniversary of the Spanish-American War of 1898. It is also a decade that experienced an unprecedented boom of novels, short stories, and cultural productions focused on the relationship between Spain and its colonies, as well as on the role that Catalonia played in the slave trade, and on the capital it gained from its illegal trading activities.⁶⁴

⁶³ It should be noted that Verdaguer's first full-length film, *L'escot* (1987), was based on María Jaén's erotic novel, *Amorrada al piló* (1986). Although Verdaguer went on to direct and produce films of a much higher quality (such as *La teranyina* in 1990, which was nominated for and won several prizes), it is intriguing to notice how both *L'escot* and *Havanera 1820* cater, for the most part, to a male audience. Although the latter is imbued with historical facts and social criticism (which are completely absent from the former), the abundance of unnecessary sex and nudist scenes is undeniable.

⁶⁴ As mentioned in note 24, other works that were published within a decade of the 1898 anniversary include *Cuba: la noche de la jinetera* (1997); *L'herencia de Cuba* (1997); *En el mar de les Antilles* (1998); *Habanera: el encuentro con un oscuro pasado antillano* (1999); *Living l'Havana* (1999); *Davalú o el dolor* (2001); *Gent del meu exili: inoblidables* (2001); *El heredero* (2003); *Havanera* (2005); *Regreso a La Habana* (2007); and *La Indiana* (2007).

When considering the historical period in which the film and novel were produced, as well as the millions of immigrants who arrived in Spain as early as the 1980s, it should come as no surprise that politically and socially invested figures such as Verdaguer and Riera choose to focus on slavery and on the unjust treatment of marginalized and subaltern characters in their work. In both the film and the novel, gender and its representation are not the central theme; instead, the author and film director appear much more eager to successfully present and denounce Cuban slavery, the slave trade, and the Catalan involvement in this unethical activity.

What is most striking, nevertheless, is that both Riera and Verdaguer seem to believe that the topic of slavery and that of gender are mutually exclusively—namely that in order to speak about one, they must set aside the other. But could we not consider women's condition in the nineteenth century as a kind of slavery, as well? The author and the director do initially make this connection (especially visible in the character of Amèlia, who is meant to be a tacit subject and to comply with her husband's orders), yet both eventually drop it in order to pursue the denunciation of slavery in a more direct way. Women, instead of being placed on somewhat of a parallel with slaves (despite the numerous differences between the two conditions), are, in the end, given a more powerful and crushing role. The conclusion that this (conscious or unconscious) choice leads to is that in order to condemn slavery, all white men and women must be found guilty of somewhat contributing to and playing an active role in it. Women are no longer seen for their gender and their subjugated condition to the male members of their family and society; instead, they are seen for their race, which, in both *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá*, is incompatible with slavery. This dichotomy is even more striking in the case of María, who is not only a woman living in a patriarchal society, but also a woman of Jewish descent who has experienced exclusion and ostracism first hand, yet winds up accepting slavery

and perpetuating its practice. Verdader's and Riera's work underline the simplicity with which the oppressed can become the oppressor (Catalonia oppressed in Spain, yet oppressor of enslaved people; women oppressed by men, yet oppressors of slaves), quickly shifting from the right side to the wrong side of history.

The Catalan presence in Cuba is an element that stands out in Riera's novel and in Verdader's film. In both cases the author and the director are able to recreate the Catalan presence on the island and the political instabilities of the time with historical accuracy. Readers are presented with a number of Catalan characters that reside in Cuba, and that are deeply involved in the plantation industry and in the slave trade. They are also introduced to fictional or historical figures that supported Cuba's independence from Spain (as well as Catalonia's), or its annexation to the United States, while paradoxically being opposed to the abolition of slavery on the island.⁶⁵ In *Havanera 1820* some of the richest plantation owners—like Massana himself—are not only opposed to abolition, but, in fact, contribute to the slave trade.⁶⁶ They also demonstrate a perpetual fear towards possible slave uprisings and a continuous “darkening” of the Cuban population. This state of agitation and worry among the White elite groups in Cuba is also well depicted in Riera's novel through the numerous characters that are terrified of slave rebellions that could resemble Haiti's recent history. One of the characters of the novel, Saint-

⁶⁵ For a detailed study of the time period, and of the triangular relations between Cuba, Spain, and the United States, see the aforementioned article by Robert Whitney.

⁶⁶ *Havanera 1820* hints at the unrest among the elite Cuban population of the time, and especially among the plantation owners, whose business and capital depended on slave work. During a gathering of the most prolific plantation owners in Havana, some express their concerns regarding the new limits on slave-trade established between the British and the Spanish, while others are more interested in finding solutions to slave work: “Intervé l’hisendat Lluís Arumí: ‘Era clar que això s’havia d’acabar un dia o altre i no ho hem sabut preveure. Però jo ho trobo lògic.’ L’hisendat Arango s’exalta. ‘Sí, Arumí, però a les seves terres també hi fa servir esclaus negres. Digui’m... ¿coneix un altre sistema millor?’ ‘No, Arango, no el conec... Però l’haurem de buscar...’ ‘No es preocupin’ els talls Massana, ‘no passarà res, ja ho veuran. Tot té el seu preu. Els asseguro que continuaran arribant esclaus africans a l’illa.’ ‘Serà més beneficiós per a tothom que comencem a pensar en la mecanització de les nostres hisendes’, insisteix l’Arumí.” (Cabré 35).

Simon, speaks about the brutality of the slave uprising in his family's plantation in Haiti. He says:

Mi familia poseía un ingenio en Santo Domingo, un ingenio importante con ciento cincuenta negros, siempre bien tratados, según las leyes para esclavos aprobadas en Francia, pero eso no importó. Se levantaron cuando la revuelta y mataron a todos los blancos que había en casa: a mi padre, a mis cinco hermanos, al administrador, al capataz, al médico... Antes les obligaron a comerse los excrementos de la negrada. Después, atados de pies y manos, les pusieron sobre un banco de carpintero, donde les aserraron los brazos y piernas y, a hachazos, les rompieron el espinazo. Sus cabezas fueron colgadas de los árboles y sus miembros esparcidos para que los devoraran las alimañas. Me salvé gracias a que mi madre, enferma de fiebres puerperales, se quedó en la ciudad y quiso retenerme a su lado. Yo acababa de nacer. (296)

In the aforementioned interview with Piñol, the author of *Por el cielo* explains the reasons behind her novel, and the ties between Catalonia and Cuba that she wishes to highlight in her text. Riera states: “Quería escribir sobre las relaciones entre Mallorca y Cuba, en definitiva, entre Cataluña y Cuba” (online n.p.) She then goes on to say: “El proceso de industrialización de Cataluña viene de Cuba. Muchos de los que allí hicieron grandes fortunas contribuyeron luego aquí a hacer la Cataluña moderna” (ibid.). Similarly, Antoni Verdagué confesses that his film “fue concebido como un drama de aventuras y una habanera” (Bahktiarova 2007 42), which underlines the ongoing relationship and the idea of a round-trip voyage between Catalonia and the Caribbean island.

Without going into detail, both *Havanera 1820* and *Por el cielo y más allá* allude to the many Catalans and Catalan institutions that existed in Cuba—especially those that supported Catalan independence from Spain—as well as to the impact that the wealth accumulated on the island had on Catalonia’s economic and social development in the twentieth and twenty-first century.⁶⁷ Bahktiarova writes: “Los comerciantes catalanes invirtieron en su tierra el capital traído de ultramar, convirtiendo a Cataluña en la región con la industria y economía más desarrolladas de España. Gracias al capital importado del Caribe se construyeron edificios públicos, hospitales y villas privadas, y el primer ferrocarril de España” (2007 41).⁶⁸ A large part of the “Cuban capital” invested in Catalonia derived from the slave trade and from slaves’ labor in the plantations. Fradera explains that “[l]a participació catalana en el tràfic és d’una evidència incontrovertible”, as is “la importància d’aquesta penetració en els orígens del capitalisme català” (1984 123). Perhaps as a way of reminding readers and present generations of this oftentimes overlooked detail, in the *Nota* that concludes *Por el cielo*, Riera writes:

⁶⁷ Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, many Catalans residing in Cuba started coming together to form groups that supported Catalan separation and independence from Spain, while serving as recreation centers for the population, as well. In 1907 Salvador Carbonell Puig founded the *Grup Nacionalista Radical Catalunya*, whose objective was “trabajar por la emancipación de Catalonia y promover sus valores culturales” (Fontanet 89). On April 11, 1911 the *Bloc Nacionalista Catalunya* was born, with the commitment of people such as José Comas Moré, Emilio Sugranyes, and Francisco Ferret. The organization’s motto was “Patria, cultura y artes”, and, as Irina Fontanet Gil explains, “esta sociedad de los catalanes y sus descendientes tuvo desde sus inicios un fuerte carácter nacionalista, arraigado en las propias tradiciones de lucha del pueblo catalán, que les exaltaba su profundo amor a la lejana Cataluña y a la vez identificaba a muchos de ellos con las luchas independentistas del pueblo cubano” (90). Many Catalans residing in Guantánamo (where the Bloc was located) actively participated in the organization’s parties, festivities, and activities, demonstrating the strong attachment they still felt towards Catalonia, despite living thousands of miles away. In 1940 the Bloc Nacionalista Catalunya merged with the *Centro Benéfico* and it took on a new name: *Bloc Casa de Recreo de la Asociación Benéfica del Comercio de Guantánamo*.

⁶⁸ The first railroad in Catalonia connected the cities of Barcelona and Mataró starting in 1848— while in Cuba it was launched in 1837. For further information on the Cuban influence in Catalonia (especially in relation to architecture), see Jaime Aymar Ragolta’s book chapter entitled “La huella americana en Barcelona” (1993); and Tate Cabré Massot’s article “El legado cubano en Cataluña y la nueva aristocracia creada a partir de la llegada de capital desde Cuba (ss. XVIII-XX)” (2013). On a more anecdotal note, it is interesting to compare the Cuban flag to the Catalan one, known as *Senyera Estelada*. Although the two flags brandish different colors, they do present the same design: a triangle with a lone star on one side (which represents the country’s independence), and alternate colored stripes throughout. For additional information on this relationship, see Joan Crexell, *Origen de la bandera independentista* (1998), and Joaquim Roy, *Catalunya a Cuba* (1988), pg. 51-58.

No hace tanto que fuimos emigrantes y también negreros. La Cataluña *rica i plena* y el industrializado País Vasco, por ejemplo, se forjaron, en gran parte, con el capital de los ingenios esclavistas, y aunque no nos guste, quizá el hecho de reconocerlo nos permitirá ser más generosos y tolerantes con los inmigrantes, con cuantos son diferentes o, simplemente, no piensan lo mismo que nosotros” (442).

The idea of collective and social memory plays an important role in Riera’s novel and in Verdaguer’s film. As Halbwachs explains in his work *On Collective Memory* (1941), although most memories are brought back when family members or friends remember them, “it is in society that people normally acquire memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (38). Society, therefore, plays a crucial role not only in the creation of memories, but also in its preservation. Although people apparently forget their past, and the past of their society, their memories never truly fade away; they are constantly present, waiting to be rediscovered. However, the collective frameworks that are crucial to the reconstruction of collective memory vary in each epoch to comply “with the predominant thoughts of society” (Halbwachs 40). What Riera and Verdaguer invite their readers and viewers to do is remember what happened to the thousands of slaves who were uprooted from their native countries and forcefully brought to Cuba, and to reconstruct a past that seems to have been forgotten.

Fiction and cinema are used as the vehicle to speak about history in a way that will appeal to a larger and younger audience. Their aim is to uncover an uncomfortable truth for Catalonia and its people. *Por el cielo* and *Havanera 1820* move away from the stereotypical representation of the *indiano* who, poor and alone, emigrates to Cuba, works tirelessly, and finally returns to Catalonia as a rich man.⁶⁹ Instead, it depicts the dirty reality of the slave trade, and the central

⁶⁹ The historical and fictional figure of the *indiano* or *americano* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

role that Catalonia played in it. As William Luis points out in his book, *Literary Bondage. Slavery in Cuban Narrative*,

Fiction in the anti-slavery works is not part of a creative or inventive process intended to entertain or delight the reader. On the contrary, it is a carefully constructed system whose purpose is to reveal a reality not often seen, accepted, or understood by the reader; one intended to alter a socioeconomic system based on sugar, slavery, and the slave trade. By creating a verisimilar narrative system, fiction takes on a special meaning; it becomes a way of rewriting other fiction and, most importantly, history. There is an intrinsic relationship between the antislavery narrative and history: The antislavery works are based on a historical reality which allows them to challenge history and rewrite in narrative discourse a different version of the same history. (1-2)

Although *Por el cielo y más allá* and *Havanera 1820* are not an anti-slavery novel and film per se, they do use fiction to discuss and reinterpret history, and to speak about slavery. By creating a bridge through the use of collective memory, they urge the Majorcan and Catalan population to remember and recreate its (at times not so glorious) past, and to accept that much of its wealth derived from an illegal and brutal slave trade. Verdaguer's and Riera's work should be interpreted as a historical film and novel that aim to speak about (and criticize) Catalonia's present by denouncing its past, while shedding a light on present-day forms of cultural and economic neocolonialism.

The critical perspective and the anxieties that emerge from the two cultural productions studied here tie in with the closing question in *Havanera 1820*. When the director asks his viewers if slavery has ended “¿Para siempre?”, to what is he referring to, if not to the new (and

perhaps more subtle) forms of slavery, neocolonialism, and acculturation that are taking place in Spain and that are visible in the form of colossal economic investments, industrialism, and (sexual) tourism? As Benedict Anderson explains in his masterpiece *Imagined Communities* (1991), when undergoing their formation, nations tend to manipulate history to their advantage, making their existence appear as more inevitable than it truly is (12-13).⁷⁰ They also create, as Freedman states, “an arbitrary sense of community and sacrifice” (4). These elements of distortion and oblivion are what Verdaguer’s cinematographic production and Riera’s novel try to uncover. While not all details and historical events can be remembered, it is fundamental to recreate a collective memory to avoid that everything be forgotten.

⁷⁰ What Anderson argues in his work is that “the creation of these artifacts [nations] towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces: but that, once created, they became ‘modular,’ capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (4).

Chapter 2

Yearnings, Failures, and the Reconstruction of Memory: Rewriting the

Gender of Spanish *Indianos*

*Mulata meva, no tornaré
a cantar l'havanera
dels teus ulls presoner.
A Catalunya em quedaré:
perquè en retornar a aquesta terra
oblido la pena, retrobo el meu cor;
perquè a la bella pàtria nostrada
terra catalana retrobo l'amor.*

—Manuel Valls i Gorina, *La ciutat cremada*

I. Introduction

As the words of the *habanera* composed by Manuel Valls i Gorina (1920-1984) illustrate, the idea of a round-trip voyage between Spain and its long-lost American colonies is a reality that is still vivid in contemporary Spanish society and culture. The aforementioned stanza from the *habanera* “La ciutat cremada” tells the tale of one of many Catalans who left Spain for the Americas (primarily to Cuba and Puerto Rico, which remained under Spanish domain until 1898, and subsequently to Mexico and Argentina) in search of wealth and in order to increase their possibilities of social mobility, and who eventually returned to their homeland, leaving behind their newly created life.

Numerous Spaniards found the prosperity they were searching for in their transatlantic voyage, and many of them returned to Spain, fostering the industrialization and development of their homeland. These people are known as *indianos*. *Indianos* were famous for ostentatiously displaying their capital through the construction of *casonas indianas* (mansions that reflected the newfound wealth of those who returned to the Peninsula, and that placed particular emphasis on

the exotic origin of the capital),⁷¹ and for promoting a somewhat distorted reality regarding the source of their wealth—one that is oftentimes perpetuated to this day.⁷² This chapter studies three Spanish texts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that recount the tales of Spanish indianos: *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba* (1997), and *La indiana* (2014).⁷³ Instead of narrating the successful quest for wealth that a number of male indianos historically experienced, these three texts analyze and illustrate their failures, and place women at the center of their tales.

A character that has filled Spanish literature and culture since the country's Golden Age period,⁷⁴ the indiano or *americano* is defined as a Spaniard who travelled from Spain to the Americas, worked tirelessly to accumulate capital, returned to the Peninsula where he invested said capital in real estate, luxuries, infrastructure, and industries, and eventually died surrounded by wealth. However, critics do not always agree on said description, and one might encounter different portrayals of these “entrepreneurs” of the past—which doubtlessly contributes to the perpetuation of their blurry myth. César Yáñez believes that “[p]ara ser reconocido como

⁷¹ As Lisa Surwillo writes, “[b]otanical idioms intersect with indiano architecture to evoke the domesticated colonies. Lavish gardens with American plants often circle the *casona*, but by far the most important marker of the indiano home, whatever its architectural style, is the palm tree” (134). Palm trees, hibiscus, and bougainvillea were among the favorite plants used to adorn the gardens, while large-leaf plants, such as the kentia plant, were used as interior decoration. Although not all plants were tropical, they conferred the idea of exoticness that most indianos strove for.

⁷² Many of the Spanish *casonas* have been converted into museums and hotels, where tourists can delve into the lavish lifestyle of successful indianos, “actualiz[ing] the memory of great colonial wealth, utter leisure, and the magic of class ascent, in a country that in the twenty-first century remains stratified and with little class mobility” (Surwillo 139). See Juanma Costoya, “Saga de indianos” (1999); and Nani Arenas, “Iconos de la prosperidad indiana” (2004). See also Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, “Emigración transoceánica de retorno e cambio social na península ibérica: Algunhas observacións teóricas en perspectiva comparada” (2001).

⁷³ To avoid confusion between the two texts that bare the same title, throughout this chapter I will refer to Ángels Aymar i Ragolta's theatre piece as *La indiana* (2007) and to María Teresa Álvarez's novel as *La indiana* (2014).

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Lope de Vega's plays *La victoria de la honra* (ca. 1609-1612) and *La dama boba* (1613), Tirso de Molina's *Marta la piadosa* (1614-15), *La villana de Vallecas* (1618-20) and *La celosa de sí misma* (1622-23), and Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa* (1618-1621).

‘indiano’ era suficiente con poder ostentar riqueza, aunque las cuentas y el patrimonio no estuvieran del todo saneados. Para el indiano, lucir podía ser tan importante como poseer, aun cuando en realidad se estuviera en una posición subalterna respecto a las grandes fortunas que se acumulaban en Barcelona y que identificaban al emigrante de éxito” (2013 97-98). Tate Cabré Massot, on the other hand, points out that “para que un emigrante fuera considerado indiano debía haber zarpado a América, intentando hacer fortuna y regresando a Cataluña; y todo ello en el intervalo de tiempo más corto posible—de entre quince y treinta años—; no es necesario haber tenido éxito en la aventura americana” (2013 167). In addition, the Real Academia Española specifies that the term indiano is used to refer to a person “que vuelve rica de América” (online n.p.). While critics present different opinions regarding the relevance of the indiano’s success in the Americas, they generally agree that in order to be awarded such title men (and women) had to leave Spain, reach the American continent, and finally return to the motherland. Therefore the voyage, and not necessarily the capital, occupied center stage. As Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla explains, “Per als indians, l’Atlàntic no separava, sinó més aviat unia la Península amb les Antilles. Els viatges en un i altre sentit eren força corrents per a ells, fins al punt que molts acostumaven a viure amb un peu a Espanya i l’altre a Cuba” (2007 182).

Most indianos emigrated from poor areas in Spain (Asturias, Galicia, Andalusia, Cantabria, and the Canary Islands) during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, trying to escape destitute situations and eight years of obligatory military service.⁷⁵ The Enlightenment age thinker Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, an Asturian native, once wrote to Antonio Ponz,

⁷⁵ In his article “La huella del indiano” (2010) Guillermo Buergo points out that between 1850 and 1900 roughly 200.000 Asturians left Spain for the Americas, and 100.000 more followed during the twentieth century. As the critic writes, “[Los emigrantes] procedían de municipios costeros; dejaban atrás una vida campesina y menesterosa; marchaban de forma individual y espontánea, carentes de organización; eran varones: adolescentes, casi niños, con una media de edad de 15,7 años, y trataban de ponerse a salvo del servicio militar, obligatorio desde 1835 y de ocho años de duración” (online n.p.). See also Germán Ojeda and José Luis San Miguel, *Campesinos, emigrantes, indianos* (1985).

Secretary of the *Academia de las Bellas Artes*: “Usted oiría decir muchas veces que Asturias y las provincias sus confinantes son unos países miserables o infelices que tienen que arrojar de sí a sus hijos porque no pueden alimentarlos, y de aquí viene que se halle en otras provincias los más viles oficios y ministerios” (292). And while Jovellanos constantly tried to demonstrate the opposite—that Asturias was “un país rico, porque es una de las provincias de España donde la tierra respectivamente produce más” (443)—to many poor Asturians and Spaniards the American continent appeared as the only land that could guarantee them a better future. Emigration, therefore, became what scholar Larry A. Sjaastad calls “cost of opportunity,” namely the proportion between what is surrendered in the present while keeping in mind what can be gained in the future.⁷⁶

Rosalía de Castro, the famous Galician poet, also wrote about the emigration of thousands of young Galician men to Cuba, focusing on the profound emptiness that their departure caused the mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters who stayed behind:

La emigración y el Rey les arrebatában de continuo el amado, el hermano, su hombre, sostén de la familia siempre numerosa; y así, abandonadas, llorando su desamparo, pasan la amarga vida entre las incertidumbres de la esperanza, la negrura de la soledad y las angustias de una perenne miseria. Y lo más desconsolador para ellas es que sus hombres se van yendo todos, unos porque los llevan, y otros porque el ejemplo, las necesidades, a veces una codicia, aunque disculpable, ciega, les hacen huir del lar querido, de aquella a quien amaron, de la

⁷⁶ Larry A. Sjaastad, a renowned scholar of international economics, first published his theory on migration in 1962, in *The Journal of Political Economy* 70.5. I have consulted a more recent edition of the article, published in 2002 in the anthology edited by Klaus F. Zimmermann and Thomas Bauer, *The Economics Migration* (vol. 1).

esposa ya madre de numerosos hijos, tan pequeños que los desdichados todavía no aciertan a adivinar la orfandad a que los condenan. (296-299)

Despite the emigrants' hopes, life in the new country was far from blissful. Guillermo Buergo explains that immigrants "llegaban en la absoluta pobreza, trabajaban 19 horas, dormían en el propio comercio, se alimentaban de galletas y sabían que les quedaban por delante entre cinco y diez años de privaciones ilimitadas. En ocasiones, ni siquiera cobraban el salario para estimular el ahorro [...]" (online n.p.). And while a number of emigrants did, in fact, become *indianos* by returning to their home region in Spain as enriched men, many remained chained to the poverty-stricken life from which they had escaped.

Over the past few decades, academics, historians, writers, and film producers alike have shed a light on the darker side of the *indiano* story: Juan Goytisolo (1966); Antoni Verdagué (1993); Carme Riera (1994; 2001); Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla (1998; 2007); Rafael Escolà (2009); and Lisa Surwillo (2014), among others. While history oftentimes speaks of *indianos* as hard-working men and women who sought a better life across the Atlantic, and accumulated wealth through sweat and years of privation, the reality behind their profits is much more complex. Because many *indianos* were undeniably involved in the legal and illegal slave trade, this semi-mythical figure that acquired much of his fortune from such a condemnable activity has lost its valor and has become embedded with ambiguous, paradoxical, and even damnable qualities. Some of the wealthiest Catalan and Spanish families with businesses in the Americas were *negreros* (slave traders). Among others were Joan Güell and his son, Eusebi (who eventually bought the title of Count and became Antoni Gaudí's magnate, financing some of Barcelona's most important architectural masterpieces), the López family, headed by Antonio

López, future Marqués de Comillas (whose daughter Isabel was married off to non-other than Eusebi Güell), as well as the Samà, Baró, Rabell, and Zuleta families.

As Lisa Surwillo points out in *Monsters by Trade* (2014), many of the municipalities and tourist offices located along the famous *rutas de indianos*⁷⁷ in Northern Spain choose to promote a positive and nostalgic image of the men and women who were forced to leave their country due to economic hardship and who were able, through hard work, sacrifice, and dedication, to overcome their situation and to *hacer las Américas* (that is to say, become rich in the Americas), finally returning triumphantly to their fatherland (152). However, what these tourist locations voluntarily omit is the involvement of a number of indianos in the slave trade, as well as their uncanny and striking resemblance to sixteenth century conquistadores who travelled overseas, took advantage of the native (and slave) population, and returned to Spain as *nouveau riche*—bringing along a train of ideas, as well as foreign and commercial goods that promoted modernization and increased the “exotic” aspect of their voyage.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, a number of indianos found inspiration for their homes in the colonial style, recurring to porches, terraces, flat roofs, and balustrades to ostentatiously display their wealth (García Argüelles 49).

By using this shift in the perception of the indiano figure as a starting point, this chapter moves away from the mythologized stories of success and analyzes, instead, the failure that many indianos faced. Specifically, it focuses on the role that women played in this voyage (either

⁷⁷ With the term *ruta del indiano* we are referring to the path along the Bay of Biscay, in Northern Spain—from the Basque Country to Galicia—where those who returned rich from the Americas built their mansions. Today, as with the *Camino de Santiago*, the *ruta del indiano* has also become a tourist attraction, with government-issued signs marking the most popular locations.

⁷⁸ There are numerous Spanish websites that promote the *casonas indianas* as promising investments or as tourist attractions (desdeasturias.com, asturiasparadisfrutar.es, farosdeg Galicia.es), and offer interested travelers with interactive maps of the various *rutas de indianos*, duration of each itinerary, difficulty level of the walks, and a brief history of each *casona* present along the way. Perhaps not surprisingly, slavery and the slave trade are omitted from all descriptions, relegating to the sidelines what must be considered one of the central motors to the indianos’ accumulation of capital.

by accompanying their husbands in their quest for wealth, or by remaining in Spain, tirelessly waiting for their loved ones to return). By studying the Aragonese novel *L'herència de Cuba* (1997) by Margarita Aritzeta, the Catalan theatre piece *La indiana* (2007) by Àngels Aymar i Ragolta, and the Asturian novel *La indiana* (2014) by María Teresa Álvarez, this chapter concentrates on the centrality that the texts bestow upon their female characters and on the influence that these women play in voyage of their loved one. I re-insert and re-contextualize the hyperbolic story of numerous indianos in today's Spanish society by explaining why these controversial figures of the past continue to be central in Spanish culture, and by analyzing the role they play in maintaining alive an anachronistic form of imperialist nostalgia. The three works here analyzed are relatively unknown to critics and readers alike. Therefore, this chapter delves into the study of three neglected Spanish texts that uncover an oftentimes overlooked historical reality, but at the same time to offer a panoramic view of the indianos' voyage and of the impact that their wealth had upon their return to their home country. It also underscores the importance of three texts that give women a literary and historical agency that has been overlooked far too often.

II. The Untold Story: Memory, Gender, and *Indianos*

The story of indianos and of their impact on Spain, its culture, its economy, and its society, has been captured by a number of Spanish literary productions that date back to Juan Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* (1874)⁷⁹ and to Clarín's 1884 masterpiece, *La Regenta*.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Valera introduces the character of the indiano late in the novel, only to underscore the blatant paradoxes that existed in Spanish society at the time. If on the one hand Pepita, the novel's heroine, should embody love and virtue, on the other hand her brother is involved in slave trafficking, which has allowed him to purchase his noble title.

⁸⁰ When admiring the city of Vetusta from the cathedral's bell tower, Fermín De Pas ponders, as the narrator recounts: "La ciudad del sueño de un indiano que va mezclada con la ciudad de un usurero o de un

After a hiatus in the literary representation of these semi-mythical characters—which includes a handful of titles, such as Joaquim Ruyra’s *Pinya de Rosa* (1920) or Rafael Alberti’s poem “Cuba dentro de un piano” (1945)—the indiano figure started to re-appear in literary and cultural productions during the second half of the twentieth century. From Baltasar Porcel’s *Los argonautas* (1968) and *Ulisses a alta mar* (1997)—titles that immediately confer indianos a mythical aura—to the short television series *Laberint d’ombres* (1998), Spanish and Catalan writers and film producers have returned to the stories of indianos, albeit with a different purpose: presenting a new and more critical view of their myth. Tate Cabré Massot believes that “[l]a imagen que la literatura catalana ha forjado del indiano es muy crítica, en especial la de los modernistas. Las gratificaciones no compensan la añoranza. Los indianos aparecen como personas desubicadas, como ‘náufragos con la esperanza de un paraíso, allá y aquí, que, como todos, será básicamente perdido’” (2004 167).

Perhaps one of the most notable Spanish authors who spoke about Catalonia’s economic involvement in Cuba—while denouncing the role that numerous Catalan merchants played in the slave trade—is Juan Goytisolo. Three of Goytisolo’s most famous works, *Señas de identidad* (1966), *Juan sin tierra* (1977), and *Coto vedado* (1985), deal with the uncomfortable truth of slave trafficking, a reality that is strongly connected to his own family history. In all three novels of this imagined trilogy, Goytisolo must come to terms with his grandfather and great-grandfather’s involvement in slave trafficking, as well as with their slave-owning properties,

mercader de paños o de harinas que se quedan y edifican despiertos. [...] Los indianos de la Colonia que en América oyeron muy pocas misas, en Vetusta vuelven, como a una patria, a la piedad de sus mayores: la religión con las formas aprendidas en la infancia es para ellos una de las dulces promesas de aquella España que veían en sueños al otro lado del mar. Además los indianos no quieren nada que no sea de buen tono, que huelga a plebeyo, ni siquiera pueda recordar los orígenes humildes de la estirpe [...]” (71-72).

which generated most of their indiano wealth.⁸¹ However, “rather than appeal for reconciliation and forgiveness on his family’s behalf, while physically and spiritually in exile, [Goytisolo] liberates himself from the community responsible for cultivating the *indiano*’s heroic identity. [...] He prompts [his readers] not to absolve his family’s sins, [...] but rather to judge the values of the community in which they had been committed with impunity” (Surwillo 171). The author, as Bradley Epps argues in *Significant Violence*, “is haunted by the ‘sins’ of the fathers (racism, paternalism, colonialism, and economic exploitation) and is conditioned [...] by a system of guilt, debt, and morality” (5). Instead of quickly dismissing such burdensome facts, the author of *Señas de indentidad* toils with them, accepts them as a part of his family’s past, and finally rejects them, questioning the unstained myth of the indiano and the way Catalan imperialist history has been conveniently altered.⁸² Such effort should not strike literature readers and critics as odd, since Goytisolo believed that “la novela cumple en España una función testimonial que en Francia y los demás países de Europa corresponde a la prensa” (1976 60).

⁸¹ For a more comprehensive study of the Goytisolo family capital acquisition, their possessions in Cuba, their involvement in the slave trade, and their final return to Catalonia, see Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, *Indians a Catalunya* (2007), paying particular attention to his third chapter, “Hasendats i esclavistes.”

⁸² Goytisolo’s relationship with Cuba goes beyond the memory of his family’s past. The author visited Cuba for the first time in December 1961—invited by Cuban writer and political activist Carlos Franqui—and wrote extensively on the island’s history, culture, and society, although his political opinion regarding the Caribbean country and Fidel’s 1959 revolution gradually changed with time. His first work dedicated in its entirety to Cuba is *Pueblo en marcha* (1963), a collection of essays originally published in the Cuban newspaper *Revolución*, where Goytisolo draws numerous comparisons between the Cuban Revolution to the Spanish Republican army fighting in the Spanish Civil War. He writes: “[Los hechos de la revolución cubana] me sacaron de mi apatía. Había una maldición que parecía pesar contra los pueblos de nuestra lengua, siempre dormidos, siempre inmóviles y como aplastados bajo el peso de las oligarquías y las castas. La odisea de Fidel y sus hombres era la negación de esa fatalidad [...] por una hermosa lección de la historia, ya que no era España quien indicaba el camino a su ex-colonia, sino la ex-colonia quien daba el ejemplo y alumbraba los corazones” (18-19). A second element worth mentioning is the presence of a chapter on Cuba in the first edition of *Señas de identidad* (1966), which was eliminated from the second edition “tras hacerse asimismo eco de las poco favorables opiniones vertidas por la mayoría de la crítica” (Domínguez Búrdalo 131-132). The comparison of this chapter with *Pueblo en marcha* underlines a “striking disparity of tone between the two visions of Cuba of 1962” (Bieder 299). Trying to understand Goytisolo’s choice of exclusion, Maryellen Bieder cites a personal letter by Gregory Rabassa, the first English translator of *Señas de identidad*: “The alterations in the English translation were due to some radical change of heart that Juan had after the translation was already finished. He felt that by eliminating most of the Havana sequence and rearranging some of the order that the book would be better for it” (ibid.).

It is reasonable to consider Goytisolo's novels as *avant-garde*, since the majority of literary works that denounce Catalonia's involvement in slave trafficking, and the origin of the wealth that allowed the region's industrialization and development, did not begin to flourish "en masse" until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Chapter 1 analyzed one of these novels, *Por el cielo y más allá* (2001), although the list includes dozens of novels, films, and theatre productions that wish to uncover this uncomfortable reality—a deed that Lisa Surwillo calls "confessional acts" (174). From Eduardo Mendoza's *La ciudad de los prodigios* (1986), José María Merino's *El heredero* (2003), Rafael Escolà's *Dinero negro* (2010), to Xavi Casinos' *Tren de venganza* (2010), readers and critics must struggle with novels that "demonstrate a desire for absolution and the consequent forgetting of these crimes, so inconveniently recovered in Goytisolo's *Señas de identidad*, *Coto vedado*, and *Juan sin tierra*" (Surwillo 174).

Notwithstanding the list of titles that focus on shedding some light on the triangular trade between Spain, Africa, and Cuba, and on the impact that Cuban wealth had in a large number of Spanish regions, the three literary pieces analyzed in this chapter move towards the discussion of a second seldom examined truth: the failure that many indianos faced during their years as immigrants in Cuba, either from an economic or a personal standpoint. In particular, the three texts engage with an important element that has been overlooked by history, as well as by most contemporary novels and cultural productions: the role that women played in their loved one's voyage, either by remaining in Spain waiting for their return, or by following them across the Atlantic in hopes of a better future. Despite the revolutionary aspects of these texts, however, all three pieces lack a heartfelt criticism towards slave trafficking and one of Spain's largest sources of wealth, which consequently keeps its people from fully coming to terms with an important aspect of their country's past. While women occupy center stage and play an active role in

maintaining ties alive between past, present, and future, the story around them falls short and does not allow for the absolution mentioned by Surwillo. On the same note, and perhaps a bit controversially, authors such as the aforementioned Rafael Escolà explains that “nos ha tocado vivir en una época en la que todavía algunas personas se avergüenzan de sus antecesores. Creo que es un error. Es sano que nos avergoncemos de algunos hechos u omisiones propios, pero no de lo que cometieron nuestros antepasados. Respecto a ellos tenemos que saber el qué y el porqué para sacar conclusiones y aprender a mejorar el futuro” (310). Does slavery, according to Escolà and the three authors studied in this chapter, fall within the spectrum of actions that present-day people should not feel ashamed about?

