

Managing Tourist Hearts:
Love, Money and Ambiguity in Relationships between Cuban Women and Foreign Men

by

Anne-Mette Groth Hermansen
B.A., University of Copenhagen, 2006

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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As a consequence of Cuba's severe mid-1990s economic crisis and the government's attempt to remedy it by investing in the tourism sector, a new interactional space has opened up, providing Cubans with the opportunity to form economically advantageous relationships with foreigners. This thesis contributes to the anthropological understanding of the lifeworlds of Cuban women who engage in relationships with foreign men that are sexualized and commercialized to various degrees. These touristic encounters are morally and ideologically contested in late socialist Cuba. They are also characterized by an ambiguous tension, as the women have to manage foreign men's expectations regarding exchanges of love and money. Based on six months of fieldwork in Havana, I examine the components and developments of such relationships and discuss the women's particular role. I highlight their agency as they capitalize on touristic desires and fantasies of the exotic and erotic Caribbean Other, simultaneously reproducing a system of sexualized, racialized and gendered inequalities. Through a discussion of the methodologies employed in the research, I question the analytical use of empirical categories in anthropological analysis. I argue that emic categories applied to relationships between Cuban women and foreign men are political and normative markers of social statuses, but are not valid analytical units.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Valentina

Introduction

Valentina is dancing by herself in front of the stage. The house band is playing a salsa-style cover of a Beatles song. She is moving to the music, apparently disconcerted with her surroundings. She has caught the eye of various men in the club. They stand around the bar or somewhere on the dance floor. Few are dancing. Some are approached by women who start dancing suggestively in front of them, rotating their hips and shaking their shoulders. The men look at the women, and some put a hand on a hip or an arm around a waist. The women do not wait long before they whisper a proposition: does he want to dance with her or buy her a drink? Maybe take her back to his hotel room? Some men agree, some decline, and some are too drunk to muster a reply. We sit down at a table and look around the room. Valentina frowns upon the sight of other women caressing and kissing drunken men at the bar: "Today," she says "you go to the club and you see these young girls throw themselves at the guys. They go straight up to them and grab their balls. They have no self-respect." She makes a face to show her disapproval. "I always had the good fortune that, for being the least visible, the guys would come to me and say: 'Poor little thing, why are you sitting there all alone?' I dress classy when I go out, like this. I don't talk to anyone; I just sit at a table by myself. You'll see, that is what they like about me. I am different." We place ourselves in an empty spot on the dance floor. I detect at least five pairs of eyes on us, and I am sure that Valentina is the one who attracts attention, not me. When I leave the club at two in the morning Valentina stays put on the dance floor, dancing by herself. She kisses me on the cheek and smiles: "See you around." I call her the next day and ask her how the night played out after I left. She cheers: "I had lots of fun, and I'll tell you what, I didn't even go home with anyone. I was dancing until five in the morning!"

Valentina¹ was one of my key informants during six months of fieldwork in Havana, Cuba. My research concerns her and nine other Cuban women's relationships with foreign men.² This thesis is based on data derived from participant observation, informal and formal interviews, and over five hundred pages of field notes that resulted from my involvement in the women's lives.

Relationships between Cuban women and foreign men are a contested issue in contemporary Cuba. In the words of anthropologist Jafari Sinclair Allen, they are: "Romantic excursions and cultivations of relationships with the implicit or explicit promise of sexual contact, for a foreigner's implicit or explicit promise to give monetary or other material support, or a promise of emigration" (2007:186). These relationships are sexualized and commercialized to various degrees and play out in a grey-zone of uncertain expectations towards the exchange of love and money. They cannot easily be defined as simple exchanges of sexual services for direct monetary payment, the most basic contract of prostitution. The Cuban women that I got to know during my fieldwork explained their engagement in such relationships as based on a host of different motivations. They related their experiences with foreign men from individual vantage points and expressed a wide diversity of emotions in evaluating their relationships. The complexities inherent in their narratives challenge our understandings of the broad spectrum of engagement often labeled "sex tourism."

However, despite their individual interpretations and personal life strategies these women were subjected to similar fantasies that foreign men have of Cuban women as the exotic and erotic Other. They were also categorically stigmatized as *jineteras* in the Cuban vernacular, a term that loosely translates as "prostitute" or "hustler" although such translations must

¹ All names that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms. Furthermore, I have altered certain demographic and personal information about my informants to protect their anonymity.

² I describe my informants more fully in Chapter II: Methodology and Fieldwork.

themselves be subjected to interpretative definition. *Jinetera* derives from the word *jinete*, which means “jockey,” but it can, in an erotic interpretation, also describe how Cuban women ride foreigners in bed while taking economic advantage of their relationship. The women both reproduced and challenged foreign men’s fantasies in their encounters, while trying to avoid stigmatization. They capitalized on the sexual allure inherent in stereotypes of Cuban women, but they also made an effort to convey their various subjectivities and stand out individually to attract attention. To me, their active engagement with foreign men’s fantasies suggested that the women asserted agency while subjecting themselves to the lusty tourist gaze.

This thesis explores Cuban women’s particular perspectives on their experiences with foreign men in the context of Cuba’s booming tourism industry and analyzes the role they play in the initiation and maintenance of these relationships. During fieldwork, I traced how a series of such relationships unfolded in order to understand their significance in the women’s lives and how my informants made sense of them. In this thesis, I unpack these relationships to show the complexities and ambiguities that they embody while challenging the categories that are often employed to explain them empirically in Cuba, as well as analytically by social scientists. To do this, I discuss how Cuban conceptualizations of love and reciprocity impact them. I argue that they are not conceptualized by the women as substantially different from their relationships with Cuban men, the difference being that foreign men possess more resources than Cuban men in fulfilling the women’s financial needs and material desires. I further discuss how ideals of love, as disconnected from other bonds of reciprocity, cause tension to arise in the relationships, when the men question the authenticity of the women’s feelings. I argue that Cuban women resolve this