The literary analyses of *La indiana* (2007), *L’herència de Cuba* and *La indiana* (2014) intend to focus on two aspects: 1) the praise that all three texts deserve for shedding light on the untold story of failures and debacles, and for taking women out of the shadows and giving them a historical purpose, and 2) the shortcomings of which these works are guilty for not probing and questioning Catalonia’s, Aragón’s, and Asturias’ muddy past. Instead of guiding their readers and spectators through a controversial historical event—which, as with *Por el cielo y más allá*, would allow them to accept and come to terms with an important aspect of history—*La indiana* (2007), *L’herència de Cuba* and *La indiana* (2014) choose to speak about gender, allowing for the perpetuation of a partially confessed truth. Finally, the three works choose to include an indissoluble connection between Spain and Cuba’s past *and* present, as to propose that despite the passing of time, the European country and the Caribbean island will be forever linked.

In *The Disobedient Writer: Women and Narrative Tradition* (1995), Nancy Walker states that “[t]he practice of appropriating existing stories in one’s own work—borrowing, revising, re-contextualizing—has a long and distinguished history that includes such unquestionably major

works as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the plays of Shakespeare" (1). *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba* and *La indiana* (2014) adhere to Walker's idea. All three works present readers with a round-trip journey between Spain and Cuba, which theoretically coincides with the trips of the indianos. Literarily, however, the story breaks away from what history has traditionally presented: a relatively young male Spaniard who chooses to leave his home country (and in some cases, his family) to search for wealth in the Americas, and who eventually returns to his homeland as an enriched merchant. Instead, they engage in a female dialogue between Spain and Cuba, and between past and present, giving history a gendered spin that is seldom encountered in critical texts. Far from embodying another Penelope, the quintessential wife who tirelessly waits for her husband to return, the women in these texts are the characters that actively maintain the tie alive. They function as an umbilical cord between past, present, and future, and are eventually the ones who are forced to make the toughest decisions and the most striking discoveries regarding their unknown family past.

A number of critics have focused on the concept of gendered migrations—some more successfully than others. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo explains that while critics are correct in considering men the pioneers of emigration (Mines [1981]), many of them “continue to operate under the implicit assumption of the household model—and so assume that all resources, including social networks, are shared equally among household and family members” (55).⁸³ Many women that were (and are) left behind were, in fact, forced to support themselves and their children. Allyson Poska speaks about the role that women played in the Patagonia project in her book *Gendered Crossings: Women and Migration in the Spanish Empire* (2016), where she

⁸³ In her book *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (1994), Hondagneu-Sotelo wishes to move away from the traditional idea of household unity in the migration process and focus, instead, on an “alternative migration theory, one that acknowledges the place of gender in shaping migration” (53).

describes the different social, political, and moral roles that women were given by the Spanish monarchy upon sailing to the Americas, and gives readers hard numerical evidence of female emigration across the Atlantic.⁸⁴ Although historically women were oftentimes tied to their husbands' will to either join them in their transatlantic voyage or remain in their home country, *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba* and *La indiana* (2014) choose to bring to life another type of woman, one that eventually develops an independence from her husband, and functions as an autonomous agent. While the men in the texts fail at their quest for wealth, women experience a more successful outcome.

It is fundamental to understand why both history and critics have overlooked the importance of the many women who either embarked on a transatlantic journey with their partners, or stayed behind waiting (perhaps endlessly) for them to return. Therefore, the questions that will guide this analysis are: Why are women given such a central role in these literary productions? Can their journey to Cuba be considered successful when compared to their male counterparts? And finally, what historical events do these women and stories offer modern-day audiences? Precisely because the three texts analyzed here have received little to no attention from literary critics and readers, I wish to stress their importance throughout this chapter. They significantly “exercise a different kind of disobedience, one that questions the singularity and ownership of certain themes, plots, tropes, and narrative strategies. Such revisions are a way of not only subverting the traditional text, but also of laying claim to it, entering into dialogue with it on an equal plane” (Walker 5). These literary productions do not only take ownership of and

⁸⁴ The Patagonia Project was an emigration venture established by the Spanish Crown during the eighteenth century, which requested that approximately two hundred destitute families from Northern Spain emigrate to the Río de la Plata region to establish new settlements along the Patagonia coast. The people's response was much more positive than expected, making it one of the most successful voluntary resettlement projects during Spain's colonial period.

subvert the myth of the successful indiano; in doing so, they also share the stories of the millions of women who left their home country to follow their husbands' dreams of richness and prosperity only to find themselves fighting with the same (Spanish) monsters: hunger, poverty, hopelessness, and misogyny.

When speaking about history, memory, and their reconstruction one must inevitably trace clear distinctions between the different types of memories and histories that exist. Bernard Lewis proposes that history is trifold: remembered history, recovered history, and invented history. Remembered history is what Halbwachs and Nora call collective memory, and what Connerton calls social memory, that is to say, what society “chooses to remember as significant, both as a reality and symbol” (Lewis 12). Far from being comprehensive, exact, and rational, remembered history is what has been perpetuated through the centuries and arbitrarily deemed important. Recovered history, on the other hand, is comprised of past events that have been recovered by academic scholars and that are slowly being reconstructed and re-incorporated into remembered history. Finally, invented history wishes to reconstruct the past by inventing and fabricating facts to suit a specific purpose (Llobera 120). This chapter will take into close consideration the two latter notions: recovered history and invented history, as it focuses on the reconstruction (and revision) of the indiano story while denouncing mythologized elements that have been modified throughout the years in order to accommodate Catalonia's nation building project.

Though history and memory are central elements to nation building, throughout the centuries scholars have also pointed out the importance of forgetting (Renan 1882; Weber 1976; Connerton 2009; Rieff 2016). In an 1882 lecture delivered at the Sorbonne titled “Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?” (“What Is a Nation?”), Ernst Renan stated: “The act of forgetting, I would even say, historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in

historical studies often constitutes a danger for nationality” (251). While Catalonia cannot be considered a sovereign nation per se, its strong cultural identity and desired independence from Spain has led its people and its leaders to follow the steps of the nation building process, which, as mentioned, include the celebration of certain historical events over others, the creation of specific myths, and the act of forgetting names, people, and actions that have no place in the desired outcome.

III. Endeavors of the Past, Silences of the Present: Ángel Aymar i Ragolta’s *La indiana* (2007)

Represented at the Teatre Tantarantana of Barcelona between January 9 and February 11, 2007, this theatre piece plays with temporality and spatiality as it presents viewers with three different locations, two chronological moments, six characters, and three actors. The setting shifts from nineteenth century Cuba to twenty-first century Spain, and the six characters who appear in the play—la Hechicera, Cati, Lluís, Ponç, Rosa, and Rita—catapult viewers back and forth chronologically, and from one side of the Atlantic to the other. As the stage directions explain in the printed version of the play, the stage is tripartite: “A l’esquerra, interior de la casa de Rosa i Lluís, a l’Havana del segle XIX. A la dreta, el jardí d’una casa colonial en un poble de l’Empordà al moment actual. Les escenes de la Hechicera i el pis de Cati de Barcelona, se situaran al centre de l’escena” (Aymar i Ragolta 25). To complicate matters further, three actors interpret six different characters—some united by blood, and others united symbolically: the same actress portrays la Hechicera and Cati; the same actor takes on the characters of Lluís and Ponç; and one actress embodies Rosa and Rita.

La indiana tells the parallel stories of Lluís and Rosa, two Catalan natives who seek fortune in Cuba during the nineteenth century, and of Rita, Ponç and Cati who live in Spain

during the twenty-first century. Rita (Rosa and Lluís' great-great granddaughter), lives in Barcelona with her husband, Ponç—who, in turn, is committing adultery with Cati, a young writer. The characters are unaware of the intimate connection that exists between one another until the end of the play, when the familial relationship between Rita, Lluís and Rosa is unveiled, and when viewers discover that Cati is partnering with Rita for a commercial shoot that will take place in her summer house located in the Catalan region of Empordà. Although initially confusing, the actors' constants switching of their role and time period makes the connection between characters all the more intricate. It also serves Aymar i Ragolta's purpose of creating a continuation between past and future, by underlining that Catalonia's history is vividly embedded in its present.

Rita's house in the Empordà is the classical *casona indiana*, built with money that her great-great grandparents earned in Cuba through plantation production and slave labor. Despite having this house built for their eventual return to Spain, Lluís and Rosa are never able to embark in their return voyage, as death catches up with them, first. Their son finally travels back to Spain after his parents' passing, investing their capital in the completion of the *casona* and fulfilling their dream of voyaging back to the motherland. By 2007 (present-day in the play), however, the owners of the home no longer possess the capital and wealth that pertained to their ancestors. Rather, they are forced to rent out the garden space of the *casona* in order to afford simple summer pleasures. As Ponç criticizes and despises his wife's plan, considering it a "bestiesa", Rita answers back: "Tenir diners per passar l'estiu ho trobes una bestiesa? Poder comprar la bici a la teva filla per seu aniversari i apuntar el teu fill a les colònies de futbol, ho trobes una bestiesa?" (61). As presented to viewers, the present is far from glamorous: Rita and Ponç are a middle-class family who, to a certain extent, are forced to violate their past in order to

make ends meet. Furthermore, Ponç is cuckolding Rita, forever staining the already fragile relationship that exists between them. Aymar i Ragolta's text appears to compare the past with the present, not only by creating a continuum between the two (through Rita's character), but also by placing both chronological moments on a scale. The problematic result is that the past and the present share issues and silences that are impossible to overcome, despite the effort that the characters' ancestors put into building a better future.

The strongest and most revolutionary element of the play is the voice that the playwright gives to her female characters, which ultimately allows them to triumph over the men in their lives. What is even more striking, however, is that these women are depicted as everyday women, who possess no special characteristic with the exception of the strength that allows them to move forward, day after day, notwithstanding what life throws their way: poverty, a cheating husband, a lying lover, and even death itself. As Izquierdo writes, “[I]es obres d’Aymar col·loquen al centre de l’escena la mirada de la dona sobre la realitat de les relacions humanes. Una mirada que no és reivindicativa, ni especialment impostada, sinó, només, natural. [...] No ens mostra dones que viuen, posem per cas, el drama de la separació conjugal” (10). Despite their marriage, or their extramarital relationships, these women function as independent entities, who hold the reins of their life and make the decisions that need to be made for the good of their family. Men, on the other hand, sit back and look at life with passive eyes, living in the present and not worrying about the future.

This difference in looking at life is made clear during one of Rosa and Lluís's many discussions about slavery and its inhumane nature:

LLUÍS. Què en sabreu les dones, de negocis!

ROSA. Com vols que en sapiguem res si ens és un terreny vetat! Potser

teniu por que ens en sortíssim millor que vosaltres.

LLUÍS. Saps exactament com funciona, això? Canvien els nostres productes per esclaus i amb es seu treball podem enviar els nostres vaixelles a Europa amb productes colonials. Vols que els nostres deixin de rebre'ls? Saps quants anys d'esforços de la nostra gent han fet possible que, nosaltres i les nostres famílies, visquem en l'abundància? Et penses que ens ho han regalat, que ara dominen el comerç de l'illa?

ROSA. M'oblidava que sou magnífics! Com ho dieu allò?... 'Cinc anys de privacions i una fortuna.' És això, oi? Diner crida diner i no hi ha temps per pensar en l'element humà. Ni en els de la pròpia família.

LLUÍS. [...] Però tu d'on treus aquestes idees? Aquí tothom accepta els esclaus com un fet natural.

ROSA. Els esclaus s'acabaran rebel·lant i quan això passi, jo seré amb ells.

LLUÍS. Ingènua! Que no te n'adones, que ets blanca? Nosaltres hem millorat les seves vides portant-los aquí, o et penses que a l'Àfrica no n'eren, de captius?

ROSA. No s'ha de ser gaire llest per veure que la gent és més eficient quan el treball és remunerat. Paga'ls! (44-45)

If on the one hand Lluís stresses the importance that slaves have played in the Catalan economy (and in his own fortune-building), and cynically believes that slavery has, in fact, saved thousands of African men and women who would have been living in captivity regardless, Rosa understands the positivity of paid labor and foresees the slave rebellions that will eventually take

place on the island to eliminate such state of imprisonment. Fearing not her husband's opinions, Rosa also stresses that, should there be a slave uprising, she would side with the captives, severing all ties with the dominant class. Though Rosa is a woman living in a man's world—excluded from the family business, considered ignorant by her male counterparts—she is nevertheless presented as a strong, independent woman who does not fear voicing her opinions and expressing her thoughts—such as her attraction towards the culture and strength of the Afro-Cuban population. Rosa is also the character who gives the play its title. Aymar i Ragolta chooses to steer away from patriarchal history and tradition to focus on women and on the role they played (and continue to play) to defy male expectations. Like a chameleon, Rosa adapts to the reality she faces, either by packing up her belongings and sailing across the Atlantic, or by striking a pact with a negrero in order to pursue her passion of painting. In a delicate discussion with Lluís, Rosa tells her indiana story:

Jo vaig venir fins aquí contra la seva [dels pares] voluntat. No hi havia dia que no parlessin del fill d'aquell o de l'altre, que s'havia embarcat. Tots el joves marxaven a fer fortuna a les Amèriques. Però les dones no. Elles es planyien. Les mares, les germanes, les promeses, es trobaven a casa de l'una o de l'altra per llegir les cartes. Quan no n'hi havia cap de nova, rellegien les anteriors. Mentrestant, a casa, anaven caient les teules del sostre i les humitats de les parets ho envoltaven tot d'una olor incòmoda, permanent, que dificultava la respiració dels pares i els emmalaltia els ossos. Jo no servia per arreglar tants desperfectes i despès de la plaga, els diners no ens arribaven. Em passava les nits pintant de ràbia i d'impotència fins que vaig dir prou. Quan preparava les maletes la mare somicava: 'No marxis filla, ja ens en sortirem.' El meu pare no deia res, amb el seu silenci la culpava a ella per no

haver-li donat un fill. Vaig acceptar venir fins aquí a canvi que els ajudessis, però no a qualsevol preu, Lluís, no amb les mans brutes. (46)

Though Rosa never returns to Spain, her legacy, memory, and wealth do, becoming pivotal elements for the other female characters that draw great courage from the history of this woman. Cati eventually chooses to discard a male-created historical memory and live in a new, female-centered reality. Ponç, instead, is ultimately defied by both his wife and his lover. Rita, who appears as the submissive wife throughout the play, makes a family decision without consulting her husband and without fearing his displeasure, while Cati, his initially submissive lover, breaks off their relationship after understanding that the clashing silence between them will never cease to exist.

Silence (alongside history and memory) is another element that permeates *La indiana* and that travels from nineteenth-century Cuba to twenty-first century Spain. The act of not speaking is perhaps the passive activity that has most notably characterized women throughout the centuries. Far from voicing their thoughts and manifesting their will, women have had to act as tacit accomplices, or as disinterested partners of men's interest, sacrificing their own self to please society. *La indiana* revisits this misogynistic reality while showing its evergreen presence. Cati tells Ponç about a dream she had of a mustached man that spoke to her "en silenci. Del silenci. Del seu. Del de la seva dona. De molts silencis, d'abans, d'ara. Del nostre també" (76). The mustached man, as spectators finally discover, is Lluís himself, who appears in one of Cati's dreams. Though the play terminates by generating more questions than it initially poses, one wishes to answer a number of them. What silence existed between Rosa and Lluís? Why is Rosa considered an indiana without returning to Spain? What criticism is Aymar i Ragolta proposing with this play?

As mentioned, silence is one of the most important elements of *La Indiana* (2007), as well as the passive action that bans Lluís and Rosa from returning to Spain and that lives on—almost as a curse—for future generations. Rosa’s silence encompasses her husband’s involvement in slave trafficking. While aware of how slaves are inhumanly treated, and though speaking in favor of their liberation, Rosa eventually accepts this harsh reality and its consequences. She understands that in order to survive in a man’s world, she must play by its rules, swallowing her opinions and her morals. Thus, Rosa decides to partner with Martí, a *negrero* with “unes maneres de fer dubtoses” (57), who has agreed to invest capital in the building of a theatre so that she can keep busy by drawing its posters. Everything, however, comes with a price, and though Rosa initially laughs about it, she realizes that in order to display her art, “hagi de fer un pacte amb un diable negrer! Després ja aniré a veure un *lucumí* perquè em tregui el mal amb un coco, o un *congo* perquè em faci allò dels *diablillos*...” (ibid). The price that Rosa and her husband Lluís pay is the impossibility to return to their beloved Spain. Their slaves eventually rebel and burn down their plantation, which leads Lluís to madness and subsequently to death. Rosa, instead, ends up alone, longing for a voyage that will never come: “Soy solo una mujer [...] que ahora sufre por su marido, que anda con el corazón partido porque amo a dos tierras y y no soy de ninguna” (66). After working for decades in view of their return to Spain, Rosa and Lluís are unable to enjoy their fortune and their newly built house in the Empordà, eternally punished for their years of silence and wrongdoing.

Rita’s silence should be interpreted as society’s silence, for she ultimately refuses to share her family history with Cati who would like to use it to write a film script. Though initially spectators might agree with Rita’s desire for privacy—it is, after all, her family’s past—the larger picture and implicit criticism push viewers and readers to look at history as nothing more

than a collage of personal, family histories. Rita, who serves as a microcosm for the Catalan population as a whole, refuses to share the story of her great-great grandparents' business in Cuba, their indiano life, and their involvement in slave trafficking. She is also culpable for keeping Rosa's life in the dark, an intrepid indiana who defied expectations and sailed off to Cuba to "hacer las Américas." If on the one hand Rosa severed the patriarchal chains that tied her to Spain, her great-great granddaughter, more than a century later, is the woman who pushes her back into the shadows, eliminating her name from the history books. Through Rita, Aymar i Ragolta reminds her public of the millions of Rosas in the world: strong women who must sacrifice what they believe in to live in a male-centered society. And if Rita, Rosa's own blood, is unable to share her story with the rest of society, then someone else should take on such task so that the stories of those women who defied what society expected of them be known and eventually become part of what Lewis calls recovered history.

The third and last female silence belongs to Cati. Initially presented as a shy and submissive woman, chained to an extramarital relationship with a man who is incapable of granting her what she most desires, Cati experiences a transformation, ultimately becoming the heroine of the play. After accidentally meeting Ponç's wife during a visit at their house in the Empordà and becoming familiar with Rita's family history, Cati decides to end her dissatisfying and emotionally draining story with Ponç, explaining to him that the deep silence that exists between them will never be filled—neither with love, nor with words. Though the public is unaware of how (or if) their story will continue, and is left with the possibility of Cati's pregnancy, her character is willing to escape from a draining dependence to live life on her own. Unlike Rosa, who paid a price for her silence, and Rita, who resorts to silence out of discretion, Cati uses silence as her weapon, as a way of liberating herself from the shackles of darkness.

After learning a life-changing lesson from her symbolic ancestor, Cati changes the rules of the game, placing herself center-stage, and casting her male lover aside.

Although Rosa, Cati, and Rita might not embody the strong, flawless women that viewers and critics might expect to find in a 2007 play written by a Spanish woman, one must remember that Aymar i Ragolta's scope is not to create imaginary superwomen, but rather to bring to life everyday women, with their struggles, their desires, and their compromises. Unlike Phyllis Chesler's idea of women as motherless children in a patriarchal society—that is to say that “women have had neither power nor wealth to hand on to their daughters; they have been dependent on men as children are on women; and the most they can do is teach their daughters the tricks of surviving in the patriarchy by pleasing, and attaching themselves to, powerful or economically viable men” (qtd. Rich 1979 91)—the three women of *La indiana* (2007) are imbued with a much stronger agency and with a voice that, at times, can even defeat their silence. Adrienne Rich writes: “We [women] need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have even known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us” (1979 35). Through the memory and accomplishments of Rosa, a distant character both temporarily and geographically, current-day women are able to re-write their story and their history, placing themselves at the center of it. The darker—and most unknown—side of Rosa's story is used cathartically, as it teaches today's audiences and readers that one must question history and its “truths.” Women, especially, should be active participants in such probing, being among the primary victims of history's exclusion.

La indiana (2007) brings back to life an aspect of Catalonia's historical memory that seems to have been forgotten: the role that women played in Spanish emigration to Cuba, and the role they continue to play in the tracing of continuous connections between past, present, and

future. It also focuses on the challenges that current generations face in trying to maintain their family past alive, wishing to attribute to it an impeccable aura that oftentimes ignores a cruder reality. History (with a capital H) eventually becomes a single family's history, distancing itself from the broad interpretation that societies give to it, and becoming what Spanish writer and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno called *intrahistoria*, the everyday experience of ordinary Spanish people that is not interesting enough to make the newspaper headlines. Oriol Izquierdo writes in the introduction to the play, "D'aquesta manera, la Cuba colonial és alhora un eco de la gran història i un rastre del passat familiar" (9). Spain and Catalonia's colonial past turns into nothing more than a distant reflection of the characters' family past, which in turn quickly becomes the only past that viewers and readers accept as true. Paul Connerton explains this phenomenon when he writes: "We experience our present world in a context which is casually connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present" (1989 2). With *La indiana* (2007) Àngels Aymar i Ragolta unites past and present by uncovering troublesome aspects of the former and by showing that the latter is not as glorious as one might think. It also toys with the concepts of history and memory, demonstrating that neither of them is capable of objectively recounting what truly happened.

Though this play has received little critical attention, the female characters it presents, as well as its socio-historic and geo-chronological setting, makes it extremely intriguing.⁸⁵ *La indiana* (2007) speaks about nineteenth-century Cuba as a land of opportunity for men and women alike; it touches upon the Catalan involvement in the slave trade; it mentions the enormous impact that Cuban capital played in the modernization and industrialization of

⁸⁵ To my knowledge, no academic article in English, Catalan, or Spanish (if we exclude the book's introduction) has been written on *La indiana* (2007).

Catalonia; it retraces an indissoluble connection between Cuba and Catalonia; and, most importantly, it re-inserts women into the sphere of historical memory by telling their stories of perils and successes and by demonstrating that far from being motherless children in a patriarchal society, women have the power of shaping the future and of re-writing the past.

IV. Indiano Failures and the Reconstruction of Memory in Margarida Aritzeta's

L'herència de Cuba

A second text that deals with the perils and debacles of wannabe indianos is Margarida Aritzeta's *L'herència de Cuba* (1997), a semi-autobiographical novel that chronologically guides its readers through the twentieth century, and geographically takes them from one side of the Atlantic to the other. Though this text has received little attention from critics and readers (in fact, the novel only exists in the original Catalan, and has not yet been translated to another language), its importance comes from speaking about delicate, yet burdensome, historical and social aspects that pertain to Aragón and to Spain as a whole: emigration, the Civil War, the post-War years, violence against women, and poverty.

Beginning in 1925, the novel narrates the life of Basilio Peguero, a young Aragonese man who dreams about emigrating to Cuba to build his fortune, and of Eugènia, his wife, who follows him across the Atlantic to become an indiana herself. Destiny, however, has a different plan for the story's protagonists, and their dreams of richness forever remain unrealizable. Basilio finds himself stuck in Cuba for the rest of his life—too proud, perhaps, to admit defeat and return to Spain, or too worried about the political climate under the Franco regime—while Eugènia, after joining her husband in the Caribbean island for a number of years, returns to Spain with her two daughters, Margarida and Catalina, hoping for a reconciliation that will never come. By jumping back and forth between Cuba and Spain, and travelling throughout the decades, readers

simultaneously witness Basilio and Eugènia's life, briefly joined as they shared a futile dream, then forever separated by misunderstandings, silences, and distance.

L'herència de Cuba offers a critical vision of Cuban reality—one that defies the stereotypical depiction of Cuba as a generator of wealth, or as a tropical paradise, and focuses, instead, on the difficulties that millions of emigrants from all parts of the world faced upon their arrival. Blinded by dreams of prosperity (and to escape military service), Basilio sails to Cuba, abandoning his family in Spain and swearing to never return “[f]ins que seré ric, [...], fins que hauré fet fortuna” (Aritzeta 12). However, the situation he finds upon reaching the Caribbean island is far from what he had envisioned, far from the stories that Don Maximino (an indiano who did become rich in Cuba and who eventually returned to his village in Spain) had shared with him since childhood. Basilio's dream of “la torre, el cotxe, la mulata, les palmeres, terres i terres i roba i diners, i molt més encara” (ibid.)—everything that an indiano could have wished for—is shattered time and time again throughout the years, until he finally understands, on his deathbed, that material possessions will not grant him true happiness.

The luxurious life that Basilio and Eugènia had envisioned is crippled from the moment they become husband and wife. Having already sailed across the Atlantic to begin his business, Basilio decides that they should marry from afar, each declaring their vows to a relative or a friend who is temporarily (and literally) taking the place of the other, thus making their nuptials legitimate. This rocky start, despite the initial happiness of the young couple, is not what either of them had wished for. The description of the event is especially gloomy, almost spectral, as explained by the narrator:

Les amonestacions van anar endavant i a la fi el casament es va fer a Sant

Sebastià a les sis, fosc i negre, a l'hora dels menestrals, perquè ningú no veïés

l'enllaç, dels Peguero amb un morts de gana de quincallaires aprofitats, perquè ningú no veiés aquell casament vergonyat, però poders, sense nuvi. Ella [Eugènia], però, somreia malgrat la fredor de les parets i de la família, mig atuída pel pampallugueig esmorteït de a cera, es deia a si mateixa que era feliç malgrat la remor de l'aire glaçat que enduria el gebre, malgrat que aquell casament no era com els casaments de les seves amigues i no s'assemblava de res al que ella havia somniat des de petita. L'Eugènia se sentia a gust en aquella cerimònia fantasmal amb la seva roba senzilla de carrer, res de vestit blanc sinó faldilla negra i abric negre, en la penombra de l'església olorosa de cera i d'encens esvaït, en la companyia erta d'uns familiars irreals amb posat de circumstàncies, embotits de mala gana dins dels seus vestits foscos, que projectaven ombres esperpèntiques sobre els bancs de la segona mitat de l'església. Era l'única que semblava trobarse còmoda, tot i que el nuvi no hi era. (27)

Instead of following a traditional marriage—lively, colorful, and with both fiancées present—Eugènia and Basilio's nuptials present readers with a couple that is separated from the start, from the day that should symbolize the beginning of their life as one. In fact, the darkness and gloom that are used in the description echo a funeral setting rather than a wedding, an end rather than a beginning. It should come as no surprise that the two protagonists do not share a happy life together, they do not fulfill their dreams of richness and prosperity, and they do not return to Spain as a wealthy family.

In her article "Power and Agency: The Rest is Literature" Kathleen McNerney draws a comparison between the female characters present in *L'herència de Cuba* and in the previously discussed novel *Por el cielo y más allá*. When speaking of Eugènia, McNerney underlines her

weakness, her lack of agency, and her complete dependence on her husband: “Her first disappointment won’t be her last, as her stark lack of agency becomes apparent: she is not only much poorer than she was in Spain, she is also completely dependent on Basilio” (88). Though these characteristics are initially true, Eugènia matures immensely throughout the novel, becoming the most strong-willed character of all. After bearing a child, living in poverty, being physically abused by her husband, and suffering a miscarriage (a tragedy that makes her friends and neighbors question her sanity) Eugènia is sent back to Spain with her older daughter, Margarida, and her unborn daughter, in the hopes that the two girls can attend school and eventually return to Cuba with their mother.

Once again, however, Eugènia and Basilio’s plans are changed by life itself. Upon her return to Spain, Eugènia must face the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), a poverty-stricken life from which she cannot escape, a fascist brother-in-law, Julio, who takes all her savings and rapes her in an act of vengeance towards his own brother who abandoned his family to emigrate to Cuba, as well as Basilio’s completely dependent family of women, who had patiently been waiting for them to return. Eugènia and her sister in law survive the difficult years of the war by sewing soldiers’ uniforms—the former even poses as a model for a painter who wishes to marry her—and are finally able to breathe the air of independence that both had longed for.

Unfortunately, however, Eugènia is unable to begin anew with the painter, since her marriage to Basilio can neither be annulled nor proven due to the conservative fascist regime and to the numerous church (and document) burnings that happened during the years of the Civil War. Eugènia finds herself alone, neither married, nor widow, nor divorcee, nor single, and is incapable of beginning a new life with a new man. She is trapped in an eternal limbo.

Basilio, on the other side of the Atlantic, does not encounter the same problem. After realizing that Eugènia will not return to Cuba with his daughters (though he doesn't pursue her, nor asks for an explanation), the novel's protagonist searches for a new wife, someone whom he can love and with whom he can eventually build a second family. Disregarding the fact that he is still legally and religiously married, Basilio starts a new life with Rosa, the woman who bares him three more children: Maria, Manuel, and Osvaldo. Finally, when Rosa abandons him and her children out of fear that the *gallega*⁸⁶ will return to the island, Basilio leaves his home on his bicycle and literally goes on a search for another woman. This time, however, he is not looking for a wife or a lover, but for a strong, good woman who can help him in the fields, in the house, and who can assist him with the upbringing of his three children. Virtudes embodies the woman Basilio is searching for; she can even offer her two sons as helping hands. Neither Rosa nor Virtudes, however, can fill the void that Eugènia left in Basilio's heart, and though he tries to rebuild his life and move on, the sweet memory of his first wife and of their blind dreams of success accompanies him until his last days.

Though at a first glance Eugènia appears as the weaker character, completely dependent on her husband as McNerney points out, readers soon realize that she is indeed stronger than Basilio, and possess an independence that allows her to survive and to raise two daughters on her own during Spain's most troubling years.⁸⁷ Even after coming to terms with her husband's

⁸⁶ Due to the numerous immigrants in Cuba who came from the Spanish region of Galicia, most Spaniards who emigrated to the Caribbean island during the nineteenth and twentieth century were referred to as *gallegos*, regardless of their autonomy of origin.

⁸⁷ Though some single women were able to maintain custody of their children during the Francoist years (1939-1975) and the first years of the Transition (1975-1982 ca.), the reality for many of them was much more somber. In the case of single mothers, divorced mothers, or mothers who did not share Franco's values or political views, their children were taken away from them and sent to *reformatorios* (reformatories) or colonies where they would be morally saved from the life of sin they had been living until then. As Catalan journalist and investigative documentary filmmaker Montserrat Armengou brilliantly shows in one of her most accomplished documentaries, *Los internados del miedo* (*The Institution of Fear* [2015]), life for many of the children who lived in the mentioned

second marriage and new family (a harsh reality that Eugènia discovers through a type-written letter from the Red Cross, which explains that Basilio has three children in Cuba and that “no tenia cap interès a tornar a Espanya i reconeixia que a Espanya no hi tenia ningú” [197]), Eugènia refuses to break the sacred bond of marriage and turns down the painter’s marriage proposal. Basilio, on the other hand, demonstrates his complete dependence on women when he searches for a wife after Eugènia’s departure, and again after Rosa’s abandonment, finally ending his days under the care of his daughter-in-law, Teresa.

Eugènia and the other female characters of Aritzeta’s novel are not the quintessential heroines that climb out of their troubled situation and experience a happy ending. Instead, similarly to the female characters in *La indiana* (2007), these women should be analyzed and looked at as everyday women, with their flaws, their weaknesses, but also a surprising strength, which emerges when life corners them. Eugènia returns to Spain to raise her two daughters without the help of a man; Rosa abandons Basilio and starts a new family because she does not want to be labeled as “the other woman” should Eugènia return to Cuba to claim what is rightfully hers; Basilio’s Cuban daughter, María, elopes with her lover after her father forbids her from leaving; and his Spanish daughters, Margarida and Catalina, grow up without a father figure in a time when patriarchal values served as society’s cornerstone.

As the novel flashforwards to the present-day (1992), Margarida explains to her own daughter that she eventually contacted her estranged father to explain that “l’Eugènia era morta i que, encara que ella i la Catalina no fossin ningú, estaven bé i li enviaven records” (197) because “[li] va fer ràbia. [Va] pensar que li refregaria pels nassos que sí que hi tenia algú, aquí, encara

reformatories and colonies was far from idyllic. Hundreds of them underwent physical, sexual, and psychological abuse from the nuns, priests, and staff working in those locations, and in some cases, children were even sold to people who were looking for cheap labor.

que no hi volgués pensar” (ibid.). Readers learn that Basilio and Eugènia’s dreams of becoming indianos never turned into a reality. The only inheritances that the protagonists’ daughters obtain from Cuba are their names, Margarida’s silver broach, and a letter that her stepbrother, Oslvado, writes to her during Cuba’s Special Period asking to “ajudar-los en la seva necessitat, o fins i tot els podria ajudar a viatjar a Europa” (198). Margarida never answers the letter, breaking (and burying) all ties that linked her and her family to the Caribbean island and to her parents’ unsuccessful quest for prosperity.

A final element that stresses Eugènia, Margarida, and Catalina’s strength is their willingness to return to Spain as failed indianas, accepting their fate but nevertheless moving forward with their lives, trying to improve their situation through hard work and dedication. Basilio, instead, shows himself for who he truly is: a coward. After leaving Spain to avoid being drafted to fight in Morocco during the Second Moroccan War (1920-1926), Basilio refuses to return to his home country for fear of being considered a deserter and of being punished or imprisoned. He also refutes the idea of return because he cannot bring himself to accept defeat, thus condemning his family to a life of poverty and estrangement, and himself to a life of loneliness:

—Per què no ens tornem? —li preguntava [Eugènia] de vegades—. A Alcorisa tindríem una casa d’obra i viuríem com les persones. Tu tindries la teva terra, podríem muntar una farinera...

—Sóc un desertor, Eugènia, no puc tornar —ell, sense voler parlar-ne.

—No diguis aquestes coses, Basilio, hi ha d’haver alguna manera d’arreglar-ho.

—No se’n parli més! (60)

These untold stories, therefore, are once again transmitted to posterity through the voices of women who serve as an umbilical cord between past, present, and future, and who participate in the re-writing of history. Though Basilio and Eugènia's story is the personal one of a family, the light it sheds on women's participation in the crossing of the Atlantic, on their fate of remaining in their home country waiting for men to return, and on the hardship many of them faced during their years as immigrants, must be acknowledged and re-written into Spain's official history. *L'herència de Cuba* is a literary plea to make that happen.

V. *Indianas in Far Away Cuba: Success, Corruption, and Moral Instability in María Teresa Álvarez's La indiana (2014)*

The third and final text analyzed in this chapter, María Teresa Álvarez's novel *La indiana* (2014), moves to Asturias and recounts the doomed love story of Marina González and Silverio Rodríguez, which spans from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. On the same note as the other two texts studied throughout the chapter, *La indiana* (2014) stretches across the Atlantic chronologically and geographically, creating indissoluble ties between Asturias—which, at one point, lost the highest number of people to emigration when compared to the other Spanish enclaves—and the island of Cuba. It also compares and contrasts the two protagonists of this tale by explaining Silverio's shortcomings as an indiano (from an economic and personal standpoint) and underlining Marina's strength as a woman and future indiana.

Though Álvarez's novel comes short in style and fluidity—two elements that, nonetheless, have not hindered its success among readers—it offers its public accurate historical facts and descriptions that promote the deeper understanding of an earlier time period and

different customs.⁸⁸ The story begins on January 14 1877 with a historical event: the death of sixty-eight fishermen from the Asturian village of Candás, who lost their life at sea while on a fishing mission, and which left numerous families without fathers and brothers to support them. Though the characters are fictional, the use of historical facts (such as the village's shipwrecks, the rampant illiteracy among the villagers due to burdensome economic and difficult family dynamics, the ghastly conditions on ships for those who ventured across the Atlantic) confers solidity to the story, allowing readers to overlook its shortcomings.

Once again, readers are confronted with the reality of emigration. However, unlike emigration from Catalonia—primarily based on commerce and trade—emigration from Asturias was driven by poverty. In the specific case of Candás, many of the villagers who lost their fathers and brothers at sea were forced to emigrate to other areas of Spain or across the Atlantic due to the sheer lack of possibilities in their hometown, whose economy depended on the all-male occupation of fishing. Confronted with living a life of perils and poverty, or trying their luck overseas, many young men chose the latter option, hopeful for a better future. As the novel's narrator explains,

La emigración era una realidad en Asturias en el siglo XIX. Muchos asturianos, desesperados ante la situación de miseria a la que se veían abocados, emigraban en su mayoría a las posesiones españolas en Ultramar. La isla de Cuba constituía el lugar soñado. Viajaban hacinados en grandes buques en unas condiciones extremas: falta de alimento, sin higiene... Se daban casos que tardaban años en llegar por embarcar en navíos que no hacían la travesía directa. (63)

⁸⁸ By 2016 the novel had sold over ten thousand copies and had been considered for a second edition.

Silverio, one of the story's protagonists, faces this gloomy reality and decides to emigrate to Cuba at the young age of seventeen. Before he can leave his land and family, however, Silverio must gather a number of legal documents that exonerate him from the obligatory military service of the time and allow him to travel without concerns: “[Un certificado] de buena conducta, de conocer un oficio, de no tener pendiente alguna condena o problema con la justicia. Autorización de mi madre porque no soy mayor de edad y el certificado de estar libre de la mili o de haber pagado el depósito correspondiente” (93). Despite the legal obstacles, Silverio perseverates, viewing the Caribbean island as a land of opportunity, where he can become rich and save money, and which would permit him to return to his hometown with a wife and kids. That is the same hope that fueled the dreams of many indianos who sailed across the Atlantic, but that oftentimes did not become a reality.

Despite Silverio's good intentions and will to work, his first years in Havana are challenging, as he is forced to take on jobs that offer a miserable pay and degrading conditions. At first, he is employed as a butcher but can only afford to sleep in the butchery's warehouse, among sacks and meat. He then finds employment in a winery but is soon let go once the owners find someone more adequate for the job. After that, comes a period of extreme difficulty and almost starvation, which bring Silverio back to the forsaken times in Candás from which he wanted to escape. It is only upon remembering the name of a lady whom he had met during the crossing, that Silverio is able to secure a job at the department store El Nuevo Amanecer, owned by the woman's husband.

As years go by, however, Silverio occupies the same economic position as when he arrived to Cuba. Though his salary has increased—with which he can afford a semi-luxurious hotel room, fine clothing, and an extramarital relationship with his patron, Doña Magdalena

Sánchez—he sadly realizes that his savings are close to none. Silverio’s dreams of becoming a wealthy man in Cuba move further away as days go by, as do his hopes of creating a family of his own, due to the controlling attitude of Doña Magdalena. She becomes so jealous of Silverio’s whereabouts that she has him fired from the department store under the false accusations of stealing and inappropriate behavior with his female customers.

Across the Atlantic, readers follow the story of Marina, a young woman who also loses her father in the 1877 shipwreck, and who must also bid farewell to her mother soon after her father’s disappearance. Although Marina and Silverio’s stories are told in a parallel fashion, Marina is the novel’s true protagonist, the one who strongly lives by her principles and who makes the (at time difficult) decisions that shape her future. She is also the character who gives the novel its title. Álvarez decision to grant a woman center stage is an important one, as it underlines one of the novel’s fundamental intentions: telling the tale of the thousands of women who stayed behind in the author’s native village of Candás (and in all of Asturias) while the men left on fishing expeditions, or emigrated to Spain’s American colonies. As the author states in an interview with Celia Fraile, “[las mujeres de los puertos del norte] eran padres y madres a la vez, tenían que hacer frente a cualquier problema solas. Eran tan sacrificadas... Tenían otras aspiraciones en la vida, pero no les quedaba más remedio. Fueron increíblemente admirables” (online n.p.). Marina and most of the female characters of the story embody the women described by the author in her interview. Many of them are forced to leave school at an early age and work for extra income—particularly those whose families had been crippled by an early death of fathers and brothers. Others, such as Marina’s sister, find consolation in the arms of God. Reality is perhaps even harsher for mothers with male children, who live with the fear that their sons will one day face the same dangers that their fathers once did.

Marina is the strongest character that readers encounter in the novel, the only one, with Silverio, who does not tacitly accept what life throws her way, and who fights for her beliefs. Though unable to continue studying, Marina never abandons the scholarly activities that mean so much to her: reading and schooling a number of young village girls who had to begin work at the young age of eight. She is also the one who provides Silverio with books and short stories before he sails to Cuba, understanding more than anyone around her the grave limits of illiteracy. Marina's curiosity and thirst for knowledge are the two elements that allow her to survive in a world that seems so unfit for her, where women search for a decent man who can become their husband and father of their children. Silverio also rejects this fixed life, as readers learn from a conversation he has with his mother:

—Y da gracias a Dios que tienes trabajo. Es nuestro destino. Hemos nacido en Candás y esta es nuestra vida.

—Madre, tienen que existir otros horizontes en los que las posibilidades sean mayores.

—No empecemos con tus sueños. Silverio, de verdad, búscate una novia y cástate. Ya verás como al tener hijos tu vida cambia.

—No hablemos de eso, madre; es muy triste vivir sin padre y no me gustaría dejar a mis hijos huérfanos. (51-52)

As characters who belong in a different time period, Marina and Silverio live their life according to their rules, careless of society's opinions. However, the dynamic between these two childhood friends changes when they both declare their feelings for one another, upon Silverio's brief return to Candás. While Marina had always been aware of her strong feelings for Silverio—hence remaining single for more than twenty years and rejecting marriage proposals from well-

off chaps—Silverio does not realize how much he loves his friend until it is too late: he is now engaged to Marina's niece, Norita, and has promised to take her back to Cuba with him. Unable to break the pact with his fiancée's father, Silverio embarks on a loveless marriage, hoping to one day reunite with the love of his life.

When Marina arrives to Cuba to help Norita during her pregnancy, she is confronted with a reality that is irreconcilable with the one she left behind in Candás. The colors of the houses, the deep blue sky, the amount of people walking down the streets are all elements that capture Marina's attention and that catapult her into a new world, far away from her beloved Asturias. Marina also experiences the courtship of a young bachelor, Ricardo, one of Silverio's former business partners, who falls in love with her at first sight. Though Norita and her child die during labor—which, ironically, makes Silverio a free man—Marina is appalled at his insistence in loving her and wanting to marry her, despite his wife's recent death. Following a series of misunderstandings, Marina marries Ricardo in a frenzy to spite Silverio, though not loving the former and still being in hopelessly love with the latter.

Marina's years as a married wife are perhaps the years in which she loses most of her agency and strength as a woman. Firstly, she embarks on a loveless marriage (an action that she had always criticized); then, she keeps quiet when her husband defends his foreman's deplorable actions with the field workers, who he rapes and beats. As she confesses to her husband that she saw his worker sexually assault a female worker in the field, he answers: "Pero, como comprenderás, no voy a meterme en las relaciones sexuales que mantengan los criados. Los negros son bastante promiscuos y es frecuente verlos retozando por cualquier sitio. ¿Qué has visto al mayoral? Yo no lo he visto, pero sé que se relaciona con varias negras y están encantadas" (403). Finally, after explaining to Marina that there is nothing he can do about this

situation—because, after all, all foremen would behave in the same way—the narrator explains: “Marina se queda en silencio. Le cuesta ordenar sus ideas. Por supuesto que el mayoral tenía razón al afirmar que su marido lo sabía, pero también entiende—aunque no la comparta—la postura de Ricardo” (404). Despite knowing that his workers are treated as slaves, that he is involved in the slave trade when such activity was still legal, and that he condones beastly actions such as rape and violence, Marina remains by her husband’s side, keeping silence as a good wife should. The narrator poses the same question: “¿Qué puede hacer?” (413). It is only when Marina personally suffers Ricardo’s violence (as he mercilessly rapes her in the fields in a night of drunken rage) that she decides to abandon him, escaping to their home in Havana, wishing to begin a new life in the Cuban capital.

When everything seems lost, the inevitable happens: Ricardo is murdered in the sugar refinery by a woman who could no longer watch her own daughter be raped and beaten by their master. Like the *deus ex machina* of Greek plays, Ricardo’s death comes as a godsend, freeing Marina from a brutal marriage, and transforming her into an incredibly rich woman. Though not thanking her husband’s killer with words per se, she hugs her during their last encounter, expressing her gratitude for completing a task that she, Marina, could have never terminated. Similarly to the storyline in *Havanera 1820* (discussed in Chapter 1), readers are confronted with a former slave who kills her master out of rage, careless of the death sentence that awaits her. Marina, on the other hand, is there to collect the fruit of such action, and though she does, indeed, put her late husband’s money to good use, she is nevertheless immaculate from all punishable faults.

Marina’s good intentions also reach out to the young girl who had been raped by Ricardo, and who is now carrying his child. When the young girl dies during labor, the novel’s protagonist

decides to adopt the infant and return to Asturias, where the young girl will grow up. With the money earned from her husband's death, Marina embodies the indiano dream by living opulently in her hometown of Candás and residing in a typical casona Indiana, as described by Surwillo in *Monsters by Trade*. The narrator explains: "La expectación resultó inevitable y cuando los candasinos vieron la hermosa mansión de dos plantas pintada de blanco y azul con preciosas galerías y las esbeltas palmeras que como mástiles ondeaban al viento, dieron en llamarla la Casa de la Indiana. Así fue como Marina, la hermana de Xuaco, de Candás de toda la vida, pasó a ser apodada la indiana" (Álvarez 452).

The protagonist's return to Spain coincides with a change in her attitude, as well. Far from the land that transformed Marina in a worse version of herself—following her loveless marriage, her social properness though confronted with acts of social injustice and violence, and finally her relief after the death of her husband—she can now recuperate her old ways in the simple village that never ceased to be her home. The adoption of Rosita amends Ricardo's years of violence and her years of silence. Unlike her life in Cuba, where every step and every action were carefully calibrated and observed, Marina is no longer concerned of what society thinks of her for adopting a mulatto girl and returning to Spain unmarried, knowing that her actions represent a minimum repair to her and her husband's wrongdoings.

The epilogue of the novel brings the story full-circle, as it celebrates the nuptials between Marina and Silverio, at the ages of fifty and fifty-three, respectively. The love that sparked between them on the terrible night of 1877 is finally celebrated more than forty years later and offers a positive ending to a story that appeared doomed since its beginning. By focusing on a female protagonist that wishes to detach herself from the strict rules and impositions of society, María Teresa Álvarez's novel redeems itself from the rather banal storyline, the inconsistent

writing style, and its stereotypical descriptions of Cuba. The gender element is, in fact, what gives *La indiana* (2014) its strength, and what makes it a novel worth analyzing. Particularly, through the many historical details that the author inserts, readers are confronted with the harsh reality that most women from northern Spain faced after losing the men of their family at sea, to military service, or emigration. Without undermining the difficult lives that most men lived, *La indiana* (2014) focuses on women, on their stories, and on their duplicit role as mothers and fathers. Silverio, the novel's co-protagonist, suffers numerous failures from a personal and economic standpoint, as he must live without the woman he loves and renounce his dreams of becoming a successful indiano in Cuba. Although he does secure a well-paying occupation in more than one department store, his hopes of returning to Candás as a wealthy man and of building his casona indiana do not materialize. Marina, instead, returns to Spain as an enriched woman who can show off her late husband's wealth by building a Caribbean-style palace in her hometown. The source of this wealth—namely, slavery—is one of the most troubling details of the entire novel, the one element that makes Marina's character weaker and less noble than what the narrator (and, perhaps, author) wishes it to appear.

Sadly, the topic of slavery is once again overlooked, mentioned only *en passant* when speaking of Ricardo's family's fortune. Though Marina cannot be held accountable for knowing of her husband's shady business before the marriage, she is knowledgeable of how he and his men treat the workers in the fields and in the sugar refinery during the years they live together. However, upon his death, she decides to keep his fortune and invest part of it in the building of a lavish casona indiana in Candás. Wealth is what makes Marina a successful indiana, and though readers should question how she decides to use her Cuban capital, she is ultimately able to take revenge over everyone who once looked at her with contempt for coming from a poor,

uneducated family. Marina, not Silverio, is the character who experiences a successful outcome, and though she must go through a number of trials and tribulations to obtain it, she becomes a stronger and more independent woman in the process. Finally, and perhaps most ironically, Marina is the one who makes Silverio an indiano by marrying him upon his return to Spain.

VI. Rebirth or Return to the Past?

This third chapter has analyzed *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba*, and *La indiana* (2014) and traced a brief history of Spanish indianos who sailed to the Americas in search of fortune and who, in some cases, fulfilled their dreams of richness. Unlike Riera's novel *Por el cielo y más allá* and Verdaguer's film *Havanera 1820*, which focused on slavery and the slave trade, rather than on gender, *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba*, and *La indiana* (2014) shift their attention to the perils of women and to the deconstruction of the myth of mighty indianos. The three texts try to rescue women from the shadows of history and patriarchy by creating female characters who are independent from the men in their lives and who are able to survive in a male-centered world. Álvarez, Aritzeta, and Aymar i Ragolta engage in what Gayle Greene believes to be a feminist writer and feminist critic's duty: "Feminist writers, like feminist critics, engage in "re-visions" of the tradition. [...] But re-vision is also a chapter in cultural history and a chapter in social history as well [...]" (8). Despite their strengths and innovative aspects, however, the novels and theatre piece fall short when discussing Catalonia's and Asturia's involvement in the slave trade—completely overlooked in Aritzeta's work, and mentioned *en passant* in Aymar i Ragolta's and Álvarez's. Once again (and similarly to the texts in Chapter 1) the celebration of women and the denunciation of slavery appear to be mutually exclusive.

Notwithstanding the texts' shortcomings, they are worth discussing because of the innovative way in which they look at Spanish history and at the role that women occupied in society. As Adrienne Rich writes, "Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (1979 35). By tearing down ancient male myths, Álvarez, Aritzeta, and Aymar i Ragolta broaden the gender spectrum, giving women the voice and attention they have been denied for centuries. Both novelists and the playwright, in fact, entrust their female characters with the power to perpetuate or change history according to their liking, offering them the possibility to either delve back into their family past, or sever the ties with it and start anew. Like Juan Goytisolo in *Señas de identidad*, where the author questions his family's actions and ultimately rejects them, the three women who are granted the power to choose, Rita, Margarida, and Marina, opt for the second alternative, deciding in favor of a fresh start, rather than a tainted past. Rita demands that Cati not make her script public—forever guarding her great-great grandparents' story; Margarida does not reply to her Cuban stepbrother's letter and plea for help; and Marina adopts her late husband's mulatto daughter, and returns with her to Candás, uninterested in the gossip that this decision might cause. Though their actions appear as somewhat limiting or harsh for the way in which they completely shut the door to the past, they also demonstrate their strength, as well as their will to move forward without seeking society's approval.

A second element that make these texts worth discussing is their questionable ending, for it implicitly tackles the problematic social, political, and economic situation in Spain during the last decade of the twentieth century. When analyzed closely, the three literary productions here studied conclusively celebrate Spain's rebirth by pointing out Cuba's shortcomings, ultimately

aligning themselves with the general festivities and positivity promoted by the Spanish government around 1992. Such enthusiastic support for Spain's symbolic rebirth is most evident in *L'herència de Cuba*, as the novel ends in 1992—an extremely important year for Spain for several reasons: 1) the World Exposition that took place in Seville (visited by roughly 41 million people); 2) the XXV Summer Olympics that were celebrated in Barcelona; and 3) the five hundred-year anniversary of Columbus' first voyage to the Americas. The fact that the novel terminates in 1992 is a detail that must not be overlooked, as this specific year marks the country's symbolic (and grandiose) entrance into democratic Europe (following Franco's death in 1975 and the its entrance into the European market in 1986), and serves as a way to commemorate Spain's glorious colonial past. Spain changed from a backward, repressed, and quaint country (as Franco's slogans proclaimed), to a modern and young European power (Gies online n.p.). When speaking about the year 1992, Richard Maddox eagerly explains:

All of these events were sponsored, largely financed, and ultimately controlled by the Spanish government, which through the events sought to 'change the image of Spain' in the eyes of the world. [...] No longer would it be possible to regard Spain as a rather backward, provincial, and poor European hinterland that was still struggling to consolidate its fledgling democracy and overcome the legacies of forty years of dictatorship under the Franco regime and centuries of fading imperial glory and national decline. The events of the 'miraculous year' of 1992 were designed to demonstrate that the period of national revival that had begun with the death of Franco in 1975 had come to a successful conclusion. (5)

If on the one hand Spain promoted the year 1992 as a watershed between an "old" and "new" version of itself, many looked at the aforementioned events with a critical eye, judging the

country's excessive celebrations as yet another glorification of its conquest of the Americas, as a relapse to its imperialistic and exploitative past, and as a new form of economic colonization. And while the positive changes that came along with the discovery of the American continent are undeniable, frivolously commemorating such event without acknowledging the millions who died in the process was certainly perceived as condemnable. Spain was set on forging a new image of itself by proposing that the new, democratic, European period would resemble its golden centuries. And what better way to do so than by commemorating the man and the year that served as the cornerstone for Spain's transatlantic empire.

Over the last few decades, a number of scholars (Surwillo, 2014; Rodrigo y Alharilla, 2007), writers (such as Carme Riera, 2002; and Paloma Pedrero, 1995), and film producers (Antoni Verdagué, 1993) have engaged critically with Spain's 1992 celebrations. Angel López García, in his article "An Image of Hispanic America from the Spain of 1992," affirms that the Spanish government's efforts to celebrate the Quincentennial were met by the Spanish people with neither positivity nor negativity, but rather, with indifference. He also critically points out that while Spain was trying to modernize itself and integrate itself into Europe (through the *Acta única*, monetary union, and new immigration and residency laws), it repeated the same forms of ostracism and xenophobia as it did in the past, "proclaim[ing] the law of purity of blood within its own borders" (726).⁸⁹ Other cultural producers, such as playwrights Paloma Pedrero and Ignacio del Moral, and film directors Montxo Armendáriz and Imanol Uribe (to name just a few), have focused on Spain's paradoxical reality of the 1990s through their plays *La isla amarilla* (1995) and *La mirada del hombre oscuro* (1992), and films *Las cartas de Alou* (1990)

⁸⁹ Spain does not base the nationality of its citizens on the *ius soli*, but rather, on the *ius sanguinis*, which implies that being born in Spain (from parents who are not Spanish or of Spanish descent) does not automatically grant you Spanish nationality.

and *Bwana* (1996) respectively. The four works present readers and viewers with a parody of Spain's social and political situation in the early decades of its newfound democratic period by pointing out that racism, xenophobia, and a fundamental fear towards the "other" (mostly African and Latin American immigrants) are elements that permeate democratic Spanish society.⁹⁰ Pedrero and del Moral apparently invert the idea of postcolonial literature by writing plays that are imbued with colonial stereotypes. Their aim, however, is to show that the Spanish people are far from having abandoned the Eurocentric view that governed their past conquests. As Camilla Stevens writes, "La repetición paródica de situaciones colonialistas en las dos obras sirve para desconstruir la hegemonía de la visión eurocéntrica del otro" (179). Viewers encounter a similar criticism in Armendáriz and Uribe's work, through which both film producers wish to show that in democratic and European Spain "el término exilio ha sido sustituido en la conciencia colectiva española por el de inmigración, el cual está estrechamente ligado a conceptos como la xenofobia y el racismo que si, por un lado, son tratados (y banalizados) como eventos mediáticos, por otro, son ignorados por la mayoría de la población" (Ballesteros 218). Purposely produced around the year 1992, *La isla amarilla*, *La mirada del hombre oscuro*, *Las cartas de Alou* and *Bwana* are perfect examples of the criticism that scholars, writers, and cultural producers directed towards a government that celebrated its colonial actions (with its positive and negative implications) without previously ridding itself of its evergreen colonial stereotypes and fears.

With both lines of thought in mind, readers are soon able to discern the daunting element concerning the three texts studied in this chapter. *La indiana*, *L'herència de Cuba*, and *La*

⁹⁰ According to Frantz Fanon, one of the founders of postcolonial studies, the fear that white people feel towards people of color finds its primary source at the biological level (1967 160), i.e. white people fear that people of color will physically dominate them, whether this be in the form of physical or sexual violence.

indiana ultimately commemorate Spain's supposed superiority over Cuba by crafting stories about the shortcomings of indianos who searched for a better life across the Atlantic, although paradoxically, a better life awaited them in Spain. The authors of the three literary productions go on to create a comparison between the female protagonists of their work and their home country. Similarly to Spain's seeming rebirth of 1992, the women of *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba*, and *La indiana* (2014) also experience a renaissance, as they symbolically break the ties with their past to project a new and better version of themselves into the future. Like Spain (which lived through a tumultuous twentieth century), the women in these literary productions do not reject or obliterate the hardships of previous years. On the contrary, they find strength in the pain and failure they experienced, and use said strength to walk out of the shadows and embody the new (democratic and European) version of the Spanish woman—one that no longer believes or follows the misogynistic doctrines born during the colonial period and the Franco regime.

While creating strong female characters that reject patriarchal values is important from a literary, social, and political point of view, why do the two novels and theatre piece deconstruct the myth of Spanish indianos, while ultimately restating Spain's supremacy over Cuba? Furthermore, why is Spain's involvement in the slave trade briefly mentioned, and not discussed and / or criticized in depth? That the answer to both questions is one and the same. By comparing Spain and Cuba, these texts take their "literary revenge" over the island that so desperately fought for its independence, only to find itself, one hundred years later, in a tumultuous economic and political vortex.

In *L'herència de Cuba* Margarida's character takes revenge over her estranged father and Cuban stepbrother by not answering the latter's letter and plea for help, in which he "demanava

que els reclamés perquè poguessin demanar el visat de sortida, i que els pagués unes vacances a ell i la seva dona, [...], bitllet d'anar i tornar i una estada per fer un passeig per Espanya i veure com era la terra del seu pare, i conèixer les seves germanes, quasi res” (198). With the deconstruction of the indiano myth, Aritzeta shines a light on the much more stable situation in Spain, because despite the European country's turbulent and unstable twentieth century, the year 1992 generated a rebirth that stands in clear contrast with Cuba's gloomy Special Period. If the 1990s symbolized the beginning of a new and brighter era for Spain, for its long lost colony across the Atlantic those same years marked the beginning of one of its most wretched decades.

Aymar i Ragolta's *La indiana* (2007) also ends on a somewhat nostalgic note, as Rosa exclaims:

Misteriosament es van tancar tots els camins de Cuba. Tota comunicació entre els seus habitants era impossible. Cadascú vivia captiu al seu lloc, com en presons d'aire. Viatjar era morir. La vida va quedar estancada, sense grillons, ni fuetades, sense *mayorales*, els blancs mirant l'horitzó se sentien esclaus. L'home de les muntanyes moria pel mar i l'home del mar moria per la terra inaccessible... (79).

Though it remains unclear whether Rosa is speaking about the end of African slavery in Cuba following numerous slave rebellions (which transformed former plantation and slave owners into prisoners of their own estates), or about the decrease in freedom that followed the 1959 Revolution, the play nevertheless leaves spectators and readers with a disagreeable feeling, one of failure and impotence. The “terra inaccessible” that Rosa speaks about is most likely Spain, which becomes a distant mirage that can no longer be reached. She and her husband, who had sailed across the Atlantic to “fer las Américas,” will never return to their beloved homeland, a

fate that they share with thousands of other Spaniards who emigrated to Cuba in search of prosperity, and instead found themselves fighting with similar demons.

Finally, in Álvarez's *La indiana* (2014) Cuba is presented as a land of opportunity, a quasi-mythical place as Álvarez herself states in her interview with Fraile: "Cuba para mí es muy especial [...]. Solo he viajado una vez allí, con mi marido, Sabino Fernández- Campo. Fue muy emocionante descubrir que seguían manteniendo costumbres de la época de Carlos III, mientras que aquí [España] parece que le damos la espalda a la historia" (online n.p.). Despite the author's naïve commentary, Cuba takes on somewhat of a negative role throughout the novel, as it is primarily presented as a land that corrupts people and their morals. Silverio, the young dreamer who left Candás at an early age, becomes a handsome man that not only embarks on a relationship with a married woman, but who also declares his love to Marina while married to his wife. Doña Magdalena, Silverio's patron, cuckolds her husband for years, redeeming herself only at the end of the novel when she helps Marina realize Silverio's love for her. Ricardo, Marina's husband and former slave trader and owner, treats his underpaid workers as animals, and takes advantage, day after day, of the women in the sugar refinery. And finally Marina, the Asturian woman with sound principles who marries without love to spite Silverio and who turns a blind eye when she discovers her husband's monstrous actions. Order is restored only when Marina and Silverio return to Candás, the small village of hardworking fishermen and their families, where people still live by their morals.

Though *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba*, and *La indiana* (2014) are relatively unknown Spanish texts (the first two, in particular), they nevertheless touch upon a series of issues and raise a number of questions that make them worth discussing. The act of deconstructing the myth of the indiano, for instance, serves the three authors a double purpose—

one, perhaps, more noble than the other: 1) to celebrate women and re-insert them in what scholars call remembered history; and 2) to underline Cuba's shortcomings after its independence, and eulogize Spain's rebirth, its economic growth, and its new forms of economic supremacy. This second reason also supports the lack of criticism towards Spain's participation in the slave trade. Such an admission and denunciation would have, in fact, mined the authors' intention of rescuing Spain from its muddy past by superimposing its bright present and shiny future. Instead, Aymar i Ragolta, Aritzeta, and Álvarez present readers and theatergoers with a somewhat doomed image of Cuba, one of a country that touched its zenith during its years as a colony (one must not forget Cuba's nickname, *la perla de las Antillas* [the pearl of the Antillies]), and that is now suffering the consequences of its longed-for independence.

Nevertheless, despite the shortcomings and controversies that are palpable in the three texts, they deserve to be praised and further studied for their work on gender. The strongpoint and most powerful element of these works is the importance they give to women's stories and lives, as well as their decision to re-write history and deconstruct patriarchal myths. Patricia O'Byrne states: "Women's experience is a central part of historical memory that needs to be recovered" (x), and it is safe to say that *La indiana* (2007), *L'herència de Cuba*, and *La Indiana* (2014) can be added to the long (yet sadly understudied) list of texts written by Spanish female authors that tell the story of women, their lives, and their experiences.

Chapter 3

Desexualizing Havana: Gendered Tourism in Twenty-First Century Cuba

*Cuba is hot. Cuba is ready. Cuba is coming.
Anticipation is high for an explosive reconnection
with the fabled island of pleasure and eroticism.*

—Jeff Cohen, *Playboy Magazine*

*Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com'è,
bisogna che tutto cambi.*

—Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo*

I. Introduction

Tourism is defined as the temporary displacement of a person or persons, a cyclical transfer of people that involves three steps: departure from the habitual place of residence, arrival and stay in a desired location, and return to the place of origin (Enciclopedia Treccani online n.p.). Therefore, if tourism is a commoditization that allows people to “exercise their fantasies, to challenge their physical and cultural selves, and to expand their horizons” (Graburn 29), tourists become, according to Rosalie Schwartz, “sedentary people who leave home for pleasure and intend to return” (xvii).

As Western economies improved during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social dynamics changed, alongside culture and fashion, and pleasure travel became a consumer good that even a zealous working-class family could eventually afford.⁹¹ In short, traveling became a

⁹¹ While the concept of tourism as a specific capitalistic enterprise accessible to most working-class individuals is relatively short-lived, and closely linked to postmodern societies, the documented temporary displacement of smaller or larger groups of people dates back to Roman times. The eighteenth century saw the development of a form of European travel and travel writing (to South America and Africa, primarily) that focused on understanding, cataloguing, and dominating natural history, as the writings of explorers such as Pierre Bouguer (1698-1758), Charles de la Condamine (1701-1774), and Alexander Von Humboldt (1769-1859), among others, illustrate. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that travel became a form of leisure, as voyagers began to engage in proto-forms of tourism. While curious explorers sailed to the American, African, and Asian continents, young European (and, subsequently, American) aristocrats and nouveau riche engaged in traveling around Europe

maker of social status, or, as Eric J. Leed writes, “an activity that weaves the fabric of contemporary lives” (3). As more and more people could enjoy the freedom that travel offered, countries around the world understood its value and its potential revenue. In modern and post-modern societies these aforementioned forms of mass travel, or organized travel, came to be known as tourism. Critics who have engaged with theoretical approaches to study tourism are unable to agree on a single, most-important element that defines tourism itself. John Urry (1989) argues that the tourist’s gaze—that is, the fact that tourists are given the power to observe, rather than be observed—is tourism’s most defining characteristic, while other critics such as Colin Campbell (1987) believe consumerism to be tourism’s driving force. Regardless of tourism’s cornerstone, tourist industries today must cater to an ever-changing postmodern society that has moved away from mass consumption, and that has, instead, entered into a period that critics call post-Fordist consumption.⁹² Poon (1993) states that this change involves “the shift from ‘old tourism’, which involved packaging and standardisation [sic], to ‘new tourism’, which is segmented, flexible and customised [sic]” (cited in Urry 15). Though one could argue that tourist mass consumerism is, in fact, a central aspect to the larger tourism industry, the customization of travel has undoubtedly acquired a paramount importance over the last few decades. As more and more people indulge in the luxury of travelling for pleasure, tourism industries strive to create travel packages that appear to be unique, meaningful, and “authentic,” and that appeal to

by joining the famous Grand Tour. The Grand Tour was especially popular among young aristocratic Englishmen during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and quickly became the means to enjoy continental Europe and its culture for months (and, at times, years) on end. Finally, the twentieth century witnessed the birth of capitalistic-driven tourism, which opened the world’s doors to all people, from all places, but that also transformed previously untouched natural paradises into capitalistic commodities.

⁹² The main differences between a mass consumption and post-Fordist consumption society is that the former is characterized by a producer dominated market, rather than a consumer dominated one, while the latter creates a market that is consumption rather than production dominant, which generates high levels of indebtedness as a result (Urry 14).

travelers who wish to experience the “real” culture of their destination country or location. What tourists do not realize (or, perhaps, what they do realize, but do not ponder upon) is that the simple act of being labeled as tourists grants them an aura and a spectrum of liberties that are not given to local residents, while the “real” culture that they seek is far removed from what they are given access to. It also implies that their gaze is to some extent controlled by governments or touristic companies, which create and monitor what tourists can and cannot see, what they should and should not experience. Urry explains: “People have to learn how, when and where to ‘gaze’ . Clear markers have to be provided and in some cases the object of the gaze is merely the marker that indicates some event or experience which previously happened in that spot” (10). Though tourists’ eyes are free to wander, such wandering is strictly monitored and carefully confined.

Tourism quickly proved to be an extremely profitable venue, particularly for those nations that could offer a mixture of cultural attractions, natural beauties, and, of course, pleasure. The unquenchable thirst for pleasure and excitement that characterizes modern societies consequently leads to the search of idyllic, tropical paradises that, according to Jennifer Ruth Hosek, are filled with “notions of liberal sexuality and indulgent sensuality” (13). Tourists journey to experience the thrills and delights that their overwhelming, urbanized lives cannot offer. It should come as no surprise that numerous third and fourth world countries began to promote a particular (and particularly hushed) form of tourism, known as sex-tourism. Young bodies across these countries are literally put up for sale, as older men (and women), primarily from first world countries, travel to these pleasure destinations to take advantage of cheap and meaningless sexual encounters. Here, natural geographic beauties are replaced with natural human beauties.

The search for pleasure is especially true for tourists who travel to Cuba, a country that has been eroticized and sexualized throughout the centuries. Ever since its grand touristic boom of the 1920s, Cuba has become an attraction for millions of tourists who travel to the island for a plethora of reasons: from virgin beaches, to political ideals, from simple curiosity to the more problematic elements of prostitution and cheap sex. In fact, prostitution and sex have been two of the island's main attractions for decades, luring hundreds of sexually voracious tourists to Cuban shores each year.⁹³

Today, tourism proves to be one of the island's most important sources of income, only second after transportation.⁹⁴ Among the international flow of tourists who every year visit Cuba—Europeans, Canadians, and Latin Americans, particularly—the number of Spaniards is significant. In her 2008 study María Dolores Espino explains that the number of Spanish tourists reached its peak during the 1900s (when Spaniards, Germans, and Italians made up 34.4% of tourists in Cuba), declined at the turn of the century, recovered slightly between 2004 and 2005, but has been slowly losing ground ever since. However, according to María Rionegro “el turismo español en la isla se incrementó un 37,5% [en 2015], con 107.000 visitantes, que llegaron allí a través de sus 10 aeropuertos internacionales, siete marinas internacionales y tres terminales de cruceros” (online n.p.). Though the number of Spanish tourists in Cuba in 2015 was certainly lower than 2007 (when 133,000 Spaniards vacationed on the Caribbean island), they still constitute one of Cuba's major touristic affluences. Furthermore, despite the number of Spanish

⁹³ Scholars agree that Cuba underwent three touristic booms during the twentieth century: the first one in the 1920s (during the years of Gerardo Machado), the second one in the 1950s (during Fulgencio Batista's time in power), and the third one in the 1980s (under the leadership of Fidel Castro). One should also add a new touristic boom in the early 2000s, after a decade of extreme hardship during to the infamous Special Period. I delve into a deeper analysis of tourism in Cuba throughout the chapter.

⁹⁴ According to the ONEI (Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información), in 2015 the exponential increase of tourism in Cuba generated an income of over CUC 1,940 million from foreign tourists and CUC 310 million from Cuban nationals (Feinberg and Newfarmer 13).

tourists taking a turn for the worst, the amount of capital that Spanish businessmen and companies invest in Cuba's tertiary sector is quite striking. Today, Spanish companies control close to 90% of five-star hotels, and approximately 60% of four-star hotels in Cuba (Rionegro online n.p.). As Schwartz points out, "Spanish companies are pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into Cuba, and the French Accor Group plans to build and manage several hotels. A Spanish hotel firm spent forty million dollars on renovations to the reopened Havana Libre-Guitart" (207).

The attraction that Spaniards feel towards Cuba is, according to scholar Jaume Martí-Olivella, twofold: "The nostalgic reinscription [*sic*] of the Spanish imperial subject and the touristic commodification of the island as an erotic and 'archeological' paradise" (162). The elements of imperial nostalgia and sexual curiosity are also present in the work of Spanish writer and novelist Manuel Vázquez-Montalbán, who affirms: "Spaniards in Cuba today are divided basically between tourists and industrialists. Tourists, themselves, are composed of two 'espeleologies:' searchers of sex and searchers of revolutionary archaeologies" (441). Though to some extent Martí-Olivella and Vázquez-Montalbán's descriptions resonate with the way Cuba is pictured and imagined across the globe, it nevertheless presents limitations by adhering to common stereotypes—namely the sexualized image of Cuba, the Revolution of 1959 and its aftermath, and the easy (and guilt-free) access to all sorts of pleasure.

Among the unfortunate stereotypes propelled by the aforementioned (or similar) quotes is the idea that Cuba has opened its doors to a specific type of pleasure-seeking male tourist, and that many (if not most) women in Cuba—particularly those of Afro-Cuban descent—are just another hedonistic commoditization that the island has to offer. Isabel Segura, a Spanish writer and historian who has worked extensively on Cuba, breaks away from the masculinization and

sexualization of tourism in her recent tourist guidebook for women, *La Habana para mujeres* (2003). Through a close analysis of this text (as well as Segura's previous work on Cuba), this chapter studies the less commercialized aspects of Cuban history, society, culture, and tourism in relation to gender. So, by focusing on tourism and gender in a non-traditional, non-sexualized way, what does Segura's text offer that other, more traditional tour-guides do not? I propose that *La Habana para mujeres* presents readers and travelers with the means to discover Cuba's history and culture in an unconventional way, by offering a new outlook on gender and its representation. Instead of relegating (Cuban) women to the sidelines, or viewing them as a mere object of national and foreign pleasure, Segura gives women a voice and an unprecedented importance—especially when taking into consideration the larger spectrum that is sexual tourism in Cuba. The text does not promote a type of tourism filled with exotic locations and tourist traps, but rather offers a cultural and literary journey through Havana where (local and tourist) women take center stage. Although this one text cannot desexualize the entirety of Cuban tourism, it does offer a valid and innovative alternative to how tourism and women have been generally viewed by Western eyes, as it stresses the importance and promotion of the island's gendered culture.

II. “Why Don't You Go to Havana?”: A Brief Introduction to the History of Tourism in Cuba

When English businessman Thomas Cook launched his travel agency, Thomas Cook & Son, in 1841, the idea of travelling for pleasure became a reality for the numerous middle-class passengers who partook in his organized tours. The most innovative aspect of his venturing business, however, was the creation of an entirely new market for lady travelers, who were

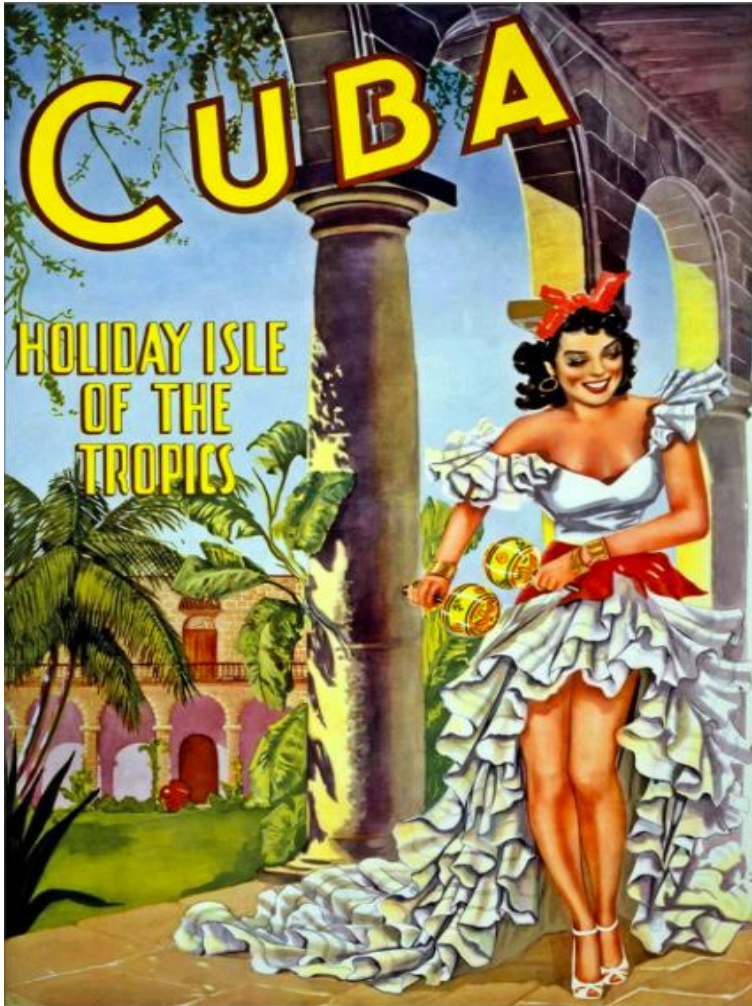
encouraged to journey unaccompanied and to enjoy the leisure that Cook's organized voyages could offer.⁹⁵

The tourism industry today appears to be growing by the minute, and people from all parts of the world take advantage of the numerous touristic locations and travel packages that websites, advertisements, and travel agencies are constantly publicizing. Among the many destinations, Cuba is once again placed at the center of tourists' radar for its particular political situation, and for its condition of literal and metaphorical insularity—in particular concerning its relationship with the United States. As advertisements featuring tropical paradises, beautiful women, and cheap alcohol fill everyone's social media pages inviting people to travel to the Caribbean island before it changes forever, an extremely high number of tourist guidebooks on Cuba has surfaced in recent years. The aim behind most guidebooks is paradoxically twofold: 1) to embrace the stereotypes promoted by the Cuban government that presents Cuba as a safe, beautiful, and pleasure-filled country that should be visited by all; and 2) to debunk the foreign stereotypes that depict Cuba as a revolutionary paradise that still prays to its two gods called Fidel Castro and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara.

Cuban and foreign visual representations of the island have not always strived to present a neutral depiction of Cuba's population—particularly in regard to women and their bodies. Dozens of sexually-inviting posters and photographs portraying Cuban women and the island's natural beauties began to surface (primarily in the United States) during the 1920s decade and continued multiplying in the years that followed. In 1949, for instance, the Cuban Tourist Commission approved and promoted an advertisement that included all the pleasurable and

⁹⁵ For further information on Cook and his organized voyages for Victorian ladies, see Edmund Swinglehurts, *The Romantic Journey: The Story of Thomas Cook and Victorian Travel* (1974) and *Cook's Tours: The Story of Popular Travel* (1982), and John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (1990).

sexual elements that an (American) tourist would be searching for (Figure 2). The anonymous poster, entitled “Cuba, Holiday Isle of the Tropics,” portrays a Cuban woman with maracas dancing in a courtyard filled with palm trees and other tropical plants. The woman is shown wearing an extremely short and ruffled folkloric dress that exposes her long, sensual legs moving to the sound of music. The dress also offers a clear view of the woman’s décolletage, her



luscious black locks, and her sun-kissed skin. Though the woman’s beauty and the suggestive location could attract the curious eye of both men and women, the sexualization of Cuba and the sexualization of its female population remains quite evident.

A second 1940s poster designed by Cuban cartoonist and artist Julius Seyler for the Cuban Tourist Commission, once again entitled “Cuba, Holiday Isle of the Tropics,” indulges in a risqué

representation of the island and its natural beauties (Figure 3), while doubling as an advertisement for Pan American World Airways System. In this photo, Cuba itself takes on the shape of a woman’s silhouette as she is lying on the beach, sunbathing—her wavy hair moved by a gentle breeze. The analogy offered by Seyler’s advertisement between Cuba and sexual

pleasure is undeniable. In fact, the woman's silhouette is not monochromatic; instead, it is filled with the natural pleasures that many tourists visiting the island would seek: warm beaches, fresh air, nature, and, of course, women. However, the detail that immediately catches the viewer's attention is not the sailboat in the background, or the colorful umbrella resting on the beach. It is most likely the large

sun hat that covers the silhouette's

buttocks, which leaves spectators

wondering if the woman is, in fact, wearing a bathing suit, at all. In this image, Cuba is not only attributed traditional female qualities, such as beauty and leisure; here, Cuba becomes an actual woman, ready to be enjoyed and ravished by its visitors.

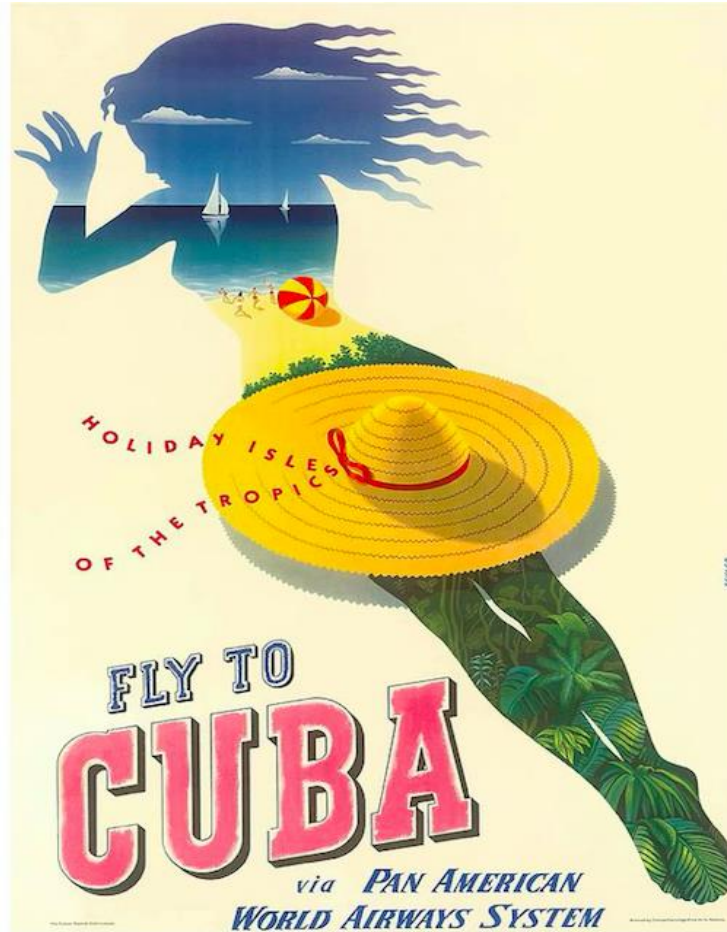


Figure 3. “Cuba, Holiday Isle of the Tropics,” ca. 1940, poster produced by cartoonist Julius Seyler (1873-1955) for the Cuban Tourist Commission, Havana. Source: United States Library of Congress.

Though both images are intended to speak to a predominantly heterosexual, 1940s male population that is lured to Cuba with the promise of encountering the beautiful and sexy women that appear on these posters, such images were also enticing to female travelers, attracted by the possibility of becoming the sensual women portrayed in the advertisements. Laura Mulvey makes a clear distinction between the two types of pleasurable looking that arise in a conventional cinematic situation (scopophilic and narcissistic and that can readily be applied to the observation of advertisements, as well. According to Mulvey, the scopophilic observer is

sexually aroused by looking at another person, while the narcissistic observer finds pleasure in identifying him / herself with the image seen (14). Although this distinction is not as black and white as Mulvey presents it, the feeling of pleasure that emanates from the two posters is one that could have sexually or narcissistically enticed both men and women tourists.

The first groups of tourists began arriving in Cuba as early as the 1920s, and since then, the numbers have continued to grow. After the *Titanic* disaster in 1912, the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, and the submarine warfare that took place during the last lustrum of the 1910s, more and more American tourists chose to vacation closer to home instead of engaging in long journeys across the Atlantic. Cuba, located only at ninety miles from Florida, presented itself as the perfect location. During the twentieth century Cuba enjoyed three booming tourism cycles: the first one in the 1920s, the second one in the 1950s, and the third one in the 1980s. Despite the ever-changing political situation on the island, tourism proved to be a driving economic force, as well as an economic factor that could shape the country's history. Described as a "smiling, luxuriant tropical land where romance, beautiful women, soft music-filled nights, and the enchantment of Spanish culture awaited visitors" (Schwartz xxi), Cuba became a land of pleasure, and tourism became its means of success. American tourists enjoyed Cuba's pleasures for decades: horseraces, gambling, alcohol during the years of prohibition, sex, luxurious golf clubs, virgin beaches filled tourists' stay on the island. In preparation for the Sixth Pan American Conference scheduled to open in Havana on January 16, 1928, Cuba sent a cast of twelve dancers and singers on a thirty-six-city tour of the United States. As the young artists moved from Chicago to Baltimore to Washington D.C., hotel signs in each city posed the question: "Why Don't You Go to Havana?" with the scope of luring American tourists to the Caribbean island (Schwartz 65). It should come to no surprise that the majority of Cuban posters promoted

before 1959 were written in English, as Americans constituted the majority of tourists who every year flocked to the island until the (in)famous embargo was set in motion in 1962.

Cuban and American posters kept advertising the foreignness of Cuba's people and culture well into the 1950s, as Conrado Walter Massaguer's image distinctly shows (Figure 4). The poster, entitled "Visit Cuba: So Near and Yet So Foreign" and subtitled "90 Miles from Key West," portrays a Cuban woman dancing while shaking maracas, with the hopes of enticing American tourists to visit the island for its closeness to Florida and for its exotic and foreign (yet, not too foreign) qualities. Though the woman on the poster is not as openly sexualized as the women depicted in the previously discussed advertisements, it is quite intriguing that the illustrator and the Cuban Tourist Commission once again resorted to using women in folkloric clothing to attract tourists. As mentioned, though any poster might have captivated the interest of both men and women, the sexualized, exoticized, and semi-erotic aspects of numerous advertisements were addressed to a specific type of tourist: the seeker of pleasure.

Once the revolutionary government led by Fidel Castro took power on January 1, 1959, and dictator Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973) was forced to flee the country, all strong economic (and dishonest) connections with Cuba's northern neighbors crumbled. As part of his plan to re-establish ties with Europe and Latin America and eliminate all traces of *americanización* (Americanization) from the island after the embargo, Castro sought to promote a type of tourism that was not based on physical pleasure (as it had been in the past), but rather on cultural and political pleasure, as intellectuals and tourists (mainly from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Soviet Union) were exposed to the Revolution's ideals through a sophisticated and cultured interchange of ideas and discussions. To understand this touristic shift, one must also take into



Figure 4. “Visit Cuba: So Near and Yet so Foreign, 90 Miles from Key West,” ca. 1950, postcard produced by illustrator Conrado Walter Massaguer (1889-1965) for the Cuban Tourist Commission, Havana. Source: Lake County Discovery Museum.

consideration the international climate and movements of the time—and particularly, the decolonization movement, which gained the support of European thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Aimé Césaire, who are now pillars of postcolonial theory.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ See, respectively, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (1964); Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961); Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957) and *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (2006); and Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950).

Most international tourists who traveled to Cuba during the 1960s and 1970s were more interested in the pleasures of intellectual stimulation than in those of prostitution, gambling, and drugs—all of which had been outlawed by the government. In fact, between the 1960s and 1980s, aside from intellectuals, writers, and left-wing politicians, a number of solidarity groups (such as the Venceremos Brigades and the Antonio Maceo Brigades) traveled to Cuba to witness the anomalous social and political reality on the island (a metaphorical and literal socialist island in a sea of capitalism,) to contribute in the harvesting of coffee, sugar, and tobacco, and to build schools. Among the changes that the revolutionary government implemented to dissolve the imperialistic face of tourism were the nationalization of major hotels such as the Hotel Nacional and the Sevilla Baltimore (which had previously been U.S. owned), and the dismantlement of exclusionary practices that kept Afro-Cubans and working-class people from entering hotels, restaurants, clubs, and beaches that had once been reserved exclusively for tourists (Schwartz 203).

Castro's government strove to attract not only foreign tourists, but also the peasant and middle-class population in Cuba, who could now enjoy discounts in restaurants, hotels, and exclusive establishments that they could afford with simple monthly payments (Villalba Garrido 151). Tourism in the 1960s and early 1970s was an important source of income for Cuba, though it was not the main one. Cuba's economy was geared towards the mass production of sugar for socialist markets. However, as more and more tourists visited Cuba, the island began to experience an exponential growth in the tertiary sector during the decade of the 1980s. According to María Dolores Espino (1991), the inflow of visitors jumped from 132,900 in 1981 to 340,300 in 1990, compared to a meager 8,400 in 1974 (online n.p.). Despite this rapid and possibly unforeseen growth, the nature of Cuban tourism did not change. As Amalia L. Cabezas

points out in *Economies of Desire*, “the neo-colonial character of the Cuban industry did not reemerge” (48), and tourist commodities remained available to the local population at affordable prices.

However, when the Soviet Union crumbled and the Special Period cast a decade-long economic crisis over Cuba during the 1990s, Castro’s government was forced to eliminate most touristic subsidies for Cubans and re-install the hedonistic and capitalistic-like tourism that existed prior to 1959.⁹⁷ The sugar market (Cuba’s strongest agricultural production) had suffered fluctuations over the decades, and although it still proved to be an important source of income, it could not grant the economic stability that the revolutionary government longed for—particularly after the failure of Castro’s Ten Million Ton Sugar Harvest plan (1970). Tourism, on the other hand, could give work to thousands of Cubans, thus keeping the economic motor running. In 1994 the government created a new Ministry of Tourism to combine market socialism with high levels of commercialization and market orientation (Jensen 440), which brought numerous European investors to the island, as well as a colossal increase of tourists—from roughly 350,000 in 1990 to 1.8 million in 2004 (Cabezas 2009 50).

Unlike the Cuban propaganda during the 1940s and 1950s that shamelessly promoted Cuba as a land of physical pleasures, Castro’s propaganda supposedly centered on Cuba’s culture and its

⁹⁷ The Special Period in Time of Peace refers to an almost decade-long period of economic crisis in Cuba, primarily caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The dire situation on the island reached its peak during the mid-1990s and was characterized by a severe shortage in hydrocarbon energy, such as petroleum and gasoline. Velia Cecilia Bobes writes: “Beginning in 1992, transportation problems are exacerbated, Havana fills up with bicycles, and buses almost disappear; the old vehicles are decrepit; the state of residential buildings deteriorates even more; the scarcity of water and electricity worsens; constant blackouts take place; and supplies of industrial food products are limited to the bare minimum” (25). Aside from the economic crisis brought about during this decade, Cuba also experienced a social crisis, as fertility rates dropped, while rates of abortion, petty crime, suicide, and drug use rose considerably (Pérez 1995 297; 311). For further information see, among others, the collection of essays edited by Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield, *Havana Beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989* (2011), which includes Bobes’ article; see also Esther Whitfield’s book, *Cuban Currency: The Dollar and “Special Period” Fiction* (2008).

natural (i.e. geographic) beauties, which could provide spiritual pleasure and leisure to entire families. Specifically, it emphasized the island's African and indigenous heritage, transforming folklore into a form of entertainment through which visitors could experience "authentic" Cuban culture and traditions. In August 1991 *National Geographic* published a thirty-page article



Figure 5. Cuban Woman Dancing. Source: Peter T. White, "Cuba at a Crossroads." *National Geographic*, August 1991.

titled "Cuba at a Crossroads", which presented the island as a familiar, yet exotic place, where visitors could enjoy the never-ending facets of the Afro-Cuban culture. The article also offered several images that helped visually promote the island's folklore, as well as its socialist ideals. What is surprising, however, is that although Castro's propaganda wished to promote a folkloric, family-friendly tourism, many of the images included in the thirty-page *National Geographic* spread were, once again, presenting a sexualized image of the island and its women. Two examples are Figures 5 and 6. The first image shows an Afro-Cuban woman dancing (as if in a

trance), surrounded by men who are curiously looking at her, as the article's description reads: "Slow, fast, and then faster, sacred *bata* drum rhythms seize a dancer in Santiago de Cuba seeking communion with the Afro-Cuban divinity Babalú Aye" (94-95). The second image portrays three Afro-Cuban dancers wearing racy (and supposedly folkloric) costumes and photographed from behind, as they attract the inquisitive glances of tourists who have just disembarked a large tourist bus. The contrast between the sexy Cuban dancers still in costume and the suitcase-carrying tourists is undeniable. What is even more problematic is that neither photo shows the women's faces—which contributes to a sense of anonymity and objectification—and they both appear to have been taken without the women's knowledge or



Figure 6. "Untitled." Source: Peter T. White, "Cuba at a Crossroads." *National Geographic*, August 1991.

consent, further feeding into Mulvey's theory that argues that patriarchal societies label women as bearers, not makers, of meaning: "Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the

male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of a woman still tied to her place as a bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (7). While the three 1950s touristic Cuban posters present women that are sexualized but also infantilized (a characteristic that is enhanced by the posters’ cartoon-like aspect), the women shown in the *National Geographic* photos completely lack the infantilizing element, but still possess the element of desire, objectification, and alienation. These photographic subjects metaphorically represent the larger Cuban female population that is being observed, immortalized, and labeled by a specific type of male gaze (both internal and external to Cuba)—one that wishes to mix elements of sexuality, sensuality, and folklore to create the perfect touristic package.

After refuting the exploitative, capitalism-based tourism model for several decades, Cuba was forced to give in to foreign demand and internal necessity by adopting an economic plan focused on mass tourism, which had already been employed by other Caribbean destination countries. Critics refer to this new cycle of tourism as neocolonial (and transnational) for its closeness to the extinct plantation societies and economies that, nevertheless, appear to be re-emerging in the form of tourism. This closeness is not only given by the type of labor and economic gain that was expected from such societies, but also by the sexualization of race, which was adopted in colonial labor regimes (as scholars such as McClintock [1995] and Stoler [2002], among others, have discussed in their work) and is still being used in all-inclusive, upper-scale touristic resorts in Cuba today. And while the face of Cuban tourism has evolved during the forty-year-long post-soviet period, the intrinsic characteristics that constitute mass tourism and capital gain have remained unchanged.

Recent scholars and authors have openly criticized the Cuban state for returning to a pre-1959 touristic model. The larger criticism does not stem from the uneven capital gain that is generated from this type of tourism (though it does, in fact, go against the socialist model, which promises equality for all), but rather from the commodization, sexualization, and fetishization of Cuban bodies that the Cuban state condones and promotes (though not openly) for the good of tourism. In his article, Thomas F. Carter argues that the Cuban state has engaged in an act of phantom-making, which refers to the “process of transforming an individual into an ethereal commodity for tourism, [which...] is indicative of the process of making alienated individuals for consumption” (242). Instead of focusing on the needs of the people, the Cuban government is now focusing on the needs of tourists by contributing to the already existing objectification of Cuban bodies. In his March 1991 *Playboy* article “Cuba Libre,” Jeff Cohen underlines the crack between Cuba’s socialist political ideals and its economic reality—particularly in regard to tourism. Women are portrayed half-naked, on beaches, or on top of old cars in the photos by Patrick Migaud, and readers are left wondering if (or hoping that) all Cuban women share this kind of in-your-face sensuality.⁹⁸ Similar images reappear when Cuban American feminist scholar Archy Obejas writes her *Playboy* article in December 2000, entitled “Cuba Fever,” which presents readers with a type of “prerevolutionary leisure” (Suárez 158) that stands in stark contrast with Cuba’s political agenda and economic reality. Obeja’s words openly criticize the exploitation of Cuban bodies at the hands of the Cuban government in order to promote tourism, but the images by American artist LeRoy Neiman that fill the fifteen-page spread speak a different language (Figure 7). Neiman’s designs are imbued with the very stereotypes and sexism that Obejas denounces, and his comments on the Cuban culture and people (such as when he

⁹⁸ See also Lynn Darling (1995) and Peter Passell (1993) to examine how critics have used Cuban women’s bodies to speak about the economic crisis during the 1990s.

says: “Salsa is a masculine dance. Cuban men really know how to lead these beautiful, desirable women” [86]) could leave readers wondering if he, in fact, read Obejas’ article, at all. It paradoxically appears as if *Playboy*’s aim was to transform the Cuban contradictions discussed by Obejas into an editorial contradiction between text and image.⁹⁹

An additional paradoxical quality about Cuba’s shift in the touristic model is that neocolonial tourism is not only attracting millions of tourists, investors, and entrepreneurs from



Figure 7. “Untitled,” 2000, drawing produced by artist LeRoy Neiman (1921-2012) for Archy Obejas’ *Playboy* article, “Cuba Fever: The Seductive Island Is Closer than Ever, Even Investors Can Hear the Music.”

Spain—who are, in fact, returning as economic neo-colonizers, or as imperial masters of the island—, but that the country is looking to its former motherland as a source of inspiration.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Another text that is worth mentioning is Antonio José Ponte’s novel *La fiesta vigilada* (2007), where the protagonist tells the story of how festivities and celebrations (or, as the book’s cover explains, at least their imitation) have returned to Havana after twenty-five years of prohibition.

Similarly to the propaganda campaign that Spain underwent during the 1960s with the Tourism and Information Minister, Manuel Fraga Ibarne, who promoted the famous slogan “Spain is different!” and introduced the idea of low-cost tourism to attract foreign visitors, Cuba also embraced a form of low-cost tourism during the 1990s, with the hopes of drastically increasing the number of people who every year visited the island.¹⁰¹ Fraga Ibarne and Fidel Castro had, in fact, struck a friendship in the 1990s, making the transmission of ideas, methods, and propaganda between the two countries all the more plausible (“Manuel Fraga” online n.p.). Giles Tremlett dedicates an entire chapter in *Ghosts of Spain* (2006) to the revolutionary aspect that low-cost package tourism had for the Spanish economy starting in the 1960s, as the country began its process of modernization and europeization that would eventually lead to a weakening of Franco’s iron-tight grip. Similarly to the tourism evolution that took place in Cuba during the 1990s, Spain also underwent a similar change as it opened its doors to millions of tourists from the colder countries in Europe. The coastline was modernized and urbanized to accommodate travelers, while touristic enclaves began blossoming, forever changing the once natural landscape. What were once Spanish homes, restaurants, and bars, are now a mixture of international tastes: from Mexican *haciendas* to Italian *villas*, surrounded by golf courses, American-like condominiums, and impressive five-star hotels and resorts (Tremlett 120). As in the case of Cuba, however, to this day “it is almost impossible [...] to find a place where, as a

¹⁰⁰ Though the terms imperialism and colonialism are sometimes used interchangeably, there is an important distinction between the two, as Edward Said explains in *Culture and Imperialism*: “Imperialism means the practice, theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; colonialism which is almost always a consequence of imperialism is the implanting of settlement on distant territory” (8).

¹⁰¹ On the first steps towards Spain’s modernization, see Manuel Álvarez Tardío, “Technocracy, Modernization, and Reform: The Transatlantic Politics of the Spanish Right in the 1960s” (2014) and Pablo Hispán, *La Política en el Régimen de Franco entre 1957 y 1969: Proyectos, Conflictos y Lucha por e Poder* (2006), particularly Chapters 1 and 2.

group, the new colonizers have provided anything more than money” (Tremlett 123), which unfortunately voids the journey of any meaning than goes beyond pure capital exchange.

Though Spain and Cuba’s tourism boom does share some common ground, it would be remiss to overlook the significant differences between the two countries. Perhaps the most important difference is found in the social stratification that these tourism economies impose. If on the one hand Cuba employs its own population to work in the tourist industry (capital, in fact, may be foreign, though the manpower is Cuban), the numerous touristic cities found along Spain’s Costa Brava, Costa Blanca, Costa del Sol, are not only created for tourists by foreign investors; they are also run, mostly, by foreigners who temporary relocate during the busier summer months. It is not uncommon to find British, Dutch, or German bars, restaurants, and clubs along Spain’s coast (with British, Dutch, and German bartenders, bouncers, and managers), considering the astonishing number of tourists who travel to Spain from these locations. In 2017 alone, roughly 82.2 million tourists visited Spain, making it the second most-visited country in the world after France (Molina online n.p.). Of this impressive number of visitors, 18 million were British; 11.4 million were German; and 10.7 million, French (Vilallonga online n.p.).

Cuba’s tourism is plagued with different and deeply rooted social problems. The most problematic aspect of Cuban tourism from the 1990s to today is that by re-embracing a neocolonial, transnational touristic model, social differences between tourists and locals, and those based on race, gender, sexual preferences, color, and class among the Cuban population, are once again clearly marked and enforced. In the numerous all-inclusive resorts and hotels that pullulate in Cuba, employees are appointed to positions according to their gender, skin color, and race, which stratify workers in a pre-determined social order. A chambermaid, for instance, is always a woman’s position, while men are employed as bellboys and bartenders. Furthermore, as

dark-skinned Cubans are more likely to be given jobs that do not require a regular face-to-face contact with tourists (maintenance, kitchen duties, cleaning), light-skin workers are employed in the frontline as receptionists, waiters, and administrators. The one exception to this dichotomy can be found in entertainment, where people of color are contracted as dancers and musicians, their bodies put on display for everyone to see and consume. The overall goal, in this case, is to bring to life a “native”, “authentic,” and folkloric Cuba through the sensual moves and enticing music of dark-skinned entertainers.¹⁰² Transnational and neocolonial tourism thus creates a realm of visual pleasure, as good-looking workers and performers, who use their friendliness and their emotions to create a relationship with visitors, surround tourists and promote guiltless self-indulgence. As Cabezas explains, “In transnational tourism, former colonizers and new transnational classes travel to the Caribbean to consume the scenery, beaches, and, ultimately, brown bodies. A new kind of brown sugar is consumed, one that calls upon locals to strategically use affect to maximize their survival and promote their well-being. A new regime structures not only the exploitation of labor but also of emotions” (2009 53).

In 2007, the Spanish airline company Iberia promoted an advertisement campaign that offered a free trip to Cuba. Due to its sexist and racist nature, the promotion was quickly denounced by the Federación de Consumidores en Acción (FACUA), and Iberia was forced to remove the advertisement from its website. The 1:30 minute-long video (which is now available on YouTube) offers an extremely problematic representation of Cuban women. The two “protagonists” of this cartoon-like advertisement are both *mulatas*, depicted with hyperbolic lips, an exaggerated hourglass figure, walking around Havana in a bikini and high-cut shorts, dancing

¹⁰² For further information on the division of labor according to gender, see, among others, Adkins (1995); Macdonald and Sirianni (1996); and Tyler and Abbot (1998). For an analysis on race relations in Cuba, see Fernández (1996).

on the beach and doing the conga to the sound of music, and engaging in slave-like activities to pamper the Spanish baby who won the trip to the island. As the women bottle-feed him while driving down the Malecón, the baby sings: “Mulatas dadme de comer y dadme de beber.” Later, we see them massaging his back and fanning him as he lies on a beach chair, while they sit in the sand. Again, the baby sings, inappropriately: “Entra en iberia.com y ven aquí conmigo, que es maravilloso tocarse el ombligo tumbado en las hamacas sin gastar dinero.” And finally, once night falls, the baby exclaims: “Venga, mamas, llévenme a la cuna,” as the advertisement’s closing line reads: “Viajes gratis que hasta un bebé puede ganar.” The advertisement, though controversial in many ways, serves as an interesting case study to support the idea that the sexualization, fetishization, objectification, and commodization of Cuban female bodies is still rampant and openly accepted, as even a world-wide company such as Iberia believed it would be appropriate to post such an advertisement on their website. Furthermore, if the Cuban state is first in line in condoning and promoting such a portrayal of their population (particularly women) and country, it is unrealistic to expect other countries to behave differently. In more recent years, the Cuban Ministry of Tourism has tried to move away from such blatant and problematic campaigns by designing an official tourism website, www.cuba.travel, that promotes culture, nature, and leisure void of sexual references and innuendos. With its interactive videos, photos, cultural attractions, travel tips, and instantaneous language translations into Spanish, English, French, German, and Russian, the website promises to attract higher numbers of interested travelers each year, who might start viewing Cuba as more than just a land of cheap physical pleasure.

The aforementioned images from the Cuban Tourist Commission Archive, *Playboy*, and *National Geographic* (which bode with the promotion of Cuba’s dark-skinned, sensual, and

pleasurable population) form part of what sociologists such as Daniel Boorstin (1964), Erik Cohen (1988) and John Urry (1990) call “pseudo-events.” Such events are concocted by specific groups (the tourism industry, in this specific case) to attract and captivate the “gullible traveller” who is ultimately removed from the local culture and people and led to observe an unequivocally artificial occurrence (Urry 7). Postmodern tourists want to be amazed by the people and culture around them, as well as to break away from the everyday nature of their life at home. As all-inclusive resorts across the Caribbean (and the world, for that matter) become increasingly similar to one another, tourists lose sight of the location they are visiting and tend to focus, instead, on their personal experience and on the visual pleasures that such venues offer. These locations cater to all of their guests’ needs, making their necessity to leave the hotel grounds almost inexistent. As a modern-day interpretation and distortion of what pastor Lynn H. Hough wrote in 1920—that life is a journey, not a destination—postmodern societies and tourists advocate that the experience (whether it be authentic or artificial), and not the geographic location, becomes the generator of pleasure.

Neocolonial tourist locations have mastered the ability to introduce just the right amount of “nativeness” for tourists to feel far from home, yet not enough to make them feel uncomfortable or alienated. Travelers must feel free to delve into the beauties of Cuba’s colonial past, while being reassured “of the nonthreatening, subservient, and welcoming population that awaits them” (Cabezas 2009 93). By presenting Cuba as a land that can offer physical and spiritual pleasures, as well as “authentic” folklore and indigenous cultures, Castro’s government sought to make the island enticing to many types of tourists. Despite Castro’s (honest?) intention to diversify tourism in Cuba, however, the island and its people remain tainted with an aura that

is deeply sexualized, as more and more advertisements for the Caribbean promote the idea that tourists can “engage guiltlessly in sensuous abandon and bodily pleasures” (Sheller 2004 178).

III. Cuban Tourism and the Discovery of New Identities: Isabel Segura’s *La Habana para mujeres*

Though the number of tourists in Cuba has peaked during the last decade, very few writers, tour-guides, professional bloggers, or academics have focused on the growing number of women who travel to Cuba alone or in groups of other women. Blog posts and short Internet articles have been published (mainly in English) for women who wish to travel to Havana: *Lonely Planet’s* “Women Travellers in Cuba;” Sarah Simon’s blog post “Havana Good Time: Tips for Solo Female Travelers in Cuba;” Polly Allen’s article “5 Tips for Solo Female Travelers in Cuba;” and others found on websites such as gogirlguide.com and trustedtravelgirl.com that, though supposedly written for women (for the names of the websites would not suggest otherwise), do not offer information pertaining specifically to women travelling to the island. And while women have been the authors of several guidebooks on Cuba both in Spanish and in English—among others, Fiona McAuslan’s *The Rough Guide to Havana* (2010) and *The Rough Guide to Cuba* (2016); Sarah Cameron’s *Cuba* (2016) and *Havana* (2016); Isabel Urueña’s *Cuba* (2014); and Arantxa Hernández Colorado’s *Cuba: La Habana, Varadero, Santiago y más* (2013)—few of them appear to give their publication the gendered and cultural spin evident in Isabel Segura’s *La Habana para mujeres*.

Despite the large amount of information found on the Internet and in official guidebooks on Cuba, none of these posts, articles, and books possesses the amount of research, accuracy, and trustworthiness found in Segura’s text, specifically in relation to female tourism. As the peculiar

title suggests, Segura composes a book that is written for women, as it caters to their specific needs, queries, and interests, but also about women, as the numerous cultural and anecdotal inserts demonstrate. The author's aim is to break away from the previously mentioned Cuban stereotypes of revolution, prostitution, and good rum, and create a tourist guidebook that doubles as a historical text—one that centers on cultural attractions and interests in Havana and its outskirts, as well as on the life and work of a number of Cuban women who have shaped the island's cultural production of the past and of the present.

When traveling, tourists are oftentimes granted the freedom to gaze and observe—a condition that stands in stark contrast with the natives' condition of passively being observed. Mexican writer and photographer Juan Coronel Rivera (grandson of Diego Rivera) has recently exhibited a number of his photographs focused on tourism in the Centro Deportivo Israelita in Mexico City. The exhibition, entitled *Rappel à l'ordre: la plaga, un análisis visual alrededor del turismo*, wishes to draw viewers' attention to the liberties and freedom granted to tourists for the sole act of being one. As the author of the article on Coronel Rivera, Fabiola Palapa Quijas, writes, “para la exposición, Coronel Rivera recurre al concepto de turismo y hace una parodia de éste, pues asegura que cuando viajamos y nos hacemos turistas, ‘nos disfrazamos y actuamos lo que no somos realmente, y eso nos pasa a todos’” (online n.p.). In a following statement, the interviewee goes on to say: “El turismo se ha convertido en una de las industrias más importantes del mundo y todos los países apuestan a este sector, porque es la gran industria; lo que me interesó fue la impunidad, además de la fragmentación y los procesos por los que se pasa el turista” (Palapa Quijas online n.p.). When people embody the character of the tourist they sense a liberty that they do not experience at home and become essentially free to gaze upon everything and anyone that comes their way with curious eyes. Unlike the native's gaze, which

could be interpreted negatively, as a stare, the tourist gaze is mostly welcome, desired, and even encouraged—though closely and inevitably controlled.

This binary notion of observer / observed is uncannily similar to Laura Mulvey's theory on the male gaze, the cornerstone argument in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). To use Mulvey's words,

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active / male and passive / female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (16)

According to the scholar, patriarchal societies grant men the active power of observing, while women are left with the passive condition of being observed and put on display. Thus, a country like Cuba—which has been promoted from the inside and outside as a land of pleasure, overly stressing its sensual (and socially constructed) "female" qualities—has invited a specific type of tourist to its doors: namely, a heterosexual male gazer who will find stimulation in the beauties the island has to offer. Given the evolving face of tourism, however, what happens when the observer / tourist is a woman, or someone who escapes the heteronormative model? Is Mulvey's heterosexual phallogocentric theory still effective, or must one implement the necessary changes to embrace the gender and sexual fluidity that is gradually being recognized in Western societies? Isabel Segura works with the observer / observed dichotomy to create a text that is conscious of the constant evolution of tourism, particularly in relation to gender. Her guidebook is not written with a traditional heteronormative male tourist or couple in mind, but rather for a different type

of tourist—women tourists—who embody the dichotomy discussed by Mulvey. In fact, as (Spanish) women tourists travel to Cuba, they take on the role of observers as they gaze at the local population, while also being observed by the male population on the island. However, Segura rids her text of the sexualization that is a reality for all women in Cuba—for Cuban women are sexualized by both Cuban men and male tourists, while tourist women mostly by locals who are not shy about speaking to women with *piropos* (flirtatious remarks), as Radhika Sanghani’s denounces in her *The Telegraph* article—and offers her readers a chance to engage in other cultural and intellectually stimulating activities. Spanish female tourists are invited to enjoy Cuban culture in a non-eroticized way, while learning about the island’s history and the many women who helped shape Cuba’s society and heritage. As we shall see, however, Segura’s guidebook is not completely void of contradictions, which range from the book’s front cover, to the fonts used for its title, to the descriptions Segura utilizes to describe Cuban women.

If the title were not enough to stress the text's interest towards women, the book's front cover would certainly do the trick (Figure 8). On it, readers find a picture of a young woman smiling, though it would be difficult to decipher whether she be Spanish or Cuban. In fact, by strategically using a blurred background, there is no visual element on the front cover that could immediately resonate with Cuba, Havana, or Spain. Since the young woman is not dressed in folkloric attire, nor is she engaging in what tourists might consider a stereotypical Cuban activity (such as dancing, wearing colorful and risqué clothing, or smoking a cigar), the only element that associates her with possible female readers or travelers is that they are all, indeed, women. Despite its apparently neutral connotations, this specific cover could, in fact,



also appeal to a heterosexual male audience, attracted by the young, smiling woman. Though a male audience would also be unaware of the nationality of the photographed subject, it could be read as a sexualized and stereotypical representation of the female subject. Readers and critics thus witness how the same image can appeal to the male and female audience in two opposite ways: women are captivated by a young woman (perhaps a tourist? perhaps a native?) with whom they

can resonate during their travel experience, while heterosexual men might be attracted to the sexual innuendos that the photograph of a smiling women might convey.

The one detail that informs readers about the content of the book is its title—which is also strategically designed. The four words that compose it seem to be divided into two boxes. In the first box, on the left, appear the words “La Habana” in a boldface font; in the second box, on the right, are the words “para mujeres” written in italics. Though this curious choice could be an editorial decision, one could interpret the title as wishing to stress the words “para mujeres,” signaling the guidebook’s unique content and focus on women. The two different fonts, however, might also be analyzed under a more problematic light: “La Habana,” in boldface, stands out, captures the readers’ attention, and informs them that the text will speak specifically about this Cuban city; “para mujeres,” written with a suave font, might implicitly create a connection with the delicateness that supposedly characterizes women. Women tourists, thus, are invited to buy a copy of the book, as the entire text promises to be focused specifically on them.

La Habana	<i>para mujeres</i>
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Initially, however, the title could also be reasonably regarded as troubling. What the title suggests is that this guidebook has been specifically written for women, which in itself does not contain obvious faults. It is, in fact, meant to be read by women who are traveling alone, or in groups of other women, and who might have other queries, plans, and questions about traveling to Cuba than if they were traveling with a mixed group of people, or with a male companion. However, one might wonder why such a culturally and historically rich guidebook is dedicated only to women. The title is, after all, *La Habana para mujeres*, which indicates that the book was written specifically for women. Why is it not, for instance, *La Habana y sus mujeres*, or *La Habana de las mujeres*? Though the answer to this question is not readily at hand, readers and critics will realize that the importance of Segura's guidebook lay precisely in its title. *La Habana para mujeres* should be considered an innovative guidebook for women who wish to visit Havana and indulge in its culture without forcefully experiencing the feeling of being objectified because of their gender. It also serves as a tool to demonize the rampant sexualization of the entire Cuban people, regardless of their sexual preferences and gender identities. In this book, women do not only take center stage—they take over the entire stage, careless of men's opinions, presence, or gaze.

A second, initial hiccup can be found in the book's index, which does not immediately resonate with its gendered title. In fact, from a quick glance, Segura's text appears no different than other tourist books written on Cuba, for she includes sections such as *Fecha del viaje*, *Preparativos*, *Informaciones prácticas*, *La llegada*, *Desplazarse en La Habana*, *Lo conocido y lo oculto* (which offers several tourist itineraries among Havana's main neighborhoods), *La*

Habana de noche, Arquitectas de La Habana: Dando forma a la ciudad, Un paseo al otro lado de la bahía, A la playa, and La última noche—information that any respectable guidebook would strive to include. Nevertheless, upon closer look, readers notice the numerous inserts and pages focused on women tourists’ needs (i.e. where to eat, how to dress, and, more importantly, how to interact with Cuban men who are known for their explicit and at times sexual catcalling), as well as the cultural inserts dedicated to important Cuban women writers, critics, intellectuals, and artists of the present and the past who left a mark (and continue to leave one) in the many facets of Cuban culture.¹⁰³ Among the sections that compose the gendered portion of the text (for this specific section zooms in on women of the past and of the present) are: *Consejos* (comprised by subcategories such as “Come poco, bebe más,” “No siempre es fácil conocer la oferta cultural,” “Una mañana en la peluquería,” “Acudir a una invitación”); *Retratos y textos de mujer* (which includes biographical information on important Cuban women, such as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Flora Fong, Luisa Campuzano, Dulce María Loynaz, Norma Vasallo Barrueta, and more); *Centros de mujeres* (dedicated to the Cátedra de Estudios de Género Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, the Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, and the Cátedra de Estudios de la Mujer); and a final section entitled *Historias de La Habana* (formed by brief anecdotes on Havana’s history and culture, such as “Mujeres esclavas,” “Las modistas de La Habana,” “Las casas,” “Derecho al voto. Sufragio universal,” “Constitución de la República de Cub,” and many more).

Written for Spanish tourists who plan to travel to Cuba, the guidebook includes tips and pertinent information on local events that would allow said tourist to enjoy the numerous cultural

¹⁰³ Conner Gorry, an American who lives in Havana, and author of *100 Places in Cuba Every Woman Should Go* (2018) has an interesting section in her book that speaks about *piropos* in Cuba and the many ways that both national and foreign women deals with this nuisance (307-308).

activities that Havana has to offer.¹⁰⁴ As the author explains in the book's prologue, "[e]n esta guía, aparte de la arquitectura, hay otro protagonista: la cultura. Desde el primer encuentro con La Habana me sorprendió la vitalidad de la creación cultural, tanto aquélla ya consolidada y clásica como la que gestan a diario las generaciones más jóvenes. El ímpetu cultural en La Habana es continuo inundándola con muchas de sus manifestaciones" (10). Unlike the countless advertisements, posters, pictures, and guidebooks that have stereotypically depicted Cuba as a land of (sexual) pleasure, Segura seeks to create a book that is still focused on gender yet void of the sexualization and exotization that oftentimes mold people's idea of the island. Aside from the text, in fact, the photos that compose the guidebook (taken by Spanish photographer Pilar Aymerich) also wish to concentrate on Cuba's culture by steering clear of an eroticized representation of its population. The majority of women immortalized in these photos are everyday women who work, have children, and enjoy their time at the beach; and even in the few photos where women are dancing, they are not wearing risqué clothing or engaging in overly sensualized movements. These women debunk the ideal of the *cubana caliente* who is fetishized and objectified by an external and veracious male gaze.

As the hedonistic, low-cost, uncultured tourism covers more and more ground each year, a tourist guidebook such as *La Habana para mujeres* becomes an extremely useful device for women who wish to see a different side of Cuba. Isabel Segura displays her guidebook as a tool against sexism and divorces herself and her readers from the misogynistic and stereotypical idea that being a woman in Cuba (whether a local or a foreigner) must necessarily be linked to gender

¹⁰⁴ The reason why I specify that *La Habana para mujeres* is written specifically for Spanish tourists is because of the information that Segura includes at the beginning of the text: i.e. time difference between Spain and Cuba, travel time, currency exchange, etc. However, it is reasonable to believe that the guidebook could be read and enjoyed by a Latin American public, as well, though part of the information (crucial for a European traveling to Latin America) might appear unnecessary or redundant.

biases, inequality, or a superimposed sensuality. In doing so, the author urges female tourists traveling to the Caribbean island to embrace a new identity—and become travelers rather than tourists. Though the distinction between travelers and tourists is a historical, social, economic, and even cultural one, it is ultimately tied to how the voyager perceives their journey. Unlike the traveler (oftentimes compared to Baudelaire's *flâneur*), who wishes to see without being seen, and to become one with the crowd, the tourist must see and be seen in order to validate the journey.¹⁰⁵ In many cases, the passage of tourists through a place is documented by photos or videos, which prove that such person was, in fact, where they claimed to be. However, according to Michele de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), the passage through a place provides quick glances and short (to no) memories for the modern-day tourist, as well as a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape. Oftentimes tourists appear more interested in the fact that they are spectators rather than part of the spectacle itself. These characteristics are typical of modern and postmodern societies, where individuals are aware of the space that surrounds them because their relations are spatial ones, and not chronological or historical ones, as they were in the past. Thus, tourists and their surrounding space become part of a Hegelian dialect, where one defines the other by which it is, at the same time, defined.

Spanish women who travel to Cuba are prompted to look beyond the exotic, sensual representations of the island and its people and indulge, instead, in the countless aspects of its culture—most of which remain unknown to the millions of tourists who flock to the island in search of mere physical pleasure. They are invited to step into the spectacle, instead of passively observing it from the sidelines. The innovative aspect of Segura's text is that it offers readers and tourists brief inserts on Cuban women who are celebrated for their contribution to Cuban history

¹⁰⁵ See Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (2006).

and culture, regardless of their skin color, their looks, or their sensuality. Though such inserts are far from exhaustive, they present interested female tourists with a taste of Cuban women's accomplishments, while supporting the book's original goal that wishes to represent Cuba as a land of immense culture and history against its many stereotypical and distorted representations. The list of Cuban women celebrated in *La Habana para mujeres* invites readers to explore a plethora of subjects that includes art, music, theater, intellectual criticism, and travel literature, as their curious eyes skim through the pages that focus on the Condesa de Merlín, Reina María Rodríguez, Marilyn Bobes, Flora Fong, Norma Vasallo Barrueta, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Elena Burke, Luisa Campuzano, René Méndez Capote, Dulce María Loynaz, Amelia Peláez, Rita Longa, and Rita Montaner. Segura brings back to life a number of Cuban women who have already passed away, but whose influence is still felt today, while shining a new light on those women who are still alive, and who contribute to Cuban heritage and intellectual production with their work and dedication. In a sense, then, *La Habana para mujeres* urges a return to the type of cultural tourism that existed in Cuba between 1960 and 1990, one that seeks an intellectual dialogue and exchange among the island's visitors, while also offering warm weather and crystal-clear waters. And while indulging in culture and in Cuban everyday life will not automatically eliminate the pesky catcalling that takes place on every street corner, ignoring inappropriate comments and celebrating Cuban women is the first step towards the emancipation of sexism and the necessary recognition of gender equality.

Unfortunately, gender differences are still clearly marked, as the sex industry in Cuba remains one of the island's major touristic attractions. Unlike the situation during the 1950s, today's government does not openly condone such practices, though its efforts in eradicating this underground business in the last few decades are far from promising. In fact, Havana's

underworld, though much more secretive than twenty years ago, is still fully functional (Daigle 64). Fidel Castro's speech pronounced at the Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular in July 1992 is a clear example of what the Cuban government is aware of but decides to ignore for the well-being of tourism. The Cuban leader declared:

hay prostitutas, pero la prostitución no es permitida en nuestro país. [...] No hay mujeres forzadas a venderse a sí mismas a un hombre, a un extranjero, a un turista. Quienes lo hacen, lo hacen por su propia cuenta, voluntariamente. [...] Podemos decir que esas prostitutas tienen una alta educación y son muy saludables, porque somos el país con el más bajo número de casos de SIDA. (qtd. in González 2004 online n.p.)

Louis A. Pérez explains that during the 1950s "pornographic theaters and clubs were expanding everywhere in the capital. Brothels multiplied through the early 1950s; by the end of the decade 270 brothels were in full operation. By 1958, an estimated 11,500 women earned their living as prostitutes in Havana" (1995 305). It is not by chance that Havana became known as the "burdel del Caribe" (Valle 125) in the early twentieth century, and as the "naughty Paris in the Western hemisphere" (Schwartz 15) during the Machado years. In 1959, the Revolutionary Government counted roughly one million prostitutes out of a population of six million; 95% of prostitutes came from rural areas (Elizalde 1996a 37). Though pornographic theaters, clubs, and bordellos no longer exist officially, the number of men, women, and children in the Cuban sex industry is still quite high, with hundreds of thousands of people involved in this underground market. Because of its shady characteristics, the government's denial, and the unpredictable frequency of services provided, however, there is no official data regarding the numbers of adults and underage children (some as young as four years of age) involved in the prostitution ring.

Furthermore, despite the disappearance of brothels and prostitution clubs, and though hotels prohibit tourists from bringing underage prostitutes to their rooms, there are several locations where such actions are neither controlled nor sanctioned, such as the many *casas particulares* (private homes) that are rented out to tourists for as little as \$10 a day. One must also take into consideration those Cubans who work in close contact with tourists—such as taxi drivers, bartenders, doormen—who will turn a blind eye in exchange for monetary compensation.

Rosalie Schwartz affirms that the prostitution market in Cuba, though present, does not attract nearly as many men as those who travel guiltlessly to Asia and Africa in search of cheap sex (211). Although the overall numbers between countries might differ, recent studies have shown that the prostitution market in Cuba is, in fact, becoming hotter and larger by the day. According to a joint investigation conducted by Robert Cribb, Jennifer Quinn, Julian Sher, and Juan O. Tamayo, entitled “How Cuba Became the Newest Hotbed for Tourists Craving Sex with Minors,” more and more tourists (especially Canadians and Spaniards) are traveling to Cuba each year in search of sex with underage prostitutes. Sexual predators are favoring Cuba over farther locations such as Thailand, but also over other Caribbean countries (such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic) where HIV rates are much higher. The number of prostitutes was lowered significantly during Castro’s first thirty years in power, as many were either forced to leave the country or participate in rehabilitation programs that would help their reintegration into society. However, as neocolonial tourism returned in the 1990s, and with the rampant economic crisis of those years, not only were tourists seeking a more hedonistic type of leisure, but Cubans themselves began viewing prostitution as a quick way to earn money and (for the lucky ones) leave the island once and for all.

In her article on *jineterismo* and sex work in Cuba, Alyssa García proposes a counterargument to the Cuban government's stance on prostitution. Though believing that *jineterismo* is a form of prostitution specific to the Special Period, for the word is taken to loosely mean "to hustle for dollars," García argues that the specific type of prostitution that emerged during the 1990s should not be interpreted as an isolated incident, but rather as an ongoing issue that finds its roots in the colonial period.¹⁰⁶ She demonstrates that despite the Revolution's intent to eradicate prostitution, and reintegrate former sex workers into society, this illegal, black market of pleasure never truly disappeared, as the government has held (and continues to hold) power over female bodies and their perception inside and outside of Cuba. The main difference, according to the Cuban government, between pre-1959 and post-1990 prostitutes is that the former were poor, starving, uneducated women, who resorted to prostitution as their only means of survival, while *jineteras* willingly choose to sell their services for money, though their social and economic condition does not require them to do so, for the state has dutifully provided for their basic needs. Thus, *jineteras* become morally corrupted women who, despite being educated, choose to indulge in activities that grant them the leisure and pleasure they seek: admission to tourist locations, dinner in fancy restaurants, and access to dollar-only stores, among other commodities.

According to Castro, prostitution (a global phenomenon) is dictated by poverty, necessity, and desperation, while *jineterismo* (a Cuban phenomenon) is provoked by a cracking of spiritual values at the social level (Elizalde 1996b 26), as *jineteras* choose to engage in

¹⁰⁶ Díaz Canals and González Olmedo (1997) differentiate between three types of *jineterismo*: those who approach tourists in specific places, such as hotels, restaurants, and clubs; those who approach tourists in public places, such as streets and parks; and those who include it into other practices, such as dancing. For a comprehensive history of the development of *jineterismo* in Cuba, see Megan Deigle's book, *From Cuba with Love*, paying particular attention to Chapter 1, "From Mulata to Jinetera: Prostitution as Image of Thought."

promiscuous and illegal activities. The Cuban government fully removes its responsibility and places it in the hands of the (morally corrupted) population who cannot steer clear of vices. Hence, “this rhetoric suggests that other countries have prostitutes who are victimized, while Cuba does not. A psychological dynamic is at play here, in that Cuba’s jineterismo ‘problem’ is not as bad as what takes place in other third world countries” (García 187).¹⁰⁷ Jineterismo is a reality that still exists in Cuba, as hustlers of all ages populate Cuban beaches, streets, and clubs. It’s a reality that even the Cuban government acknowledges, though it chooses to ignore it, it must recognize the tragically positive impact it has on tourism. A number of Cuban men and women willingly offer sexual or emotional pleasures in exchange for money, feeding into the sex industry that attracts so many tourists each year.¹⁰⁸ However, what can be said about the millions of Cuban bodies that do not partake in prostitution, that do not condone prostitution, but that are nevertheless sexualized, objectified, and exoticized by an external gaze?

In *La Habana para mujeres* Segura speaks about the Cuban (female) body in a way that could generate both question and praise. Because speaking of foreign bodies is oftentimes a sign of (conscious or unconscious) objectification, Segura could be criticized, or at least questioned, for the instances in which she speaks about this topic. However, one must also focus on the way the author addresses the issue, as she strives to present Cuban female bodies not as better or worse than those belonging to Spanish women, but rather as positively different, characterized by a *cubanía* (a pride of being Cuban) that is seldom found in other countries. On one occasion, she writes:

¹⁰⁷ For a comprehensive study on the concept of sexual labor in the Caribbean, see Kamala Kempadoo’s article “Prostitution, Marginality, and Empowerment: Caribbean Women in the Sex Trade” (1996).

¹⁰⁸ It should be noted that though prostitution per se is not illegal in Cuba, pimping and the prostitution of minors is considered a crime and can be punished with prison or death.

...[P]orque si el paisaje urbano es excepcional, el humano no lo es menos, no sólo por la conversación, también por la belleza de las caras, por la belleza de los cuerpos, que viran en toda la gradación del negro [...] y del blanco [...]. Existe en La Habana, en Cuba, cierto gusto por la exhibición de los cuerpos al margen de hechuras y redondeces. El cuerpo es, está y se exhibe orgullosamente. Por ello, las que no lucimos una talla 38, nos reconciliamos con nuestro cuerpo. (26)

Though explained in a curious way, Segura's description of Cubans, their bodies, and their beauty is meant to prepare Spanish women travelers for the cultural modalities they will encounter on the island. What stands out is the way Segura speaks of the Cuban women who are clearly not ashamed of their bodies, nor of what society might perceive as imperfections. Though the author's comments could be interpreted as a stereotypical representation of what Cuban people are expected to look like, it could also be a celebration of these women who are proud of their bodies, and who do not feel the need to hide behind the farcical patriarchal notion of female propriety. One must also remember the book's ultimate intent: being an effective, resourceful, and useful guidebook for Spanish women traveling to Cuba, as well as a tool that celebrates those Cuban women who fight against gender inequality, gender biases, and the many unfair limits imposed by a patriarchal society.

Alongside controversial details such as the book's title, its front cover, and a number of quotes, lays the richness of Segura's text: its tips for tourists that fill the pages and the cultural elements that transform Cuba into a "real" country by separating it from the imagination-based stereotypes that have been discussed throughout this chapter. Segura's ability consists in giving life to the Cuban people in a guidebook that is meant for foreign tourists. Cubans are no longer viewed as disposable chess pieces that can be inserted and removed from the equation without

significantly altering the tourists' experience of the island; instead, they become active agents for those tourists that roam the streets of Havana. Moreover, as those same tourists are invited to look at the culture, people, and history that surround them with curious eyes and a newfound type of intellectual stimulation, they are also being observed and consumed by the local population. As Cabezas puts it, "while tourism has been long studied as the consumption of place, culture, and people, only recently have we begun to explore the ways in which those who are the object of the "tourist gaze" also consume tourists" (2009 53). Readers see how Segura modifies and adapts Mulvey's theory of the male gaze to modern-day tourism, where lines between observers and observed are not as stark as one is led to believe.

Notwithstanding the many innovative elements that characterize Segura's text—most importantly, her focus on gender in relation to tourism in Cuba—there is one facet of the book that places it among the effervescent number of Spanish literary texts and cultural productions centered on the Caribbean island. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Spanish editorial world has witnessed an almost inexplicable amount of publications focused on Cuba starting as early as 1992 and continuing well into the twenty-first century. *La Habana para mujeres* is no exception to this phenomenon, and although Segura gives her text the gendered spin that is lacking from many books and cultural productions of those same years, it does comply with a crucial detail that is found almost entirely across the board: a sense of nostalgia for a glorious time in Spain's past, which, in turn, has been fueling an economic neo-colonization of Cuba. One must not forget, in fact, that Segura's text is first and foremost a guidebook for Spanish women tourists who wish to travel to Cuba, though they are invited to look at Cuba through the lens of culture and intellectualism rather than pleasure. Despite the unprecedented focus placed on gender and on the desexualization of tourism on the island as a whole (hence the importance given to culture

and personal growth, or change, rather than on material and physical gratification), the aim behind *La Habana para mujeres* is, ultimately, to attract tourists by presenting Cuba as a country that is worth visiting, though not necessarily for the pleasure-based reasons promoted by travel agencies and advertisements. In order to do so, Segura unites elements of the past and present, describing the country as foreign, but not foreign enough as to make visitors feel uncomfortable or alienated.

Unlike a number of interesting Spanish texts that bring readers back to the Caribbean island, *La Habana para mujeres* is not born from a family tie that Segura shares with Cuba, but rather from a cultural connection that she experienced during her first trip there. As the author herself points out in one of her first texts on Cuba, *7 passejades per l'Havana* (1999),

Vaig arribar a l'Havana com a turista al començament de la dècada dels anys noranta. Una de las primeres sorpress va ser la quantitat de cognoms d'origen català: els Puis transformats en Pui en la fonètica cubana d'algunes de les persones que vaig conèixer; els Socarrats, d'alguns rètols publicitaris de les botigues; [...]. Una altra de les sorpreses van ser els noms d'alguns carrers: Xifré, Ramon Pintó..., que posaven se relleu el protagonisme d'alguns personatges d'origen català que havien viscut i mort a la ciutat. Un munt de preguntes em va assaltar. Què hi feien tants catalans a l'Havana? Quan van arribar-hi? Per què? Com vivien? On vivien? Amb qui es relacionaven? Quins eren els seus recorreguts, les seves passejades? (11)

Though *La Habana para mujeres* does not solely focus on the Catalan culture present in Havana, nor is it written specifically for Catalan women traveling to Cuba, the personal and cultural connection that Segura feels towards the island's capital cannot be overlooked, as it (perhaps

unwillingly) fills the book's pages with a sense of longing and belonging: longing for a historic and almost mythical past that no longer exists, and belonging for the engravings that the Spanish and Catalan cultures left on the island. Many Spanish tourists who visit the island inevitably feel a connection with it, its people, and its culture, and can visibly see the influence and history the Spaniards left behind—as well as the numerous aspects of transculturation that were brought back to Spain. In Chapter 2 I mention that Spanish author María Teresa Álvarez experiences Cuba as a land filled with history and an almost mythical aura, as her interview with Celia Fraile indicates: “Fue muy emocionante descubrir que seguían manteniendo costumbres de la época de Carlos III, mientras que aquí [España] parece que le damos la espalda a la historia” (online n.p.) One encounters a similar comment in Segura's *7 pasejades per l'Havana*, where the author states: “Caminant pels carrers de l'Havana sovint he tingut la sensació de fer un viatge en el tempo. Indicis, insinuacions i signes que m'han portat a altres èpoques de la meva pròpia vida i a record d'experiències col·lectives. A l'Havana, la presència dels temps passats i dels seus actors és contundent” (12).

In both of Segura's texts, Havana is presented as a familiar city, amidst the ruins that so typically characterize it. Whether because of one's personal past, or the past of one's country, Havana speaks to its people as much as it speaks to its tourists. In a commentary that is tinged with colonial imagery, Segura explains to her readers that they will feel at home in Havana because of the many similarities between the Cuban city and Spain:

La Habana es una ciudad de lectura fácil, que se deja aprehender. En ella no te sentirás extranjera, quizá por ser una síntesis de los estilos arquitectónicos imperantes en la Península Ibérica, hasta finales del XIX, que dejaron una enorme influencia no sólo en la arquitectura, sino también en las costumbres. Caminar por

La Habana es, hasta cierto punto, un viaje al pasado, un pasado que también es el nuestro y que nos sobrepasa transportándonos años, siglo atrás. (2003 42)

Though one is left wondering why Segura fails to mention the four hundred years of colonial control that Spain exercised over Cuba (which would explain the many similarities between the two countries) and decides to speak only about the architectural and cultural influence that Spaniards left on the island, she nevertheless creates a connection between the island's past and present, explaining that both chronological moments co-exist in Cuba's capital. By reliving Cuba's past during present days, Spanish tourists are invaded by a sense of nostalgia for what once was their past, as well. Though this conclusion is certainly imbued with problematic questions, it nevertheless shows the role that ruins and nostalgia play for Spanish tourists who visit the island. According to Andreas Huyssen, nostalgia holds its primary meaning in the irreversibility of time, in something in the past that has become unreachable. But it also expresses desire for a distant or different place, thus uniting temporality and spatiality, which "are necessarily linked in nostalgic desire" (7). Unlike the Spanish texts that are imbued with a strong sense of nostalgia (and even melancholia) towards Cuba for the familial connections that authors share with the island, Segura's text interprets nostalgia as a desire for a distant or different place.¹⁰⁹

So how is nostalgia linked to gender and a text that wishes to desexualize tourism in Cuba? The answer is found in the use that Segura makes of nostalgia in her book. In *La Habana para mujeres* nostalgia is not viewed as a passive element, a rock that lays heavy on those

¹⁰⁹ I am thinking, in particular, of Ángeles Dalmau's novel *Habanera: el reencuentro con un oculto pasado antillano* (1999), where the Spanish author mixes sentiments of nostalgia and melancholia for a carefree childhood spent in Cuba, which stand in stark contrast to her gloomy present in Spain. For further references on nostalgia and melancholia, see the aforementioned essay by Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins" (2006) and Sigmund Freud's essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1984).

Spaniards who return to Cuba after decades to rediscover their family past; instead, nostalgia is used actively, positively, as a feminist tool—for it is precisely through nostalgia that Spanish female tourists in Cuba can uncover or create new identities while celebrating Cuban women for their contributions to Cuban culture. The author, for instance, invites her travelers to visit the Plaza de la Catedral during their first night in Havana, to experience the feeling of positive nostalgia that permeates her guidebook: “La Plaza de la Catedral nos devuelve la armonía. Es una de las razones por las que siempre se vuelve a La Habana, anunciándote algunos de los secretos que te deparará la ciudad” (36). Segura and her female readers sense an inexplicable attraction towards Cuba and its capital, for the city functions as a shrine where positive memories are created and guarded, and then rediscovered during subsequent journeys to the island. The closeness between Spain and Cuba is what makes the initial connection possible, though it is Cuba’s own aura that transforms an early spark into a perpetual flame.

In *La Habana para mujeres* Segura also addresses her inexplicable need to return to Havana time, and time again, despite the continuous and seemingly unstoppable deterioration of the country:

Siempre que regreso a La Habana, en ese primer momento, me asalta la misma pregunta: ¿Por qué vuelvo a estar aquí? No encuentro la respuesta—si es que alguna vez la he hallado—hasta transcurridos unos días, cuando el primer impacto de la decadencia, sin desaparecer, porque está ahí, cede su hegemonía a otras percepciones, a otros estares, no tan angustiosos. (35)

The author feels attracted to Cuba for reasons that are, at least initially, unknown, though she senses a strong connection between the Caribbean island and her home region of Catalonia; or, more generally, between Cuba and Spain. However, unlike the millions of pleasure-seeking

tourists who visit Cuba for one reason, and one reason only, Segura appears to be moved and called back to the island by an inexplicable cultural and historical attraction, one that goes far beyond the bodies that inhabit the country. The way in which Segura unites the topics of culture, history, tourism, and gender is by writing a guidebook that aims at offering useful tips for Spanish female tourists who embark on a journey to Cuba, and by proposing that by following her suggestions and looking at Cuba through a gendered, non-sexualized, non-eroticized lens, women tourist will create (or uncover) a new identity for themselves while slowly unveiling the millions of identities of the people that surround them. A reinvention of the self is at the heart of *La Habana para mujeres*, where Segura points out that everyone becomes a different and changed version of themselves after returning from a trip to Havana. People—women—who travel to Havana are not doing so in search of themselves (or of someone else), but rather, in a Pirandellian way, in search of the many different selves that characterize each human being. The author writes in her closing section:

No hay nada obvio en La Habana. Las “verdades”, “valores”, “principios” con los que convivimos cotidianamente en nuestro lugar de origen, aquí no son aplicables con tanta facilidad. Cuando crees que has entendido algo de lo que te circunda, de las experiencias que has vivido, de las relaciones que rigen en la sociedad cubana, ¡zas!, nuevos matices te hacen dudar de la verdad a la que habías llegado pocos minutos antes. Estando en la Habana, a menudo te sientes como en una coctelera de emociones, de sensaciones. Es como si te sacaran de ti para mirar, para mirarte, con otros ojos, provocando el descentramiento de una misma. No se sale igual que se llegó a La Habana, y eso hay que celebrarlo. No todas las ciudades ofrecen esa posibilidad. [...] Tras la llegada al lugar de origen, el viaje aún no ha finalizado.

Vuelves excéntrica, con unas ganas imperiosas de compartir, de hablar con otras personas, que, como tú, ya han estado en La Habana. Las buscas con una voluntad imperiosa de entender, aclarar, vislumbrar tan sólo alguna pequeña parte de lo que has vivido. Cada Habana es particular y en cada una se esconde su secreto, pero todas ellas tienen en común una historia de amor. (200-201)

The notion of blending tourism with gender and identity does not appear solely in *La Habana para mujeres*. In fact, the majority of Segura's publications that center on Cuba and Havana are tainted with a gender / identity component. In 1997 Segura published *Viatgers Catalans al Carib: Cuba*, where she collected a number of excerpts from chronicles, novels, letters, newspaper articles written by Catalan men and women (though mostly men) who journeyed to Cuba during the nineteenth and twentieth century and wrote about their impressions, their feelings, and their memories. This text is followed by *7 passejades per l'Havana* in 1999 which, as previously mentioned, zooms in on the Catalan presence and identity on the island by taking a trip back in time and uncovering the stories of the millions of Catalan men and women who emigrated to Cuba. Unlike *Viatgers Catalans*, which collects texts written by other travelers and writers, *7 passejades* speaks about history through Segura's eyes, as she struts along and gets lost among the serpentine streets of Old Havana. The year 2002 saw the publication of a literary anthology entitled *Cuba en la literatura catalana* that Segura edits with Àlex Broch, which is followed one year later by *La Habana para mujeres*, discussed at length throughout this chapter. Finally, in 2008, Segura writes and publishes *Viajeras a La Habana*, which narrates the literary stories of four Spanish women who journeyed to Cuba during the nineteenth and twentieth century, and wrote about their stay on the island. The four women are the Spanish princess Eulalia de Borbón, the first member of the Spanish monarchy to ever visit

Cuba before its independence; and three Spanish Civil War exiles: María Zambrano, the famous writer and philosopher who spent roughly five years in Cuba before moving to Mexico; Zenobia Camprubí, writer and wife of Juan Ramón Jiménez; and María Teresa León, a politically involved writer, married to Rafael Alberti, who visited Cuba on two separate occasions, one before and one after the 1959 Revolution.

Segura's last two mentioned publications—*La Habana para mujeres* and *Viajeras a La Habana*—share more than a geographic location and photographs by Pilar Aymerich, and should be studied as more than a literary or touristic guidebook around Cuba's capital. In fact, they become markers and makers of female identities. Here, women break away from the patriarchal, observant society described by Mulvey and acquire a hybrid agency that contains a gamma of shades of grey—unlike the classic black and white dichotomy envisioned by Western societies. In her guidebook Segura presents tourist women as active agents who choose to travel alone to a foreign country, and who are actively observing the culture and people around them; but they are also presented as subjects who are consciously engaging with said culture and experiencing a personal change (or growth) in the process. Cuban women are no longer depicted as fetishized objects that possess little more than a beautiful body and that can be commoditized by tourists; instead, they are given a voice and a gaze that gives them the power to speak and look, instead of being spoken about and looked at. Thus, in Segura's book women are not solely bearers of meaning, but active agents, observers, and producers of meaning, as well.

On a broader level, and within the context of Spain's neocolonial interest in Cuba, Segura proposes an interesting power shift. The author detaches herself and her text from the female colony / male metropolis dichotomy by writing a guidebook for Spanish women traveling to Cuba, who wish to enjoy the cultural and natural attractions of the island. Instead of presenting

Cuba as a metaphorical (colonial) female subject that awaits its master to be discovered and enjoyed, Segura transforms both countries into strong, decided women who choose to present themselves, their culture, and their people as autonomous entities, free from the anchoring chains of history and patriarchy. Men and the larger idea of patriarchal society are not granted a space in Segura's text, as the entirety of *La Habana para mujeres* consists of a transatlantic interchange of ideas, culture, and customs seen through a feminist and gendered lens. Cuban (female) bodies are no longer put on display for the tourist to consume; instead, Segura celebrates the mind and achievements of Cuban women, whose ideas and accomplishments can be shared through a new literary / touristic portal with women across the world. Spanish women, on the other hand, are given the means to enjoy a culturally rich land such as Cuba by learning about the many women who have overcome obstacles and social impositions to reach the place they occupy today. Stripped of the stereotypes that plague this Caribbean island, Cuban women are finally granted the recognition they deserve—although, initially, it might only come from a small group of female readers and travelers residing on the other side of the Atlantic.

IV. A Reinvention of the Female Self

Tourism in Cuba is a topic that has been studied at large from many scholarly points of view, and that continues to be studied today due to its ever-changing nature. With the introduction of mass, low-cost tourism in the 1990s, which was followed by a constant strive to expand and refine the tourist industry during the 2000s and 2010s, Cuba's economy has slowly improved, though social, racial, gender, and labor divisions that had been previously hushed, have steadily reemerged. Fusco speaks of Cuban tourism during the 1990s as a double edge sword (163), for it did, indeed, help the economy, but also introduced a number of commodizations and pleasures for tourists that were off limits to most Cubans. It also allowed

for the visible resurfacing of prostitution, as male and female jineteros search for those commodities that the government denies them. With respect to tourism, jineterismo has generated a wave of criticism towards the government for two main reasons: 1) the government's disinterest in acknowledging that prostitution was never truly eradicated (which translates into a shift of culpability from the state to the single person working as a jinetero/a), and that it came, in fact, back to life during the Special Period precisely because of the new tourism model implemented by Castro; and 2) the obvious distinction that the government makes not only between male and female prostitutes (the latter tend to be punished, while the former tend to be overlooked), but also between jineteras and those tourists and businesspeople who enjoy their services (Cabezas 1998; Strout 1996). In order to protect the face of Cuban tourism, the government attacks the supply rather than the demand (Facio 73), releasing foreigners of most responsibilities.

The ever-growing sex market in Cuba, as well as modern-day, neocolonial tourism, has contributed to the perpetuation of preexisting stereotypes regarding the fetishization and commodization of Cuban bodies—particularly those of mulatas.¹¹⁰ Tourist economies allow for the distinction between brown bodies meant to be consumed and white bodies meant to consume, further reinforcing the idea of Eurocentric white upper-class superiority (Fernández, 1999) and keeping the racist myth of the sexually licentious mulata alive (García 181). The quasi-mythical figure of the mulata (perpetuated since colonial times) becomes central in the Cuban imaginary, as it is believed that she is “born of lust, made of lust” (Deigle 31), and therefore embodies the sexuality and sensuality that many tourists seek. The mulata, more so than fair or dark-skinned

¹¹⁰ Scholars such as Bolles (1992), Kempadoo (1996), Cabezas (1998), and Fusco (1998), among others, began to study the practices of the sex industry in the Caribbean not as a vacuum, but as part of a larger, more complex system of social, political, and economic dynamics. These scholars take into consideration gender, sexuality, race, color, culture, and economy to better understand the practices that exist within the sex industry.

Cuban women, is fetishized, objectified, and sexualized by Cubans and foreigners: she is the ultimate interest of the penetrating male gaze. All Cubans—and especially women—however, become part of the tourist package, as their bodies are marketed, sold, and meant to be enjoyed by the highest paying tourist. In *Consuming the Caribbean*, Mimi Sheller writes that “sex tourism packages Caribbean people as ‘embodied commodities’ by turning the long history of sexual exploitation of women (and men) under colonial rule into a ‘lived colonial fantasy’ available for the mass tourist consumer” (164). Though Sheller only mentions sex tourism, it is appropriate to enlarge the colonizer / colonized fantasy spectrum to include the majority of tourist visiting Cuba—for many are interested in anachronistically exploring Cuba as if they were traveling back in time, to a land far removed from their own reality.

La Habana para mujeres, analyzed throughout this chapter, is born in a sea of stereotypes and misrepresentations concerning Cuba and its people. As the media, advertisements, and even the Cuban government try to sell tourism packages that focus on the consumability of Cuba and its inhabitants, Segura’s guidebook proves to readers that the Caribbean island is composed of much more than beautiful bodies, virgin beaches, and endless mojitos. The culture and the people that emerge in *La Habana para mujeres* are not meant to be exploited and consumed in a quick and guiltless transaction, but rather to be enjoyed and absorbed on an intellectual (and perhaps even spiritual) level. Unlike the advertisements that alienate the local Cuban population by focusing exclusively on the needs of tourists, Segura’s guidebook unites tourism with gender and culture by offering a vision of Cuba and of Spanish tourists that is seldom encountered elsewhere. The gender element is, in fact, what makes the book so innovative. Though, as previously mentioned, gender and racial stereotypes have dominated national and foreign advertisements on Cuba for nearly a century, Segura gives gender a new spin. She places women

(whether they be local Cubans or Spanish tourists) at the center of her text, and eliminates men, the male gaze, and the patriarchal values from the equation. Thus, she creates a tourist guidebook that doubles as a history book and as a feminist tool, for it empowers women of all ages, races, ethnicities, and from all social backgrounds by demonstrating (through successful historical figures, intellectuals, and personalities of the Cuban cultural scene) that their position within Cuban society is not subaltern to that of men, but egalitarian. Although such equality is not yet a reality in Cuba (for the country primarily follows the values of a patriarchal and *machista* society), it does not take away from the important intent behind Segura's text.

As this chapter ends, we circle back to Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, for the dichotomy between active men and passive women is still very much alive today. Segura, however, is able to break away from this patriarchal distinction by centering her book around women (and women only), and by erasing the distinction between Spain's superiority as a (former) motherland and Cuba's inferiority as a (former) colony. If Spain was once imbued with traditional male values such as strength, stamina, and the power to observe and control, Cuba was attributed traditional female values, such as submissiveness, docility, and the condition of being observed. As both Cuba and Spain metaphorically become women in Segura's guidebook—Spain through its female tourists and Cuba through its female intellectuals and artists—former patriarchal values come to a halt: Spaniards are no longer given unlimited control over their former possessions (whether they be people or objects), and Cubans acquire the power of vision, for they no longer are the subjects, the Others, those who are observed but dare not look back. And while the reality concerning the Spain / Cuba relations is much more complex than what Segura proposes in her book—for Spain's economic neocolonial, imperialistic presence in Cuba is not a distant mirage, but a palpable reality, as the controversial Iberia

promotion demonstrates—it is nevertheless pivotal to praise this text for its innovative and meaningful representation of gender in relation to Spanish tourism in Cuba.

La Habana para mujeres present a depiction of Cuba and its capital city that is quite distant from the stereotypically tainted images offered by the media and mythical social imaginaries. In the text studied throughout this chapter, tourism is not used or seen as a means to emptily take advantage of the many Cuban pleasures, to search for socialist utopias, or to enjoy nights of endless sex. Instead, tourism becomes the means through which Spanish women can re-discover themselves in a land that is distant, yet uncannily close to home. Segura masterfully depicts a city and country that are constantly changing—despite their chronologically stagnant appearance—but that remain permanently imbued with infinite layers of intellectual, historical, and artistic achievements. By uniting tourism, gender, and culture, Segura creates a guidebook that is worth reading not because of its style, wording, or photographs (though these certainly add to the book’s success), but because of its particular nature focused on Spanish women travelers and Cuban women artists and scholars. And although the guidebook might not reach as wide of an audience specifically for its gendered nature, *La Habana para mujeres* goes beyond the pure consumerist, stereotypical, hedonistic tourism that hopes to attract the “gullible traveler.” Instead, Segura removes Cuba’s makeup, its fancy clothes, and its seductive dance moves, and focuses on the island’s lesser-known cultural treasures: its women. The many women who appear throughout the text are the active agents who contributed, and continue to contribute, to Cuba’s shining cultural heritage.

Segura’s work on Cuba and women represents an important contribution in the field of women’s studies and in the world-wide strive for gender equality. Unlike the dichotomies present in the cultural productions studied in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (which seemed to force the

authors to choose between the celebration of women or the condemnation of slavery,) Segura does not choose between supporting Spanish women's independence or Cuban women's history and cultural contributions; instead, she unites women from both sides of the Atlantic to create a text that incorporates the recognition of all women, regardless of their country or origin and history. Nevertheless, the feeling of imperialist nostalgia still permeates *La Habana para mujeres*, though, perhaps, in a subtler manner when compared to Segura's Spanish contemporaries. What Segura and her readers seem to long for is a peacefulness and a serenity unobtainable in Spain, one they can only reach when traveling to the paradisiac Caribbean island. While Cuba's society and economy is undoubtedly different from Spain's capitalistic and European model, Segura overlooks the hardship and problems that many Cubans face on a daily basis, and presents readers with an idyllic and tainted *locus amoenus* where tranquility is within a hand's reach.

Chapter 4

Photographing Cubans: Rethinking the Gendered Lens

*To collect photographs
is to collect the world*

—Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

*A photograph, whilst recording what has been seen,
always and by its nature refers to what is not seen*

—John Berger, “Understanding a Photograph”

*They do not represent themselves;
they are represented*

—Karl Marx, “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”

I. Introduction

In his groundbreaking 1978 book *Orientalism*, the late Edward Said discussed the patronizing representations of the Orient at the hands of the West, stressing that the boundaries that divided the globe into two geopolitical spheres were nothing more than a product of Western imagination, “a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power” (12). Though the notion of Orientalism is closely tied to the imperialist societies (particularly France, England, and the United States) that gave birth to this concept when looking at “the East” (particularly North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia), a similar condescending power, scholarship, and view is also present in Europe (and the United States) as it looks West (and South), towards its former American colonies. The island of Cuba for instance, despite geographically falling in the Western hemisphere from a European perspective, is nevertheless subject to the dominant gaze and physical presence of Western powers that to this day consider it

a foreign and exotic land. The aforementioned gaze is not only a symbol and metaphor of colonialist power; it is also physical, palpable through photographs that are not repertoires of the past, but very much artifacts of the present. By proposing that photographs were (and still are) a tool for the construction of a (neo)colonial culture (as explained by Nicholas Thomas' consequential study of anti-colonialist theory),¹¹¹ this fourth and final chapter studies how two Spanish female photographers—Cristina García Rodero and Isabel Muñoz—choose to photograph Cubans and share the country's history and culture with the world. By circling back to Said's theories on Orientalism and drawing from postcolonial and feminist theory of the twentieth century, this chapter analyzes how photography is used to impose a contemporary version of neocolonial power onto the Cuban people.

In *Camera Lucida* (1981) Roland Barthes wrote: "I observed that a photograph can be the object of three practices [...]: to do, to undergo, to look" (9). He then proceeded to label the photographer as the Operator; the public as the Spectator; and the subject that is being photographed as the Spectrum, for it becomes, as John Berger proposes, a "memento of the absent" (1980 293), a memory of a past reality. Thus, whenever looking at a photograph, viewers must necessarily consider that the photo is not simply the mechanical result of a camera button being pressed, or a chemical reaction, but a complex effect that entails agency, subjectivity, scope, and interpretation. Ariella Azoulay takes the notion of photography one step further and proposes that "photography is an apparatus of power that cannot be reduced to any of its components: a camera, a photographer, a photographed environment, object, person, or spectator" (85). Photography, thus, becomes an entity that encompasses "production,

¹¹¹ In *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government* (1994), Thomas denounces what he considers an over-reliance on theories that assert that colonialism was "justified through ideologies of racism and oppression" (2). Though not dismissing the mentioned notions of racism and oppression, Thomas believes that colonialism was also a cultural process, "energized through signs, metaphors, and narratives" (3).

distribution, exchange, and consumption of the photographic image” (Azoulay 86), which is born from, and continues to live through the presence of a professional photographic community, as Walter Benjamin stated in his 1931 essay, “Little History of Photography” (507). Demand invokes supply—particularly when the supply captures a reality that escapes viewers’ reference point—and the way photographs are interpreted strongly depends on “whom they photograph, where they show, and who will see them” (Solomon-Goudeau 1981 110).

The analysis conducted in this fourth and final chapter branches away from the sole study of literature and film to discuss the work of two artistic photographers from Spain: Cristina García Rodero (1949—) and Isabel Muñoz (1951—). The discussion herein pays particular attention to the photoshoots these women conducted in and on Cuba, thus remaining connected to the larger theme of this dissertation: how Spanish women writers and photographers of the last thirty years view and speak about Cuba and its people. Similarly to the writers and works that occupy the previous chapters, the two photographers who take center stage in this last section have received some attention from critics (for example, Fontanella, 1981, who mentions them in passing; Labanyi, 1995; Smith, 2000; López Mondejar, 2005; Parreño, 2005; Coixet and Mayrata, 2009; Aguirre, 2009), Spanish journalists, and the international photographic community, although no scholar to my knowledge has focused exclusively, or extensively, for that matter, on their work on Cuba. My analysis wishes to remedy this oblivion, to look at the work of the two aforementioned photographers from a neocolonial and feminist perspective, and to discuss if their production on Cuba expresses feelings of imperialist nostalgia.

García Rodero and Muñoz are certainly not the only Spanish photographers who have conducted work in Cuba. Pilar Aymerich has visited Cuba on several occasions and has captured the island’s culture and people in her photographs. Her work has been included in several

historical and literary publications on the Caribbean island, as she has worked in close contact with Spanish historian Isabel Segura (see Chapter 3) and has provided the images that accompany many of Segura's texts.¹¹² More recently (2012-2013) an exhibit on Cuba, entitled "La tierra más hermosa, Cuba," put on display the work of eleven Spanish photographers at Madrid's Casa de las Américas during the PhotoEspaña Festival of the same year.¹¹³ The project included names such as Enrique Meneses, Alberto García Alix, Cristina García Rodero, Isabel Muñoz, José María Mellado, Juan Manuel Díaz Burgos, and Toni Catany, among others, and exposed sixty-six photographs that dated back as far as the ominous year of 1959. The scope of the exhibition (similar to the scope of this dissertation) was to offer different interpretations and perceptions of the Cuban culture seen through the eyes of eleven photographers throughout six decades. Not surprisingly, however, the only two Spanish female photographers included in the group were precisely García Rodero and Muñoz, who were and still are among the most celebrated women photographers in Spain. Even less surprising is the wording and the images used by several Spanish newspapers to publicize the event. Concha Carrón, who writes for *La Vanguardia*, speaks of an "amor incondicional" towards Cuba, as well as of an "hechizo que la isla ha ejercido siempre entre los españoles en general, y sus fotógrafos en particular [...]" (online n.p.). The image chosen to accompany Carrón's words, however, tells another story, for it shows a close-up of a Cuban woman's tightly clothed derriere moving to the sound of music (Figure 14).¹¹⁴ Though the article fails to recognize that the photograph's author is Isabel Muñoz,

¹¹² See, for instance, Isabel Segura's *La Habana para mujeres* (2003) and *Viajeras a La Habana* (2008).

¹¹³ The exhibit was then moved to the Centro Andaluz de la Fotografía in Almería, Spain, where it remained open to the public from the 25th of July 2013, to the 15th of September 2013. For further information on the exhibit, see the Center's website, http://www.centroandaluzdelafotografia.es/esp/es_23_expo_ante_detalle.php?id=130.

¹¹⁴ This specific image will be analyzed in more detail in the third section of this chapter, where I discuss Isabel Muñoz and her work.

and that it is perhaps one of the most iconic photographs from the entire exhibit, it certainly stands in contrast with the notions of unconditional love that Carrón describes in the text that accompanies the images. Instead, the photograph (which is not void of problematic aspects, as we shall see further along) establishes a connection with the common clichés of sensuality, eroticism, and exoticism (three notions with which Cuba is oftentimes associated,) and steers away from the deeper interpretations of the island's history and culture.

In this chapter the study of photographs is closely connected to the idea of gender, for the analysis explores how women and their bodies are captured in García Roderó's and Muñoz's photographs and observes how (and if) the photographers' own gender affects their portrayal of other women. The discussion thus focuses on: 1) the idea of the "gendered lens," that is, on the notion that there is a woman behind the camera; and 2) on photographic female subjects. The study of photography in relation to women (be these women photographers or photographic subjects) has been studied at large by critics. Some have focused on the photographic representation of women as colonial / imperial citizens (Graham-Brown, 1988; Eileraas, 2003; Deb, 2016); others (Abel et al., 1997; Corinne, 2002; Solomon-Godeau, 2017; Raymond, 2017) have approached photography from a feminist perspective by analyzing the work of those female photographers who took a feminist standpoint, or who used their art as a way of describing and / or denouncing the condition of women in their own culture; and others still have centered their studies on female photographers: from their history (Sullivan 1990; Rosenblum, 1994, 2000, and 2010; Horwitz, 1996; Friedewald, 2014), to their contributions as war photographers (Labanyi, 2002; Zanger, 2005), to the overarching notion of the gendered lens, as these women photographically dialogue with the women they are capturing on film (Solomon and Spence, 1995; Schirmer, 2002; Wells, 2016).

Women have engaged in the art of photography since its inception, though earlier histories have failed to recognize this. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, during the feminist movement, that gender became worthy of focus. Scholars began framing women's work instead of marginalizing it, and women-only photographing agencies started developing as a way to support female photographers and tell stories from a woman's perspective. Gendered photography covered a number of issues that interested all people, but that had seldom been discussed by putting an emphasis on gender; class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and economic relations soon came into play. Instead of conceptualizing themselves as objects of the male gaze, as John Berger pointed out in *Ways of Seeing* (1972) (qtd. in Wells online n.p.), women became authors of the gaze, acquiring the power to see, interpret, and finally, produce. How do, then, gender and / or feminism fit into the photographic picture? Sarah Parsons argues that the little attention that is given to feminism in photography is quite striking, given that photographic representations are oftentimes believed to figure sexual differences and reproduce hierarchies of gender (xv). Photography critic Abigail Solomon-Goudeau, a strong supporter of feminism in art and politics, is nevertheless weary of the gradual diminishing of feminist approaches used to understand art production (including photography), which she attributes to the growing societal repudiation of feminism; a "nuisance," as Claire Pajaczkowska writes (5) when discussing how feminism is oftentimes perceived today. Though writing about women photographers and their exhibitions is an important step towards recognizing the work of women and their contributions, argues Solomon-Goudeau, this action cannot and must not be confused with feminism itself (2017 7). She writes:

A feminist orientation necessarily addresses the complex relations between the individual viewer and image, and the coding of photographic images (conscious

or not) through which the multiform components of individual and collective gender identities are produced, confirmed, or contested. (ibid.)

Thus, what transforms a photograph *about* women or *by* women into a feminist photo *on* women is the political implication that accompanies the work—oftentimes a social criticism of women’s supposed roles in society; or a “questioning of heretosexism,” to borrow David William Foster’s expression (3); or still, within the field of visual culture, an indispensable tool “for opening and disinterring the repressed and troubling questions of sexual difference that inflect the visual” (Pajaczkowska 4). Feminism, contrary to common belief, is separate from the subject’s gender, the photographer’s gender, or of said photographer’s previous work being labeled as feminist. This is the case for García Rodero and Muñoz: both photographers are women, both have been labeled as feminist for their work on women, yet curiously, when producing work on Cuba, their gaze grotesquely mutates into a voyeuristic gaze (oftentimes associated with the male gaze, as Laura Mulvey points out in her celebrated work), as it observes its photographic subjects from the outside and paints them with sexual and / or colonialist tones. This should come as no surprise, for the very notion of voyeurism entails a sexual stake, one that originates in Freud’s clinical theory of sexual pleasure derived from looking without being seen.¹¹⁵ The questions that beg to be answered, thus, are the following: What happens when one analyzes the photographic work of women from the global north who photograph women (and men) from the global south? Does their role as feminist professionals stand strong, or does their country’s history and their sense of national belonging take the upper hand?

While scholars and writers have studied the perception of non-Western cultures as exotic and primitive in art, literature, and travel narratives, little attention has been given to how

¹¹⁵ See Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905).

photographs express(ed) colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial interests and fetishizations,¹¹⁶ and even less attention has been devoted to the role that women from countries in the global north play(ed) in imperialist and colonialist photography. Through a close reading (or close viewing, if you will) of selected photographs from García Rodero's and Muñoz's Cuban repertoire, this final chapter proposes that the island and its people are, once again, fetishized with stereotypes and clichés that, far from representing the Cuban situation, wish to appeal to curious and unaware spectators in Spain and beyond. Among the primary questions that guide this chapter are: What portrayals of Cuba do García Rodero and Muñoz offer their public? Who is taking the photos? Who is looking at them? Who or what is being portrayed, and how? What do these photographs wish to convey to viewers? How can we interpret them?

In her 1981 article entitled “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography),” Martha Rosler proposed a criticism of traditional documentary practice: “Imperialism,” she wrote, “breeds an imperialist sensibility in all phases of cultural life,” with photography being the most imperialist medium of them all (321). This statement eerily resonates with my critical analysis of García Rodero's and Muñoz's selected work. In line with the literary texts and cultural productions studied throughout this dissertation, I propose that García Rodero's and Muñoz's photographs embrace the notion of imperial nostalgia that entices them to look at Cuba and Cubans with melancholic eyes, as treasured and anachronistic possessions of an unreachable past.

II. Cristina García Rodero in Baracoa, Cuba: Five Hundred Years Later

¹¹⁶ See, for instance, Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche, eds., *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* (1999); Sarah Graham Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in the Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950* (1988).

Cristina García Rodero is among Spain's most successful photographers, as is well demonstrated by her numerous national and international prizes (such as the "Book of the Year Award," which she won in 1989 at the Arles Festival of Photography for her book *España oculta*; the prestigious W. Eugene Smith Foundation Prize, won that same year; the Dr. Erich Salomon Prize in Cologne, Germany, in 1990; the World Press Photo Prize in 1993; the Premio Nacional de Fotografía in Spain in 1996; and the Medalla de Oro al Mérito en las Bellas Artes in 2005); her position as the fourth woman in Spain to be a part of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (Morales 2013 online n.p.); her feature in *Cuatro direcciones*, the official show of contemporary Spanish photography, curated for the 1992 anniversary,¹¹⁷ and in the *Open Spain / España Abierta* photography exhibit, organized by the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago; and finally her world-wide recognition as the only Spanish photographer (as of 2009) who is member of Magnum Photos (Castedo and Bendito online n.p.), the prestigious photographic agency established in 1947.

García Rodero is also the author of several photography books, such as *Transtempo* (2010), *María Lionza: la diosa de los ojos de agua* (2008), *Rituales en Haití* (2001), *Festivities and Rituals of Spain* (1992), and *España oculta* (1989), this last text being the book that catapulted her to international fame. Though she has conducted a large portion of her work in her native country, García Rodero has also traveled around Europe (Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania) and the rest of the world in search of the ideal locations to conduct her photoshoots—as she is particularly interested in local rituals and popular

¹¹⁷ As discussed in the manuscript's and chapter's introductions, the year 1992 holds an important meaning for Spain, as it represented the five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus' first voyage to the Americas, as well as the starting point of Spain's imperial glory. While the anniversary was met by many with jubilee, others expressed their concern and criticism towards said celebration, for it implicitly commemorated Spain's dark role in colonialism and the slave trade.

traditions. In the late 1990s García Rodero traveled to Haiti on several occasions to photographically immortalize the country's voodoo rituals, which she then reproduced in “a series of expressive portraits and moving scenes flanked by engaging documentary observations” (Magnum Photos online n.p.), and then exposed for the first time at the 2001 Venice Biennale. During the same period, she conducted trips to Mexico, Panama, and the United States, as well as Ethiopia. In 2006 she journeyed to Venezuela to capture fragments of the María Lionza rituals before traveling to India in 2007 to document the Holi Spring Festival and the Kumbha Mela Festival in a series of colorfully expressive photographs. Her more recent works include photoshoots in Brazil (2008 and 2017), Georgia (2008), and Armenia (2013). In an interview with Susana Moreno Pachón (2000) for the Spanish newspaper *El País*, García Rodero explains that her fascination with culture and traditions is due to the fact that “en las tradiciones y los rituales está recogida la historia de cada pueblo y las necesidades de las personas” (online n.p.). By delving into a culture's traditions, García Rodero hopes to capture a people's soul; by uniting elements of the past and of the present, she hopes to make that soul immortal.

Despite García Rodero's vast repertoire, in this chapter I am most interested in a photoshoot that she carried out in Baracoa, Cuba, in 2010, which to my knowledge has solely been published online, on Magnum Photo's website—though there has been talk of a forthcoming printed collection.¹¹⁸ The voyage to Cuba, sponsored by the *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional y Desarrollo* (AECID),¹¹⁹ was meant to commemorate and celebrate the five-hundred-year anniversary of the village of Baracoa, the first Spanish settlement in Cuba,

¹¹⁸ Selected photos from García Rodero's photoshoots in Cuba have been included in a PhotoBolsillo edition (2008), though no book solely on Cuba has been edited and published.

¹¹⁹ The AECID (Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development) is a Spanish entity whose main goal is to combat poverty and promote human development around the world. In its work, the AECID focuses on three specific elements: gender perspective, the respect for cultural diversity, and environmental quality. For further information, see the Agency's website: <http://www.aecid.es/EN/intro>.

founded by Diego Velázquez on August 15, 1511. Notwithstanding the journey's official goal, the first question that an inquisitive spectator might ask is: Who is celebrating the anniversary? The answer appears quite obvious. García Rodero, as a Spaniard, traveled to Cuba to photograph the first Spanish settlement five hundred years after the colonizers landed on the island, though the people living in Baracoa were not engaging in the same type of festivities, as the photographs clearly demonstrate. On the contrary, the photos that comprise the shoot show a different type of celebration, one based on local and national festivities and rituals, and that have little in common with Spain's ghostly presence on the island. Furthermore, one might wonder why an entity such as the AECID, which focuses on the elimination of poverty and on the promotion of human development around the world (see note 4) would sponsor García Rodero's visit to Cuba. Though to my knowledge no official explanation exists, there are several plausible elucidations that could justify the photographer's journey: 1) the Agency's interest in capturing the Baracoan reality five hundred years after Spain's first act of colonization, in an act of self-criticism considering the country's colonial past; 2) the AECID's wish to underline the precarity of everyday life in Baracoa as a result of Cuba's quest for independence; 3) the desire to use Cuba as an example of a country that is overcoming its economic obstacles to promote human development; or 4) the wish to show that extreme poverty is still lurking in the Caribbean island. Though all four explanations present flaws and loopholes, the involvement of the AECID in García Rodero's trip remains quite puzzling, especially when observing the photos that comprise the collection.

The photographic documentation of anniversaries, events, and everyday life is no novelty in global societies. Critics began noticing and discussing the importance of photographs in postmodern and capitalist societies as early as the 1970. Susan Sontag and several postmodern

critics believed photography to be an integral part of industrial capitalism, which feeds off of and depends on a constant production and consumption of images. Abigail Solomon-Goudeau accused documentary photography of committing a “double act of subjugation,” in which the victim was quashed by oppressive social forces and by the power of the image itself (1991 176). John Tagg brought the notion of power even further by stating that photography is “ultimately a function of the state” (122), which supports the ruling class’s system of ideological control. Keeping the social and political power of photography in mind, spectators must look at García Rodero’s photoshoot through the lens of one-sidedness and even prejudice, reminding themselves that the project was funded by a Spanish agency and taken by a Spanish woman who chose to travel to Baracoa during a specific historical moment to commemorate a specific historical event from a European perspective. Despite the photos’ undeniable artistic vein, and the attention that García Rodero gives to cultural details and to everyday life in Baracoa, I argue that each photograph is charged with socially and culturally constructed clichés that are meant to appeal to the curious Western spectator by poking at their desire for exoticness. García Rodero’s photoshoot further propels an erroneous depiction of Cuba, as it promotes it solely as a land of Afro-Cuban rituals and traditions that maintains nuances of a “primitivism” that is both enticing and repelling to the modern Western spectator.

García Rodero’s 2010 voyage to Cuba (which was split in two journeys—the first one between May 15 and June 1, and the second during two weeks in November) was not her first experience on the island. She had already travelled to the Caribbean country on several occasions, dating back as early as 1997, when Pope John Paul II travelled there after decades of physical and ideological distance. As Mauricio Vicent writes in his article, “lo que en principio fue una indagación sobre la religiosidad popular cubana acabó por convertirse en una obsesión”

(online n.p.) that brought García Rodero back to Cuba time and time again to cover important social, political and cultural moments for the island and its people: the ceremony for the burial of Che Guevara's remains in Santa Clara thirty years after his death in Bolivia (1997); the peregrination on San Lazarus (1998); the return of the remains of the famous popular and political figure Tania *la guerrillera* (1998); and the fortieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution (1999).¹²⁰ According to critics, these first trips to Cuba produced some of García Rodero's most



symbolically charged photographs of the island and its people—enhanced by the choice of printing the photographs in black and white, which gave them an aura of timelessness, distance, and austerity. García Rodero has commented on her predilection for black and white photographs, explaining that “al no tener la sensualidad del color, te ayuda más a que la fotografía o comunique o sea buena, o no tenga ningún otro elemento que la pueda justificar” (Moreno Pachón online n.p.). Viewers can thus concentrate on the photo itself, on the subjects or objects being

photographed, rather than getting lost in a sea of colors that might distort the photograph's message. Some of the most celebrated photos from García Rodero's first trips to the island show young Cubans who are either partaking in national celebrations, or who are meant to symbolically represent the many festivities and events that took place in Cuba during the last

¹²⁰ For additional information on the popular and charismatic figure of Tania *la guerrillera*, see Jennifer Ruth Hosek's book, *Sun, Sex, and Socialism. Cuba in the German Imaginary* (2012).

years of the 1990s. A particular photo from 1999, entitled “El pionero” (“The Pioneer”) (Figure 9), shows a young Cuban male dressed in uniform, vehemently participating in what appears to be a procession, as other subjects dressed in the same attire walk behind him, one of them holding a (presumably Cuban) flag. The young Cuban subject is pictured while chanting,

Figure 9. © Cristina García Rodero /
Magnum Photos

singing or yelling, though his expression is serious.
His eyes are open, as he looks straight ahead, but

not at the camera. He is not seeking the attention or approval of the observer (which includes the photographer) and is more interested in his official duty. His tie and shirt are not perfectly in place, which informs viewers that the photo was taken as the subject walked or marched down the street; furthermore, it implies that the photo was likely un-staged (inasmuch as a photograph can be neutral in every way)—all elements that support the spontaneity and vehemence conveyed through the final product. Like all photos from the collection, this photograph is in black and white, which, as García Rodero explains, serves as a way to judge the true quality of a photograph, but also as a way to create a temporal veil of separation between the photo itself and the viewer, or, as the photographer herself says, because the use of a two-dimensional color “te separa tanto de la realidad que te lleva a otra dimensión, crea un misterio” (Alcocer Teston online n.p).

Though the photo does not offer much information regarding the exact time or place of the event, the year the photograph was taken (1999) gives spectators an important hint—for this year marked the forty-year anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Viewers can thus assume that the young man photographed by García Rodero is a member of a Cuban organization who is participating, along with the majority of the Cuban people, in the festivities arranged for the year’s celebrations. The title of the photo, however, is the detail that offers viewers the majority

of information. Though the word “pioneer” initially resonates with acts of colonialism or (scientific) advancement, in the Soviet Union and other communist countries the term refers / referred to a member of a movement for children under the age of sixteen, whose goal was to share and instill communist ideals among youngsters. It also creates a schism between a dark past and a new social order, of which youth are the true pioneers. In Cuba, the movement is called *Organización Pioneros José Martí* (OPJM), their motto being “Pioneros por el comunismo, seremos como el Che”—which echoes the revolutionary actions of Ernesto “Che” Guevara, as well as his contributions in the Cuban Revolution.¹²¹ Though Cuba is not a communist country per-se, it was closely connected to the Soviet Union prior to the Special Period (see Chapter 3), and therefore shares many a similarity with the historic communist bloc.

Alongside cultural traditions and rituals, an ever-present protagonist in García Rodero’s work are women, as seen in the countless exhibits, books, catalogues, and online publications. A particular photography exhibit, *Cristina García Rodero: Combatiendo la nada* (2013) (*Combating Nothingness*), reveals photographs of women that García Rodero shot in different countries (Albania, Cuba, Georgia, Haiti) and during various stages of life—her aim being that of capturing their strength and humanity during delicate life moments: from happiness to sadness, from love to solitude (Torres 9).¹²² It is ultimately a collection of photographs that speak about women as seen through the eyes of another woman, and that looks at all women with the same glance, regardless of their age, nationality, and social status. As José María Díaz-Maroto writes in the Prologue to the exhibit’s catalogue, García Rodero’s photography “homenajea a la

¹²¹ For additional information on this organization, see Francisco Almagro Domínguez’s article, “Pioneros por Cuba, seremos como Martí” (2016).

¹²² A digital version of the exposition’s catalogue can be viewed here: https://issuu.com/centrodeartealcobendas/docs/catalogo_cristina_garc_a_rodero?viewMode=doublePage.

mujer con mayúsculas” (14), as women become the undiscussed protagonists of the photographs. Her feminist outlook in said collection is undeniable, as the women are free of patriarchal constraints and are celebrated not for their social role, their bodies, or their compliance to heteronormativity, but simply for being women.

García Rodero’s importance as a woman photographing other women echoes the words pronounced by Catalan author and critic Monserrat Roig, who wrote extensively on the marginalized condition of the female gender, and on the development of what she calls a *mirada tuerta* (a crooked look). In one of her most celebrated works, *Dime que me quieres aunque sea mentira. Sobre el placer solitario de escribir y el vicio compartido de leer* (1991), Roig writes:

Eso significa que en un ojo llevamos un parche, y eso nos permite seguir mirando hacia adentro, escuchar nuestra voz [...]; mientras que el otro ojo mira hacia fuera, vuela libre, activamente, sin gafas oscuras, ni cámaras, ni binóculos. El ojo que mira hacia fuera se ha escapado del tedioso, redundante tema de la mujer. El otro, pasa cuentas. No podemos ocultar que ‘todavía’ llevamos un parche. (110)

Though García Rodero’s photographs were taken roughly ten years after Roig put her thoughts on paper, the imagery created by the Spanish author still applies to García Rodero’s photographic product: with one eye, she looks to the outside, searching for the “truth” that she wishes to capture on camera; with the other, she looks to the inside, towards her womanly self to capture the emotions and feelings of her photographic subjects. However, we must also consider a third eye, the one that looks through the camera to create the perfect photograph that blends truth and emotion. In an interview with Moreno Pachón, García Rodero explains why she chose to pursue photography instead of painting: “En fotografía soy autodidacta, pero creo que me atrajo la fuerza que tiene la fotografía para comunicarte con lo que tienes delante, para

aprenderlo, saborearlo y luego transmitirlo a los demás” (online n.p.). The third eye is what allows García Rodero to look through the camera lens to photographically engrave the moment she wishes to immortalize. This gaze, however, does not solely depend on facts (the eye that looks towards the outside) and personal emotions (the eye that looks towards the inside,) but also (and more importantly) on the idea that the photograph is being created for a third person: the observer. The third, or photographic eye, if you will, thus unites objectivity, interpretation, and the artistic capability of creating a photograph that will speak to the public, while the camera functions as an omnipresent object interposed between the operator and the spectrum, one that will always introduce a sense of foreignness. This third gaze that looks through the camera towards the public is the most problematic one, the one that needs to be re-thought, as the chapter’s title suggests.

The most iconic photograph of the *Combatiendo la nada* exhibit (used as the cover of the exposition catalogue) is “Caminos de Lluvia. El Rincón, Cuba” (Figure 10), which forms part of another photographic series entitled *Caminos de lluvia (Walks of Rain)*, a project that García Rodero began during her first visit to Cuba 1997 and that spanned across the following years. This black and white photograph shows a young Cuban girl as she walks down a long, empty road, towards an unknown future. She gently holds her hands behind her back with her head tilted to one side, a detail that informs the public that the girl is not frightened nor in a situation of immediate danger. Rather, she is caught in a moment of pensiveness, as she walks slowly down the street. Since viewers cannot see her face, they are unaware of her emotions—both elements that, with the lack of color and the presence of rain, create a mysterious aura around the girl’s life. The rain, which contains a plethora of symbolic meanings (an ominous or worrisome moment, rebirth, the cleansing of one’s trespasses, and the aforementioned element of mystery,

to mention just a few) could be interpreted, here, as the uncertainty of whether or not the sun will shine again in the life of the youth, which, in turn, leaves spectators wondering what perils might be awaiting along the way. The aspect of uncertainty, however, is obstructed by the long, straight road that unravels in the distance, for although neither the public, nor the girl, see where the road ends, its unswerving and undeviating nature wards off the presence of unseen dangers. As the Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson explains, García Rodero's photography does not only capture socio-cultural mores and traditions, but also documents voyages of personal growth, where uncertainty and risk are a decisive part of the process (online n.p.).

The analysis of photos that García Rodero took in Cuba between the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s was used to describe the photographer's style and study some of her previous

“Cuban” work. The focus of the following section (and of this chapter), however, lays on the photographs that she took in Baracoa, Cuba, in 2010, for they are the ones that are most closely tied to and inspired by Spain’s colonial past, and the ones that more vehemently break away from her feminist work. The images that comprise the photoshoot combine established techniques and new experiments. The most striking difference between the 2010 photos and



Figure 10. © Fundación María Cristina Masaveu Peterson.

those shot during the photographer’s previous visits to Cuba is the presence of color. García Rodero abandons the black and white spectrum to embrace a rainbow of vivid chromes that speckle a number of photos, thus creating a stronger connection between the photograph and its public. Color gives the photograph a modern touch that is clearly absent from those in black and white. At the same time, however, the use of color for a number of specific photos that comprise the shoot is almost oxymoronic, for the collection is meant to celebrate the five-hundred-year anniversary of the town of Baracoa—an event that is chronologically distant from the modern Spanish imaginary. It is possible, however, that color was used precisely to create a more

palpable connection between the years 1510 and 2010, for although the colonization of Cuba is a historical event belonging to Spain's past, the celebration of such feat was meant to be commemorated in the present. Though unclear if García Rodero willingly introduced color, or if the AECID requested the change, the result is quite different from her previous black and white photographs, for color adds folkloric touches to photos that are specifically focused on culture and traditions.

The Baracoa photos immortalize Cubans of different ages, different genders, and in various poses—all elements that contribute to the scope of García Rodero's visit to the island: commemorating the customs of the first Spanish settlement in Cuba on the eve of the town's five-hundred-year anniversary. Nevertheless, this detail is what poses a hiccup in the project, for the local conventions and festivities have little to do with the Spanish presence on the island, particularly when looking at the photographs that García Rodero presents to her spectators. She chooses to capture her subjects either engaging in local festivities (Figure 13),¹²³ or during fragments of everyday life, such as women in a hair salon,¹²⁴ or mothers breastfeeding their children.¹²⁵ What is absent from every photograph is the ghostly presence of Spain (with the exception of two photos that reference Catholicism on the island: one that shows children engaging in catechism, and another that captures a moment from the Sunday cult of Christ's soldiers of the Gedeonista Church in Guandao), a detail that makes spectators further question García Rodero's mission in Baracoa. What is striking, however, is that despite Spain's absence,

¹²³ There are several photographs that capture local celebrations. In addition to Figure 14, see, for example, the photographs titled "Ramona Labarino during a spiritual ritual the night before Santa Barbara's day," and "A worshiper during the initiation ritual of Palo-Monte rule," all found on Magnum Photos' website.

¹²⁴ On Magnum Photos' website, this photograph is titled "Hairdressing salon."

¹²⁵ On Magnum Photos' website, this photograph is titled "Tatiana Matos and Elizabeth Perez with their children Maikol and Yamaira, talking about the daily life."

the image that many photographs share is that of an archaic, underdeveloped society, whose practices have slightly evolved since colonial times—or perhaps even regressed after Spain’s expulsion from the island in 1898. The three figures analyzed in the following pages are an example of such sentiments.

Figure 11, “Fishmonger,” shows a man posing with a large fish in his right hand—most likely the catch of the day—wearing worn-out clothes, his skin sunburnt after long hours spent outside, his hands dirty from manual labor, his hair and beard graying with age. The man’s eyes look straight at the camera, as he is willing to share this moment with the photographer and the invisible public. According to photography critic Miguel Von Hafe the gaze of many of García Rodero’s subjects is “immune to the circumstances of being portrayed, [and] essentially shares a moment with a substrate of innocence and veracity that escapes any kind of



commercialism” (20). The light blue (though dirty) background reminds observers of the ocean, which ties into the theme of the picture and creates a connection with Cuba’s insularity. The precarity of the fishmonger’s attire and location also remind viewers of the economic hardship that this man (like many others) face on a daily basis, as they are forced to hunt for their meals. The aspect of “primitiveness” is further supported by the photographer’s reliance on traditional gender roles: men are the hunters (as in the case of Figure 11), who proudly display their prey,

Figure 11. © Cristina García Rodero / Magnum Photos

take care of the home (as we shall see in figure 13).

Figure 12, “Dancer from the Afro-Cuban musical group, Omi II, who represents Oshun, one of the Yoruba deities,”¹²⁶ presents some similarities to Figure 12. Again, observers are



confronted with a nameless Cuban subject who glances directly ahead. In this case, the woman’s body is turned to the right, though her gaze is unbroken—slightly confrontational and intriguingly seductive. Her expression is serious and proud, two characteristics that stand in contrast with the vivacity of her clothing and headgear. Her long, satin dress is gold with green and blue shapes scattered throughout; her headwear, made of the same material and following the dress’s pattern, resembles a traditional crown with pointed edges. Despite not

knowing the woman’s name, the caption offered on Magnum Photos’ website informs viewers

Figure 12. © Cristina García Rodero /
tl | Magnum Photos

she is a member of a musical group dressed as

Oshún. Oshún (also known as Ochún) is the

Orisha¹²⁷ of love, while in nature she rules over freshwater lakes, rivers, and streams; she has

also been associated with St. Catherine, Our Lady of Caridad del Cobre, Mother of Charity, and

¹²⁶ Yoruba is a people and a language spoken in West Africa. Lucumi, the non-vernacular remains of Yoruba, is used as the liturgical language of Santería in the Caribbean.

her feast day is celebrated on September 8. The color of her dress follows tradition, for it is said that she wears a yellow satin dress tied closely around her waist; lives in a yellow tureen made of porcelain and filled with river water; wears a sacred necklace (called *eleke*) made of five yellow beads alternating with five amber-colored beads; and is especially fond of sunflowers, honey, yellow rice, and gold. Oshún embodies passion and fertility and symbolizes grace and feminine sensuality, all qualities that the photographic subject tries to convey by wearing traditional clothing and by posing in a graceful, yet subtly sensual, manner—as she looks directly at the viewers and tickles their (sexual) fantasies.

In their introduction to *Activating the Past: History and Memory in the Black Atlantic World* (2010) Andrew Apter and Lauren Derby speak of the dialectics of memory and counter-memory in the Black Atlantic world, seen through several perspectives “on a fetishized past that is congealed in ritual objects, reconstructed on altars, and embodied by practitioners and devotees” (xviii), whose intent is to maintain their traditions and past alive. What role, then, does García Roderó’s photograph play in the reconstruction of a memory that is not hers? The notions of “acculturation” and “cultural appropriation” could be loosely applied in this case: though García Roderó, member of a dominant culture, is not physically appropriating or adopting elements of a minority culture, she is photographically capturing them and exposing them for the world to see. The photographer and the public become the quintessential voyeurs, as they observe a subject who, despite her steady look, is not physically looking back at them. The fetishizing interest in the past that Apter and Derby write about (and which they attribute to practitioners and devotees), becomes, in photos such as Figure 12, the fetishization of someone else’s past and

¹²⁷ Orishas are the gods of the Santería religion, with whom individuals interact on a regular basis. By doing so, once the gods descend and possess one of the ritual participants, that person is regarded as an orisha.

culture—namely, the white dominant European culture that devours its former colonies’ past and present.

Although capturing different moments of life in Baracoa, Figures 11 and 12 share details that are worth discussing. To begin, both photos focus on single subjects who are carefully posing: their bodies turned to one side, their eyes looking straight ahead. Unlike Figure 9, which captured a natural and un-staged moment, the two images from García Rodero’s trip to Baracoa show an opposite reality. The entire stage is set by the photographer: the background, the attire, the subjects’ position, and even the “props,” such as the dangling fish from Figure 11 and the woman’s clothing from Figure 12. The subjects’ gaze, however, is the detail that stands out in the photographs. The man and the woman look fixedly at the person or object in front of them—and, consequently, look directly at the viewer, as well. Their gaze is nevertheless misleading: they can only give the impression to be looking at the observer, for the public was not physically present during the shoot. Von Hafe further discusses the gaze that García Rodero’s photographic subjects bestow upon the viewers, which temporarily inverts the dichotomy observer / observed. He then goes on to write: “Don’t forget, the gaze is directed at a camera; it is directed at a photographer, or in other words, at something unknown, at the tension of the unfamiliar. This is why it is so sincere” (20).

The innocence, veracity, and simplicity that Von Hafe writes about, chillingly resonate with Rousseaus’s notion of the good savage and with colonialist thought as a whole, which believed colonial subjects to be meek, docile, and easily dominatable by the virile force of the colonizer. It also mirrors (metaphorically and literally) the numerous colonialist photographs taken throughout the decades, which captured colonial subjects from a frontal or side perspective in order to offer the best possible view to curious Western spectators. These subjects were both

looking at, and being looked at by a foreign eye, though these gazes were charged with a different power: on the one hand, the colonial subjects being photographed demonstrated a sense of wonder—not knowing who would look at the final product; on the other hand, the Western public observed the photographs with inquisitiveness and a sense of superiority, captured by the portrayed exoticness of the colonial subjects, yet confident in their dominating status. In the case of “The fishmonger,” the man is found at an additional disadvantage: upon careful examination, his left eye appears glossier than the other, possibly symbolizing a form of partial blindness. This, in turn, physically means that the man is looking at the camera (and beyond) with one eye only, but is, in turn, being observed by the photographer’s two eyes, the camera’s eye, and the thousands of eyes belonging to the public.

The third photograph discussed from García Rodero’s journey to Baracoa is Figure 14, “María Jiménez washing her clothes in the mouth of the River Toa.” As the title suggests, this photo zooms in on a woman washing her clothes in a river, an unusual sight for any modern-day spectator used to the comfort of washing machines and clean, running water. She is pictured alone, as she cleans a white garment from the literal and symbolic dirt of everyday life, new ripples forming in the water and surrounding her body, engulfing her further and further into an eternal wavelet. In the background, a tropical jungle, natural, uninhabited, primitive, symbolically in line with the woman’s anachronistic actions. In the words of Paul Julian Smith, who has commented on García Rodero’s work, “past and present overlap with festivity and everyday life” (Smith 51), and, in this specific case, create a modern photograph of an old-fashioned action. This was, according to Walter Benjamin, one of the qualities of photography: the ability to blend past, present, and future to create a “document of history and possibility” (Linfield 58). Unlike Figures 11 and 12, which were taken in an enclosed (and visibly staged)

environment, Figure 13 takes its public outdoors, to a natural environment that is unfamiliar to the European eye. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson explain that the visualization of place was an important tool in the development of colonialist ideology (4), for it needed to appear as mildly exotic or foreign, and aesthetically pleasing for the photographer and the intended public. In figure 13, García Rodero offers us precisely that. A visually pleasing photograph of a woman washing her clothes in a river in a foreign location. Circling back to the notion of traditional gender roles that García Rodero adopted in figure 11, figure 13 shows a woman engaging in a task that has been traditionally considered feminine: the washing of the clothes, and, on a larger level, the overall care of the household. Although Figure 13 presents visible differences with



Figure 13. © Cristina García Rodero /Magnum Photos

Figures 11 and 12, it does, in fact, share a common element with them: all three photographic subjects can be labeled as “types,” which, according to French anthropologist Paul Topinard (1885), is “the average of characters which a human race supposed to be pure presents” (qtd. in

Stocking 58).¹²⁸ These men and women captured in colonial photography were considered “typical” examples of their culture either in their physical appearance or occupation. García Rodero’s photographs offer modern-day viewers a similar product: men and women from Baracoa staged in folkloric clothing and engaging in what a Western observer and photographer might consider “typical” activities: washing clothes in a river, participating in Afro-Cuban rituals, and fishing for their meals.

The three figures analyzed in this section, as well as the other figures from her Baracoa journey are also problematic from a gender perspective, as they lose trace of the feminist look present in García Rodero’s earlier work, and comply, instead, with heteronormative and gender-binding notions. The men and especially the women in the photographs engage in paradigmatic male / female activities, such as fishing (a man’s duty to provide for his family), washing clothes (an activity in the domestic sphere), dressing up and posing in front of an audience, or getting an up-do in a hair salon (“women as accomplished decorative beings”, as Foster explains [3]), and women breastfeeding their children (women’s importance as child bearers and reproducers in patriarchal societies). The political and social element that is at the base of feminism is absent from García Rodero’s photos in Baracoa; the public is left with images that stereotypically embrace those representations and designations that feminism and other gender-equality movements have fought to dismantle. It overlooks, for example, the notions of performance and performativity that many feminists drew from John L. Austin’s theory on language and from Michele Foucault’s theories on social vision and social control, which negates the idea of gender as a static structure that cannot be molded, negated, or changed. It also dismisses Judith Butler’s

¹²⁸ Also see Elizabeth Edwards, “‘Photographic Types’: The Pursuit of Method” (1990), and Ayshe Erdogdu, “Picturing Alterity: Representational Strategies in Victorian Type Photographs of Ottoman Men” (2002).

argument that gender is socially constructed through speech acts and non-verbal communication (i.e. performativity), which is used precisely to create and maintain identities.¹²⁹

Considered one of Spain's top photographers, Cristina García Rodero's work has been analyzed and discussed by a number of critics (both Spanish and foreign). Noemi Méndez, for example, believes that García Rodero's work "nos sumerge en un recorrido por los recuerdos y nos traslada con sus fotografías a un pasado en apariencia lejano cargado de significados y sentimientos contradictorios" (120), while Jo Labanyi considers her work to be the "anachronistic survival in contemporary Spain of cultural relics from the past" (1995 11). However, if in Spain García Rodero's mission was to capture and preserve her country's "folkloric inheritance," which had "deteriorated or even disappeared altogether" (qtd. in *Old World, New World* 6), in Cuba her interest in folkloric and exotic details becomes problematic for several reasons. Firstly, because as an outsider, her view of Cuba and its people is inevitably tainted by prejudice and / or preconceptions, which necessarily impact her photographs. Secondly, because of the spectrum itself (to borrow a Barthian term,) which in Cuba is quite different from that photographed in Spain. While traveling through her home country to capture the nuances and the significance of Christian and pagan ceremonies, García Rodero focuses on a specific, enclosed reality—that of rituals and festivals. Though her photography has been labeled as photojournalism, documentary, and post-modern,¹³⁰ spectators must keep in mind that García Rodero's photographs of Spain's rituals and traditions portray an extremely specific

¹²⁹ See John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962); Michele Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (1978); and Judith Butler, *Gender Troubles: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*" (1990).

¹³⁰ Critic Paul Julian Smith in *The Moderns. Time, Space, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Spanish Culture* classifies García Rodero's photography as postmodern "in its appeal to an unsettling of subjectivity and a disruption of linear time that are not simply dissolutive" (52), while Lee Fontanella pushes the limits of documentary photography, describing García Rodero's work as having "reference to the concrete, but with implications of a tale beyond the photograph that is moral, ethical, ethnic, and religious" (1992 32).

aspect of Spanish life and traditions, one that might be deemed unfamiliar even by some urban Spaniards who are detached from regional folklore. In the Introduction to *Colonialist Photography*, Hight and Sampson warn about the perils of interpreting documentary photography as a neutral form of art, as the photographer hides outside the picture and the photograph begins its quest for the truth. To quote the aforementioned critics, “[t]he very notion of ‘documentary photography’ as an ideal balance of aesthetic representation and the insightful comprehension of a given situation has come under critical scrutiny for its contribution to a biased discourse of ‘official’ knowledge.” (15) This applies, particularly, to García Rodero’s representations (and to Muñoz’s, as well, as we shall see) of foreign people and cultures, as Western spectators accept as valid the reality that is shown in their photographs.

As she travels to Baracoa, however, García Rodero’s spectrum broadens for she is no longer capturing solely rituals and traditions, but also moments of unartistic everyday life that are far removed from festivities and folkloric events. Thus, the contradictions and problematic aspects of her Baracoa photoshoot: while maintaining, as Lee Fontanella writes, a “cultural anthropological interest” (1995 181) for life in Cuba on the eve of Baracoa’s foundational anniversary, García Rodero transforms all of her spectra into folkloric and exotic photographic subjects that can be admired, studied, and scrutinized by an implacable and curious Western gaze. Spectators can no longer distinguish between a Cuban engaging in a folkloric or ceremonial ritual, and a Cuban engaging in what, for them, is an everyday event, such as breastfeeding. As a consequence, the woman washing her clothes in the river, and the fishmonger showing off his catch are placed on the same exotic level as the Afro-Cuban dancer dressed as Oshun, or as the men and women partaking in spiritual rituals. The entire Baracoa population, in short, becomes an element of awe and interest for the untrained, but curious, (neocolonial) Western eye.

III. Isabel Muñoz's *Danza cubana* and *Ballet nacional de Cuba*

Spanish photographer Isabel Muñoz (1951—), winner of the 2016 Premio Nacional de Fotografía, has also created work on Cuba. Similar to García Rodero, Muñoz's accomplishments have been celebrated and recognized by the numerous national and international prizes she has received over the years. Among the most important ones are the aforementioned Spanish National Prize for Photography (2016); the PhotoEspaña Prize and the Medalla al Mérito de las Bellas Artes in 2009; and the Word Press Photo Prize in 1992 (for the category "Art and Entertainment") and again in 2004 (for the category "Portraits"). The many exhibitions she has organized around the world are testimony to her international fame—United States, Mexico, France, and Sweden, among other locations. Portions of her work have been published in numerous books, photographic collections, and exposition catalogues. Some of the most famous titles are *Tango* (1990), *Isabel Muñoz. Fotografías* (1993), *Flamenco* (1993), *Isabel Muñoz en Jambes* (1994), *Tauromachies* (1995), *Isabel Muñoz* (2000), *Isabel Muñoz – Lucha turca* (2004), *Isabel Muñoz – Surma People* (2004), *Los cuerpos como territorio* (2007), *Isabel Muñoz* (2007), *La sublime utilidad de lo inútil* (2007), *Maras* (2010), and *Isabel Muñoz: obras maestras* (2010). The corpus of her photographic production is also made available to viewers, critics, and aficionados on her personal website: www.isabelmunoz.es.

Notwithstanding her national and international accolades, this chapter focuses on two photographic series on Cuba: *Danza cubana* (*Cuban Dance*) from 1995, and *Ballet nacional de Cuba* (*Cuban National Ballet*) from 2001, where Muñoz unites her passion for photography and dance, closing in on the oftentimes unnoticed, yet fundamental details that comprise the many forms of Cuban dance rhythm—from *danzón* to *son*, from the *danza Yoruba* to classical ballet.

Muñoz's focus on dance stems from the close relationship that this form of artistic movement holds with a people's culture, as she explains to Yolanda Montero in an interview with *El País*: "Me gusta mucho [la danza] porque a través de ella hablamos de nosotros y de nuestra cultura. Nuestro cuerpo y nuestra forma de movernos habla de nosotros" (online n.p.). As in García Rodero's case, however, this section will also analyze the problematics that arise through Muñoz's photographs. Once again, what is presented to viewers does not depict a Cuban reality per se, but rather the perceived reality that the Western public would expect to see, as stereotypical representations of gender and sexuality find their way into her work.

Muñoz's predilection for the human body is evident in a number of photographic series that she carried out around the world: Cuba, Turkey, Ethiopia, El Salvador, and Burkina Faso, among others. Muñoz's inclination to capture the purity of the body (evident in her predilection to photograph nudes, as she explains in an interview with Morales in 2016) is also captured by the attention that she gives to detail—for instance, how the subject's skin appears in the photograph. In order to photographically reproduce the subjects' skin texture in a way that is both accurate and artistic, Muñoz engages with platinotypes, a photographic monochromatic printing process involving platinum (or palladium, in some cases) that forgoes the use of gelatin and albumen, commonly found in the silver print process. Though creating platinotypes is an arduous and time-consuming labor—for it is meticulously conducted by hand—, this print process has become Muñoz's photographic signature throughout the years, and the results she has achieved are nothing short from admirable (*Moove Magazine* online n.p.).

Despite the artistry behind each photograph, however, I propose that numerous shots from *Danza cubana* and *Ballet nacional de Cuba* lack the individuality and individual recognition that Muñoz expects to portray. Most photographs are headless shots that focus on the

physicality of the body. Muñoz believes that the emotions conveyed through the eyes might offer too much information to the observer; thus, she eliminates facial expressions in order to leave enough unanswered questions for the spectators' imagination to run free (Morales 2016 online n.p.). The predilection for the (nude) human body, however, also shows traces of a latent (and perhaps unaware) colonialist gaze, as it was not uncommon for colonialist photography to capture its non-European subjects "partially or totally unclothed against a plain or calibrated backdrop to create a profile, frontal, or posterior view" (Hight and Sampson 3). Though it would be excessive and anachronistic to speak of colonialist photography or colonialist feelings in Muñoz's case, her photographs demonstrate that Spain's colonialist and imperialist past has not been fully eradicated from its society. In an interview for *El País*, Muñoz explains: "La fotografía es mi vida. Me gusta contar historias, hablar de la dignidad del ser humano, de los sentimientos. A través de mis imágenes intento sacar, hasta de los momentos más duros y oscuros, la parte positiva. Y muchas veces utilizo el cuerpo como pretexto para contar esas cosas que me emocionan y que me gusta compartir" (qtd. in Montero online n.p.). Though one cannot question Muñoz's artistic and photographic abilities, nor her personal and professional intentions behind each photograph, spectators and critics are entitled to observe if her purpose is in fact in line with the final photographic product. My questions, thus, are: Can one speak of individuality in an artistic photograph if the subject's face is completely absent? Does the subject's body not become just *a* body, when there is no facial expression or recognition to accompany it? What role do race, ethnicity, and gender play in the movements and dance genres seen in the photos? And finally, how to these questions fit into the Spain-Cuba relationship?

Numerous are the theorists who have studied the idea of nation-as-body (for example, Yuval-Davis, 1997; Nelson, 1999; and, partly, Daigle, 2015), an idea that was discussed in

Chapter 3, and that resurfaces here, in Muñoz's photos. As spectators observe Muñoz's production, one must juxtapose the ideas of body and nation given the photographer's detailed interest in the human form. The headless figures present in Muñoz's work come to embody the island of Cuba as a whole, and spectators must come to terms with the stereotypical association of skin color, gender, ethnic background, and sensual behavior that has haunted the Cuban people for centuries. The body, in short, becomes a palimpsest upon which meanings can be created and distorted in accordance to the occasion, and Cuba itself becomes an empty shell whose significance is found not in its history, culture, and politics, but in the acceptance that these photographs receive from distant and prejudicial foreign eyes.

The exotic and timeless aura that the photos convey is further stressed by their lack of color. As in the case of García Rodero, Muñoz predilects the black and white spectrum because of the associations that normally accompany it: ambiguity, a-temporality, timelessness. Muñoz clarifies that she chooses black and white because of "esa distancia que impone el blanco y negro, que es mucho más onírico" and because "el color es demasiado real" (Vellón online n.p.). However, Muñoz does not completely disregard the power of color, for she believes that some stories must be told using a wider chromatic sphere, as she informs Morales in a 2011 interview. The choice of black and white, then, creates a metaphorical and chronological barrier for spectators, who would be unaware of when and where the photos were taken were it not for the taglines that accompany them. This, in turn, creates an even greater distance between the Barthian notion of Spectator and Spectra, as the former is observing something or someone that could be far removed in both time and space. Aside from her photographs on bodies and dance, Muñoz is also known for engaging with social themes that are as compelling as they are critical—such as the photoshoot she conducted on *La bestia*, the train that crosses Mexico from

South to North and whose belly carries thousands of people from Central America and Southern Mexico who wish to reach the United States' border; or her recent interest in endangered animals and their suffering; or her 2006 series on human trafficking and slavery; or her portraits of members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang in El Salvador in 2006. However, when considering the color of the photos (or lack thereof), what type of connection (if any), is being created between the person who observes and the person who is being observed? Is the observer able to fully engage with the subject before him, given the ambiguity and oneiric-like aura that Muñoz wishes to convey through her photographs? Ultimately, the color choice hinders a deep connection between the observer and the photo, or at least a connection that is deeper than a celebration of the photo as a work of art.

In the series *Danza Cubana* and *Ballet nacional de Cuba* viewers are presented with photographs that zoom in on the moves that compose different types of Cuban dances. As in numerous other series, Muñoz focuses mostly on the details: hands, arms, feet, hips, and the overall feeling of sensuality, as exemplified by her most celebrated photo from the series (Figure 14). However, because many of the shots are both headless and focused on one particularity of the human body, they attribute a deep sense of anonymity to their photographic subjects. Observers are unaware of who is being photographed, and most photos lack a tagline to

compensate for facial absence. And while such silence does hinder any type of prejudice and bias



Figure 14. © Isabel Muñoz

(based on facial expressions and emotions) on the observers' part, it also hides the identity of those who are being photographed. The attention that Muñoz gives to dance and to the (female) body as part of this art is also worth discussing, for it relies on problematic ideas that have been passed on throughout the decades. Margaret Duffy and Erin Mackie¹³¹ have studied the role that the female body plays in fashion photography and advertisement, a field that Foster describes as

¹³¹ See Duffy, "Body in Evidence: Studying Women and Advertisement" (1994); and Mackie, "Fashion" (1997).

“sexual in nature, in that it calculatedly appeals to known, recognized, accepted markers of sexual identity, sexuality, and eroticism” (20). Dance and bodily movements in general could undergo a similar interpretation, in that the dancers must reenact the feelings of emotion, sexuality, and eroticism that the art itself, as well as its public, expect from them.

Figure 14, perhaps Muñoz’s better-known photo, shows a Cuban woman photographed from behind, as the camera zooms in on her firm buttocks, tightly wrapped in a short white dress. The color of the dress stands in clear contrast with the woman’s dark legs, the only uncovered part of her body—which also serves as a way to inform viewers of the dancer’s race. The dress is used to accentuate the woman’s toned physique, and its horizontal ripples embrace her curvy and muscular body. Though the exact location is unclear (for the focus is on the body, and not on its surroundings), the woman appears to be dancing down a hallway, as she moves her *derrière* from side to side, to the imaginary sound of music. Muñoz makes use of no visual props nor details in the photograph; the focus is on the woman. The viewer / voyeur is compelled to gaze at the woman’s body, which, in turn, becomes a fetishized sexual object placed at the disposal of the public. Not only is the woman unable to see the public who is so intently studying her body; she is also unable to look at the photographer and the camera, making the feeling of anonymity and alienation all the more real.

Unlike Figure 14, a number of the shots from the two series on Cuba do offer social details that are oftentimes absent from the photoshoots that Muñoz conducted around the world. One of the factors that makes Muñoz’s work so interesting and captivating, in fact, is the lack of background information regarding the photo, which in turn (similarly to her theory on facial removal) allows spectators to run free with their imagination and study the photo as if it were a blank canvas. The uncredited author of an article on Muñoz for the Spanish magazine *El cultural*

describes her work as coming from a “mirada renacentista que aúna belleza y confianza en el ser humano [y que] da paso a una fotografía despojada de todo elemento adjetivo, accidental, que pueda desviar la atención del visitante” (online n.p.). If the lack of external embellishments is what makes her work so captivating, why, then, does Muñoz choose to include socially relevant information in a number of photos on Cuban dance? What do these details add to her work?

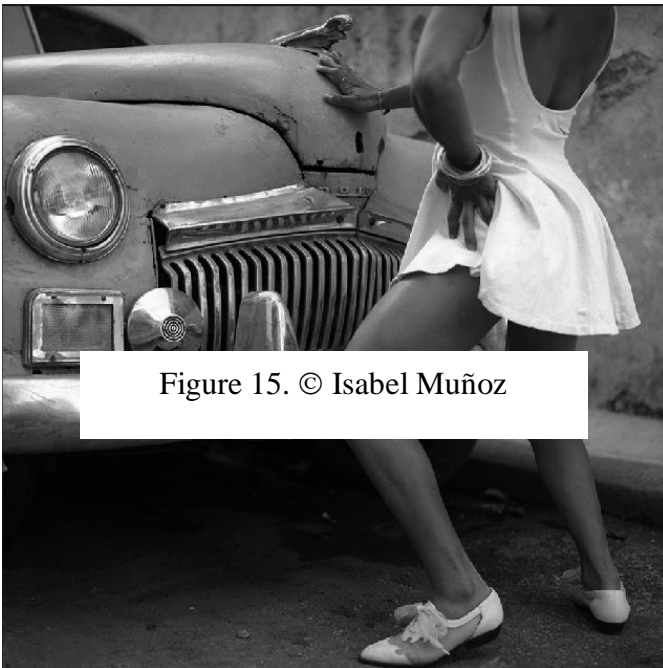


Figure 15. © Isabel Muñoz

Figures 15 through 18 exemplify the uncomfortable addition of social information mentioned above. Figure 15 and 16, from the series *Danza cubana*, show mixed-race women dancing

sensually with two stereotypically Cuban objects: an *almendrón* (the old 1950s cars that function as taxicabs for tourists and locals) and a portrait of Fidel Castro, Cuba’s prime minister from 1959 to 2006. In figure 15 the young woman (for her skin appears to be toned and smooth) is sensually dancing with an old, rusty car. Her dark skin stands in clear contrast, once again, with the pristine white shoes and short dress she is wearing, which exposes her long, vigorous legs. As her left hand is placed on her hip, her right hand rests on the hood of the car, exactly below an uncannily phallic-shaped emblem that points in her direction, directly opposite her breasts and mouth. The front of the car itself takes on the shape of a monstrous (male) human face—the radiator symbolizing the mouth, the lights



Figure 16. © Isabel Muñoz

CREATING OF SCIENCE FICTION (1977)—a definition that Zubiaurre later applies to women cyclists and women typists in her ground-breaking work, *Cultures of the Erotic in Spain, 1898-1936*.¹³² Zubiaurre explains that the mechanical and/or technological elements of modernity (bicycles and typewriters at the turn of the twentieth century), and “[t]he combination of opposed elements and textures—hard against soft, artificial against natural, intellectual against instinctive, mechanical against organic—automatically trigger male desire” (223-4). Erotic desire is thus born from the sense of opposition and unnaturalness that these types of images convey. In Figure 15 the “eroto-technological device” (to borrow Zubiaurre’s term) is embodied by the almendrón, old and rusty, but, nonetheless, fully functional. Although the woman is not glancing at the spectator in a coquettish manner (and in no manner at all, for that matter), her bodily movements speak for

symbolizing the eyes, and the protuberance from the metal bumper resembling sharp fangs, designed to attack and devour its prey. The car, in short, becomes a cyborg, as explained by Donna Haraway. The relationship between women, technology, and eroticism has been discussed at large by critics (the aforementioned Haraway, 1991; and Zubiaurre, 2012), and is applicable to Muñoz’s photograph, as well. According to Haraway, the cyborg is a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a

¹³² In particular, see Chapter 7, “Imported Techno-Eros: Bicycles and Typewriters.”

themselves. As her soft skin touches and presses upon the hood of the car, she and the machine become one, complying with Haraway's notion of cybernetic organism.

In Figure 16 viewers are presented with the image of a young Cuban woman dancing under a portrait of Fidel Castro. The photograph of Castro immortalized him during a speech (given the presence of microphones in front of his mouth), as he paternally looks down (from above) at his "social children." The paternal aspect of Castro's position as head of state insinuates the disturbing aspect of incest into the photograph, as the young woman sensually moves her body against (or directly below) her "father's." The sensuality expressed by the woman's dance moves are unmistakable: her legs are partly open, her dress is pulled up above the knee, and her right hand is placed at the same height as her sexual organ. The door to the dancer's right is wide open, which invites the inquisitive and intrigued glances of two types of spectators: the metaphorical spectators who could be watching her movements from the other side of the door, and the actual spectators of the photograph who are granted access to her body. The open door and Fidel Castro's look also reference the comfort of the woman's sexual expression, which does not happen behind closed doors, but, rather, openly, for all of society to see.

Because these photos do not show a natural or candid pose and setting, but one that was carefully staged by Muñoz, viewers must ask themselves why the photographer chose to capture these specific moments. Furthermore, the technique behind these shots is different: viewers are not looking at a specific detail from the dancers' bodies, but instead are observing them from afar, which makes both the photographer's and the observers' gaze sexualizing and objectifying. This also implies that the stereotypically Cuban object was more important to Muñoz than the girls' dance moves, for she meticulously altered her style to capture the car and the portrait,

which add an unquestionable load of foreign information. Instead of emotionally participating in the photograph or being drawn in by its artistic aspect, the spectator is captured by the dancers' sensual movements, their physical beauty, and the presence of culturally intriguing (mechanical) elements put on display for everyone to see. In both cases, alongside the sexualization of the human body, typical Cuban objects are also sexualized, for they fall within the spectrum of Cuba and the sexualization of its people. The *almendrón* from Figure 15 and Fidel Castro from Figure 16 become the dancers' partners, as the women fluidly move their bodies, unaware or uncaring of observant eyes—may they be the eyes of a tourist, a photographer, or even of the *pater patriae* himself. In a video interview with Photolari, found on YouTube, Muñoz declares that during a photoshoot “[e]l ser fotografiado te está dando todo [...]. Es un acto de generosidad del otro hacia ti, hacia la cámara y hacia las personas que van a hacer suya esa imagen.” While observing the *Danza cubana* shots, one might wonder if Muñoz's statement stands true: though the photographic subject might be giving their all, how is such passion and emotion captured and represented in the photograph, when their bodies are put on display for the curious (Western) eye? The photographs' result is that Cuba in its entirety is portrayed as sensual and lustful, for the dancers' desire to move their bodies cannot be stopped by an inanimate machine (and not just a machine, but one of Cuba's better-known trademarks, symbol of tourism and of the former American presence on the island), nor by the profound gaze of the country's prime minister.

Figure 17, from the *Ballet nacional de Cuba* series, turns the tables again, for it offers a different vision of Cuba from the one present in Figures 14, 15, and 16, as well as from the majority of photos that comprise both series. Here, viewers notice a paradigm shift for several reasons: 1) the presence of social clues such as the *almendrón*, the dusty Cuban roads, and the old, crumbling walls; 2) the presence of two dancers whose complicity is evident in their facial

expressions and in their movements, rather than one (headless) dancer whose personal sentiments and emotions are removed from the photo; 3) the appearance of a third photographic subject who is not a dancer, and who is strategically placed in the background by the photographer; 4) a stark contrast in colors, despite the photo being black and white. In this photo Muñoz does not capture a natural, albeit artistic representation of dancers from the Cuban National Ballet, but offers, instead, a photograph that is as artistic as it is problematic—for it presents a vision of the island that is exactly what an untrained, curious, and fetishizing Western eye would expect to see. It embodies what art critic Michael Fried calls theatricality in art photography—when a picture is aware of the anticipated audience and therefore declares itself, making the very presence and participation of an audience a key element to the photo’s fulfillment. This idea stands in contrast to anti-theatricality, defended by Fried, that relies on



notion of art for art’s sake, or, in this case, photography for photography’s sake.¹³³ But then

¹³³ See Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (2008).

Figure 17. © Isabel Muñoz

again, can an image be *just* an image in a global, capitalist, consumeristic economy?

The two ballet dancers from Figure 17, who are also the subjects of the photograph, serve a different purpose: they underline the harsh contrasts that exists among Cuba's population, as well as the delicate and difficult economic situation that affects the country. The dancers show a beauty and a peacefulness that is almost ethereal: their feet are barely touching the ground, her right arm is gently extended, while the left is wrapped around her companion's head; their expressions are serene and gentle, as they appear unaware of the feeble reality around them. Opposite the dancers' Petrarchan beauty, stands the third subject of the photograph, evidently not a member of the ballet corpus. Though no information is given regarding the identity of this third figure, observers could suppose him to be the owner of the *almendrón*, for he leans on the car with his arm in the window, as he glances at the dancers in front of him. Unlike the ballerina and

her companion, whose clothing is vivid and crispy (a white tutu, headband, tights, and slippers for her, and black pants and slippers for him), the man's clothing appears dirty, old, and blends in with the color of the car, making him one with the machine and voiding him of his identity. His face and facial expression are also obscured by his hat, which hinders observers'



interpretations of his thoughts and feelings. The man, in short, is not granted the subjectivity that is bestowed upon the dancers, yet Muñoz includes him in the photo to create a clear element of disparity. As in the case of Figure 15, the almendrón epitomizes the technoseros that Zubiaurre writes about, as the car's pointy (phallic) emblem

aims directly at the woman's sexual organ. The unknown man, who reflects the car's masculinity and sexual prowess, invitingly glances over at the dancers (or, perhaps, solely at the ballerina), and becomes an embodiment of Freud's voyeur who looks, but does not touch.

Another photography from *Ballet nacional de Cuba* (Figure 18) shows a single ballerina bowing to her imaginary public at the end of an old and cracked staircase. Unlike the majority of the setting—engulfed in darkness—the ballerina and her staircase are drowned in light, making the contrast between gloom and gleam all the more striking. Despite their worn-out appearance (symbol of the economic hardship in Cuba), the stairs represent a metaphorical escape route—one that, however, is solely accessible to the “white” ballerina. The Dantesque division between

inferno and paradise exists here in the form of light, while the dancer symbolically embodies Dante's muse, Beatrice, the only person adequate enough to accompany him to the doors of paradise. The heavenly qualities of the dancer are further supported by her all-white attire and her aura-like tutu, the whitest and shiniest detail in the photo. Though staged, the photograph is sending a clear message: the ballerina pays her final goodbye to her underworld audience, before quietly returning to her above-ground realm, for the two worlds are close, but not compatible. Though the photograph does not offer a visual of the woman's face (for her head is facing down, towards her knees), the setting, her clothing, and the ballerina herself transmit the idea of non-belonging, as if she were temporarily inhabiting a world in which she is, in fact, a foreigner. As in the case of Figure 17, the ballerina from Figure 18 becomes a porcelain object that can be looked at but cannot be touched. Though in this photograph there is no voyeur who glances over at her, the photographer (and the public) embody such role, forever casting their ravishing glance upon her body.

Figure 18. © Isabel Muñoz

From a racial perspective, as she tends to follow in the path of racial stereotypes when addressing topics such as sensuality and bodily movements. When looking at figures 14 through 18 the cliché representation of brown and white bodies is evident. The three women from the *Danza cubana* series are Afro-Cubans, photographed as they dance sensually and use their bodies to lure in observers. Their sensual movements and the lack of facial expressions draw viewers' attention to the women's bodies that, next to the subjects' darker skin, feeds into the mythical idea of the sensual and sex-driven *mulata* who rejects a male dance partner. Their desire to move is too strong to be stopped—so much so, that they choose to move alongside inanimate objects such as cars and portraits; or, in a

more unsettling manner, they sensually dance with their metaphorical father, a strong masculine figure who, however, is deemed unreachable (both for the physical positioning of the portrait and the metaphorical positioning at the top of the political ladder.) In contrast to the *Danza cubana* photos stands the *Ballet nacional de Cuba* series, which, as mentioned, depicts an alternate reality and uses different subjects to do so. Figure 17 captures faired-skin subjects whose facial expressions are clearly visible to observers. Their fairness is amplified by the girl's all-white attire, and by the man's lack of shirt, which creates a contrast between his light torso and dark pants. And while the photograph grants importance to the subjects' bodies, it also focuses on their angelic and delicate expression, symbol of a platonic love that is absent from all photographs from *Danza cubana*, where dancers are either partially photographed or captured while passionately glancing into their partner's eyes. Not surprisingly, all the photographic subjects from *Danza cubana* are Afro-Cubans, while all the dancers from *Ballet nacional de Cuba* are light-skinned Cubans. This stark discrepancy is not accidental, and further promotes the idea that light-skinned and dark-skinned Cubans belong to two separate realms of society, where the former occupy the higher levels of the societal pyramid (embodied by the delicacy of the ballet,) while the latter are relegated to its baseline, expressed by the more sensual forms of traditional Cuban dance.

The two realities that come to life in Muñoz's photographs are not a product of her imagination, but a division that is still quite evident among the Cuban population: on the one hand there are the "white Cubans, who have leveraged their resources to enter the new market-driven economy and reap the benefits of a supposedly more open socialism. The other reality is that of the black plurality, which witnessed the demise of the socialist utopia from the island's least comfortable quarters" (Zurbano online n.p.). While the (white) members of the Cuban

National Ballet clash with the old, run-down streets of Havana, improv dancers from *Danza Cubana* are part of the scenery around them, making their presence beside an antiquated 1950s car or a cracked wall unquestioned and easily accepted by the public. This connection resonates with Hight's and Sampson's notion on how non-Westerners were captured in colonial photographs. They write: "Thus, in photographs native people and their physical environments, even if fabricated in the studio, complemented each other; they helped define each other as an untamed spectacle for the fascinated, if anxious, Euro/American viewer" (4). While white-skinned Cubans clash with the environment around them (for they do not pose a threat to the Western viewer), Muñoz makes use of her neocolonial gaze to create the perfect artistic setting for Afro-Cubans to blend in with the photographic background. Thus, unlike what John Berger proposed, photographers are not simply a subject behind the camera who unquestionably capture the reality around them. Instead, they become active agents in the photographic process, leaving their digital fingermark on each one of their products. As García Rodero's and Muñoz's work demonstrates, photography has evolved into a form of art, where everything is carefully chosen, controlled, and (possibly) altered by the photographer. The artistic aspect of photographs is what grants critics and observers the right to interpret and criticize the piece (much like a literary or cinematographic production), if not from a technical perspective, certainly from a cultural, political, and sociological one.

IV. *Cuba Is: Problematic Foreign Portrayals*

Part of the inspiration for this chapter came from *Cuba Is*, a photography exhibit that took place at the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles from September 2017 to March

2018 and that featured over 120 photos.¹³⁴ The exposition consisted of photographs of Cuba and Cubans taken by local and foreign photographers, their aim being to show the many facets of Cuban society and its continuously evolving nature. Though the majority of photographs were laudable for their artistic qualities (despite the scarcity of means that most Cuban photographers face), the exposition material could easily be divided into two groups: photos taken by Cubans and photos taken by foreigners. This separation did not stem from a qualitative discrepancy, but from a cultural one. In fact, while the photographs shot by Cubans were unassuming, raw, and authentic—as they focused on showing the reality around them without embellishments, and certainly without technological alterations—those shot by foreigners were begging for the public’s approval, and thus were giving observers what they wanted to see: an oftentimes critical and doctored representation of the Caribbean country.

A similar conundrum is present in the work of the two Spanish photographers studied in this chapter. Cristina García Rodero and Isabel Muñoz use their Western neocolonial gaze to interpret and artistically capture the Cuban culture and its people; and though their artistic style and technique is undeniable, they fail at offering a stereotype-free representation of their photographic subjects. Photographing Cuba as a foreigner is no easy task, for the complexity of the country’s history, culture, society, and politics cannot be omitted but is oftentimes cumbersome to explain or show in a photograph. To complicate matters further, Cuba’s culture is not unknown to most Spaniards, which adds a dense layer of preconceptions and misconceptions on the viewer’s part that the photographer must also address. Unlike the photoshoots that García Rodero and Muñoz conducted in countries whose culture is lesser-known to Western observers (such as the former’s trip to India and the latter’s trip to Ethiopia), their work in Cuba faced the

¹³⁴ For additional information on the exhibit, see the Annenberg Space for Photography’s website: <https://www.annenbergphotospace.org/exhibits/cuba-is/>.

burden of being exhibited in front of people who already knew what to expect. The photographs analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that next to García Rodero's and Muñoz's technique, style, and personal interest, also lay the wish to please the public by offering oftentimes problematic, and even violent (if you will), depictions of the Cuban people and of Cuban society as a whole. This resonates with the inside / out dichotomy discussed by Solomon-Godeau in her homonymous 1994 article, where, after analyzing critical work on photography by Susan Sontag and Martha Rosler, she writes: "The operative assumption is that the vantage point of the photographer who comes from the outside (the quintessential documentarian, the ethnographer or anthropologist, the camera-wielding tourist) is not only itself an act of violence and appropriation but is by definition a partial if not distorted view of the subject to be represented" (51).¹³⁵ Hence, what spectators observe in the two photographers' production is not a neutral, honest (if such possibility even exists) representation of Cuba; rather, it's what García Rodero and Muñoz choose to show, as well as what they believe foreign eyes will enjoy looking at given the mythical, exotic, and "primitive" aura that surrounds the island. In their analysis of colonialist photography, Hight and Sampson emphasize that "[t]he Western visualization of native people and their environments as primitive or exotic was more often an attempt to make the unfamiliar or strange seem desirable in a traditionally legible way" (4). The critics' interpretation is applicable to García Rodero's and Muñoz's photos, as well, despite their distance from colonial times. Their photographs of Cubans are not meant to serve as a racial or ethnographic denigration, but as a way to make the supposedly exotic land of Cuba more familiar to Western observers; less daunting, in a way. In both cases, however, the photographs fall short, for they

¹³⁵ Let us not forget that Sontag wrote: "The camera doesn't rape, or even possess, though it may presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of the metaphor, assassinate—all activities that, unlike the sexual push and shove, can be conducted from a distance, and with some detachment." (13)

fail at conveying the cultural complexities and offer, instead, a titillating spectacle adorned with cultural curiosities and traces of imperialist nostalgia.

When discussing García Rodero's photographic production, Díaz-Maroto writes: "Pero sus fotografías nunca están realizadas con el espíritu de un reportero editorial, ella busca el testimonio real, en ocasiones salvaje, escudriña lo auténtico y de este modo llega a expresar situaciones extraordinarias en forma de auténticos relatos visuales" (12). Though the critic's words are meant to applaud García Rodero's production, it raises a number of questions, particularly ones that circumnavigate the meaning of the word "authentic" and "real testimony." One could argue, in fact, that no work of art is truly authentic, especially, as in García Rodero's case, one that carefully stages the details for each photograph in order to capture individual glances of a people and culture that are far removed from one's own. In García Rodero's 2010 photographs of the village of Baracoa and its people the notion that sizzles up from each shot is that of primitiveness. The photographic subjects are clothed, positioned and captured in a way that resembles colonialist photography, for the Cuban people, their actions, and their traditions are put on display for everyone to observe and judge. They are showing off their catch and their festive clothing; they allow García Rodero to capture personal moments of their everyday life (details that would have perhaps been overlooked were they originating from an industrialized, Western country; i.e. women in a hair salon; women breastfeeding their children; school kids running around in circles) and they grant her a favorable position to photograph important cultural moments such as spiritual and initiation rituals. The result, however, is that of a white, western woman photographing a reality that is not her own in order to commemorate a paradoxical anniversary. This cultural and physical triangular distance between operator,

spectator, and spectra transforms her photographs and her Cuban subjects into a simplified and overgeneralized image of what the reality in Baracoa is today.

Isabel Muñoz's photographic production is also guilty of giving into Western stereotypes, though in this case she does not fold on primitivism, but on the ideas of race and sensuality. As Muñoz's photographs on Cuban dance demonstrate, she connects sensuality, exoticism, and passion to one's skin color—which further stresses the many social and economic discrepancies that still exist in Cuba. Where light-skinned Cubans are incompatible with a dirty, dusty, decayed Cuba (emphasized by their pristine clothing and their delicate movements), dark-skinned Cubans blend in perfectly with the social reality around them, as they are shown giving free range to their passionate and quasi-animalistic instincts. By engaging in a repetitive promulgation of stereotypes, the (former colonized) Cuban subject becomes, as Franz Fanon wrote, “mummified” (34), trapped in a past that is now his present. This, in turn, forces individuals “to a condition of relative invisibility, of never being present in any vital human sense” (Hight and Sampson 7). Such invisibility becomes all the more obvious when glancing at subjects who have no face and no name.

The three photoshoots here analyzed illustrate how two Spanish women photographers occupy a dominant and colonizer-like role when photographing a culture and a people that does not belong to their Western realm and that is so closely connected with their home country. In line with the three previous chapters, García Rodero and Muñoz reveal that being a woman does not necessarily make their photographic production feminist, for their gaze and their work, in this specific case, is far removed from the notion and promotion of gender equality. More importantly (and circling back to Solomon-Godeau's notion of feminist photography) their work is void of political (i.e. feminist) implications and does not contribute to the dismantlement of

super-imposed roles and limitations based on gender. The photos from *Baracoa*, *Danza cubana*, and *Ballet nacional de Cuba* could have been easily taken by a detached (male) photographer, for they rely on the same distanced and dominating gaze that has been historically associated with the White Western Man and with colonialism. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, feminism is necessarily eclipsed once the voyeuristic element comes into play, as the person who is being looked at (the photographic subject) is objectified and sexualized by the observer. The subjects captured by García Rodero and Muñoz are observed and studied by European viewers without, in turn, being able to observe. They are seen but cannot see—a characteristic that has accompanied the very notion of femininity (and female submissiveness) throughout the centuries. In Muñoz's case, in particular, the dichotomy of observer / observed is accentuated by the lack of faces, which further distances the spectator from the spectra by casting a spell of anonymity upon her work. (European) viewers are free to look at the toned, sensually moving body (generator of sexual pleasure) of the Cuban other without, in turn, facing the discomfort of being looked at—Freud's perfect definition of a voyeur. And though at times being a woman has aided the photographers and their photographic subjects in finding a comfort and a complicity that would not have been possible with men (as Muñoz discloses in an interview for *El País*),¹³⁶ this is not the case in the three photoshoots analyzed in this final chapter. Solomon-Godeau's dichotomy between insider / outsider once again comes into play, stressing that the photographers' gender (in this particular case) does not automatically allow them inside the group that is being photographed. Perhaps against expectations, the characteristic that marks

¹³⁶ When asked if she had encountered problems for being a woman, Muñoz replies: "Muchos. Pero no me gusta que nos prohíban las cosas. Me gusta darle la vuelta e intentar conseguir ese objetivo que me prohíben. Pero por ser mujer se te abren otras puertas maravillosas. Una mujer nunca me mirará a mí a la hora de hacer una foto igual que a un hombre. Bueno, es que de hecho algunas ni miran al hombre. No pueden. Y claro, la complicidad que tienes con ellas es preciosa". (Vellón)

García Rodero and Muñoz is their national belonging, their Spanish origin, which unequivocally influences the way they look at the Cuban other, regardless of its gender. As spectators are left with incomplete and stereotypical representations of Cuba, its people, and its society, the two photographers behind the lens (who are aware of the disadvantages that many social groups have faced and continue to face to this day—for they, too, had to climb up the patriarchal social ladder) are the executioners that make this simplistic, conventional, and unfair depiction an accepted standard for Western eyes.

Conclusion

Is Colonialism Dead? Spain, Cuba, and Women

*Or should one recognize
that one becomes a foreigner
in another country
because one is already a foreigner
from within?*

—Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*

*Quand sera brisé
l'infini servage de la femme,
quand elle vivra pour elle et par elle,
l'homme—jusqu'ici abominable,—
lui ayant donné son renvoi,
elle sera poète, elle aussi*

—Arthur Rimbaud, *Lettre du voyant*

I. Overarching Themes

The scope of this manuscript has been to critically analyze literary texts and professional photographs on Cuba written and taken by Spanish women during the last thirty years (1992-2015). The specific focus on gender did not stem from a practical reason (merely to narrow the source of input for this study), but from intellectual curiosity, for the aim behind this project was to uncover and discuss how Spanish women envisioned Cuba. Is their outlook a feminist one? Or do they comply with traditional paternalistic representations of Spain's former colony? Are they critical about Spain's past, its treatment of native populations, its patriarchal society, and its role in the slave trade, or do they forgo such criticism to better (and further) advance their work? And finally, what role do their female subjects (intended here as literary characters and photographic models) play in their productions? Are they given a voice? Are they silenced? Are they freed

from the limits of the patriarchy, or are they described in an objectifying and condescending manner? These are the questions that have been posed and answered throughout the project.

This dissertation began with an investigation of Catalonia's past relations with Cuba as seen in the novel *Por el cielo y más allá* and the film *Havanera 1820*—used here as an element of comparison with Riera's text due to the similarities that exist between the two. By uncovering Catalonia's uncomfortable participation in the legal and illegal slave trade, and by displaying the unthinkable wealth that the Spanish region and its people gained through their questionable trading activities, both the novel and the film wished to draw readers and viewers closer to a historical reality that is oftentimes hushed. Riera and Verdaguer stressed the importance of historical memory in post-modern societies in order to give voice to the silenced and learn from mistakes of the past. Slavery (and its criticism) thus became the central theme of the novel and film, as the plot and meta-literary additions that conclude the two cultural productions demonstrated. Readers will recall Riera's vehement epilogue that denounced Catalonia's *negrero* past and the final title sequence in *Havanera 1820* that questioned if slavery had disappeared "para siempre." Women, on the other hand, took on an unconditional role. Instead of being "pobres y ciegas víctimas" (270), as Gertrudiz Gómez de Avellaneda wrote in her masterpiece, *Sab* (1840), they became complicit in the oppression of slaves, as they exerted their power over the weak in the same way that men exerted their power over them. Thus, Riera surprised her readers by eschewing the feminist approach for which she is known. Women, according to the novel's and film's message, shared men's culpability in their tyranny towards slaves, and were perhaps guilty of an even greater sin. While women's subaltern voice was muted by men (to paraphrase Spivak),¹³⁷ the voice of slaves was muffled by both men and women who, well aware

¹³⁷ I am referencing Spivak's famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988).

of their own condition as subalterns, inflicted onto others the same punishment that men inflict onto them.

As the study moved along, the topic of discussion shifted from that of Catalonia to that of Spanish *indianos*, the mythical figures who sailed across the Atlantic, built their fortune through hard work, luck, and at times questionable business ventures, and finally returned to Spain to enjoy their wealth and contribute, in many cases, to the betterment of their country's economy. Through the analysis of three literary texts—the novels *L'herència de Cuba* and *La indiana*, and the homonymous theater piece—readers encountered a similar, though reversed situation to that discussed in Chapter 1. The texts in Chapter 2 shifted their attention to the marginality that women have suffered historically by granting them an agency that is seldom celebrated. As women took center stage, readers uncovered the lesser-known story of female *indianas* who, though scarcer than their male counterparts, did in fact exist. The female protagonists of the three works discussed in this chapter are the umbilical cord that unite past and present; they are the ones that keep Spain's past alive by functioning as the guardians of memory. Similar to the first chapter, however, Aritzeta, Aymar i Ragolta, and Álvarez felt compelled to choose between two equally important topics: the denunciation of slavery and the emancipation of women. The texts from Chapter 2 chose the latter, and for that, they are laudable. They omit, however, the equally important topic of slavery, which makes their social and historical criticism incomplete and partially inaccurate. Though women's contributions in history are celebrated, their involvement in slavery and the slave trade is voluntarily hushed.

The third chapter analyzed Spanish tourism in Cuba through Isabel Segura's tourist guidebook *La Habana para mujeres*. The chapter briefly explored the history of Cuban tourism during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and underlined the inherent and deep changes that

Cuban tourism has undergone throughout the decades. It delved into the study of Segura's text as both an innovative and (at times) stereotypical representation of Cuba and its culture, designed specifically for Spanish women who wish to travel alone (or in groups of other women) to the Caribbean island. Though the text was commendable for the attention it gave to Cuban women who have contributed and continue to contribute to Cuban society, history, art, and intellectual production, it also relied on common clichés and descriptions that were meant to prepare the Spanish tourist for their journey abroad. As we have seen recurrently throughout this dissertation, it is customary for Western societies to fetishize, primitivize, or exoticize unknown (or different) cultures and communities in order to make them more accessible and less daunting for Western visitors, readers, and the public, in general. These corrupting actions are also present in Segura's text, which praises the numerous women who have enriched Cuba while providing readers with a typically-Western representation of its society.

The closing chapter shifted away from literary texts to focus on photography, and specifically on the photography of Cristina García Rodero and Isabel Muñoz who both conducted photoshoots in Cuba. By studying selected photographs from three collections (*Baracoa*, *Danza cubana* and *Ballet nacional de Cuba*), the chapter's analysis showed how the two Spanish photographers molded Cuba's culture and its people to create an artistic photograph that gave spectators what they wished to see. García Rodero offered her spectators a primitive representation of the island, as the photographic subjects posed in ways that pertained to colonialist photography or engaged in actions that would be considered anachronistic by Western viewers. Isabel Muñoz, on the other hand, toyed with the notions of sensuality and race. Her photographs demonstrated a clear distinction between light-skinned and dark-skinned Cubans, specifically in how these two groups stereotypically express their sensuality and in the position

they occupy in Cuban society. The analysis showed that despite there being a woman behind the camera, the images offered of the Cuban people unmistakably belong to an oppressing gaze, regardless of the photographer's gender.

As this project ends, new pertinent questions surface: Why is the study carried out in this dissertation important? What does it add to the already existing scholarly literature and criticism written on the topic? What future research can stem from current findings? The four chapters of this dissertation have studied Spanish literature, film, and photography of the last thirty years in order to analyze how Cuba is envisioned and represented in said works. The research also included an important gender component to the discussion by selecting specific works by Spanish women and studying the role that female characters played in these cultural productions. As with every project, however, there are silences and omissions that are important to discuss, for they play a tacit role in the findings, and because they offer inspiration for necessary and compelling future research.

Leaving the limitations aside for a moment, this manuscript has important things to add to the conversation about the current Spain-Cuba relationship, and the role that gender played and continues to play in Spain's postcolonial and neocolonial history. Though this project and its findings are by no means conclusive and all-encompassing, it does offer important insight on new (and perhaps less obvious) forms of colonialism and imperialist nostalgia that continue to plague Spain more than one hundred years after losing its last colonies, as well as analyze cultural productions by Spanish women who, in many cases, have been overlooked by critics and readers alike. This new type of colonialism, or neocolonialism (as I have referred to it throughout the project), does not necessarily imply a physical presence as it did in the past; instead, its strength lies in the economic and cultural dominance that it exerts upon its subjects. As the third

chapter illustrates, Spanish businesses (most of them from Catalonia) own roughly 90% of four- and five-star hotels in Cuba, and the number of Spanish tourists in Cuba are among the highest on record—making Spain’s presence on the island not ghostly, but extremely real; one that is well rooted in Cuba’s society and history. The connection that began as a forceful act of colonization has now taken on a new shape, though its dominating nature remains unchanged, as the literary texts and photographs have tried to demonstrate.

This project commenced with the intention of uncovering what Spanish women had to say about Cuba amidst a growing cultural, intellectual, and literary interest concerning this country. It leaned on the metaphor that has oftentimes compared colonies to women in order to explore the voice of white women from the metropolis, which has been typically attributed masculine qualities. The initial expectation was that Spanish women would, to some extent, trace similarities between their condition as women and Cuba as a former colony—for they both existed outside of and subjected to patriarchal values. For this reason, the findings of this investigation were unexpected. My analysis of three novels, a theater piece, photography, a film, and a tourist guidebook (written and produced between 1992 and 2015) all pointed in one direction: that colonialism never truly died, that white women from Spain actively participated in it, and that Cuba’s independence from Spain left a wound that remains unhealed. Spanish women, as much as Spanish men, contribute to this day to the perpetuation of myths and misconceptions about Cuba, and to the gradual obfuscation of part of Spain’s dark history. The imperialist nostalgia and the new forms of colonialism discussed in this project are evident in the work of white Spanish women, who oftentimes still view Cuba as a land of exotic locations and sensual brown bodies, and who avoid discussing unpleasant historical realities such as slavery and racism.

If on the one hand this dissertation sheds a light on lesser known works (partly because they were written by women who are not considered canonical, and partly because a number of the texts were written in Catalan and never translated into Spanish) by breaking away from a list of more traditional male authors and by recognizing the work of women who have labored to support a feminist cause, it also underlines the role that stereotypes and misconceptions continue to play when speaking about Cuba. Despite the historical, cultural, and economic claims that Spaniards feel towards the Caribbean island and its people, a decolonialized future can only be born from the destruction of the colonial gaze, regardless of its gender.

II. What Lies Ahead

As the conclusion to this project is drawn, numerous lines of investigation remain open for future research. Specifically, there are three silences in this dissertation that provide the starting point for a compelling new study. First, the chapters do not analyze literature and cultural productions that come from all Spanish enclaves. Despite providing readers with material from Madrid (Cristina García Rodero), Asturias (María Teresa Álvarez), Aragón (Margarita Aritzeta), the Balearic Islands (Carme Riera), and Catalonia (Angels Aymar i Ragolta, Isabel Muñoz, and Isabel Segura), three important autonomies are missing from this analysis: Galicia, Andalusia, and the Canary Islands. Their importance lays in the extraordinary number of emigrants from these areas who settled in Cuba and created an unbreakable link between their motherland and their new home. And since ideas and movements are seldom one-directional (as transatlantic theory informs us,) not only did millions emigrate to Cuba; thousands returned to their home country, bringing back stories, myths, ideas, and cultural artifacts from their time abroad. Because of this strong connection, the literature and cultural productions from

Galicia, the Canary Islands, and Andalusia focused on Cuba must be as compelling and powerful as those produced in the enclaves studied in this dissertation.

Second, the voice of Cubans is absent from this study, which is, in part, paradoxical, for I partake in the same muting that I criticize throughout the project. However, the choice of actively excluding Cuban texts and cultural productions was dictated by the intent behind this dissertation—namely centered around how Spanish women writers and photographers view and speak about Cuba. Nevertheless, I believe that providing a Cuban perspective on this sudden scholarly interest in the Caribbean island would make an excellent future research topic. Are Cubans aware of the literary boom that their country has produced in Spain? Has this impacted the number of Spaniards that every year travel to Cuba? Has it affected their perceptions about Cuba and its people? How do Cubans react to this? And finally, are Cuban intellectuals and scholars producing a literary transatlantic response to such interest? Though this is only a small number of the questions that readily come to mind, they function as a starting point for an anticipated and valuable investigation.

Third, perhaps the most significant silence in my work is that of diverse social groups, as the only voices that are heard are those of white women. This dissertation does not include texts by men, minorities (such as immigrants and first-generation Spaniards), and non-white women. The exclusion of cultural productions created by and focused on men was implemented to break away from the study of canonical names, texts, and cultural material that has already been amply discussed by scholars, for, as Yvette Dechavez says in her *Los Angeles Times* article, “if academia continues to uphold white men as the pinnacle of literature, they’re also continuing to uphold white supremacy” (online n.p.). The lack of inclusion of material produced by minorities, on the other hand, is due to it not fitting the larger scope of this project, and to the lack of

information readily available. Despite the limitations of such a small pool, in fact, the project's aim was precisely to observe how non-minority Spanish women fit in the postcolonial / neocolonial equation, and whether they use their own "subaltern" social position as a means to (economically, metaphorically, intellectually) oppress those whom they subconsciously consider subaltern to them. As Spivak writes in "Subaltern Studies," the radical intellectual in the West is caught between "a deliberate choice of subalternity, granting to the oppressed either that very expressive subjectivity which s/he criticizes, or instead a total unrepresentability" (1988 209). This dissertation shows that the majority of the material analyzed throughout the chapters follows Spivak's idea of "unrepresentability," as seen through the texts and photographs that transform the Cuban people, their history, and their culture into curious artifacts that can be molded or forgotten altogether by a supposedly higher Spanish power. By exploring how other Spanish groups have spoken of Cuba during recent years, and by subsequently analyzing if and how Cuba has responded to Spain's literary and cultural interest, a future version of this project could expand to become an all-encompassing transatlantic dialogue between Spain, Cuba, and intellectual and cultural productions from both sides of the Atlantic.

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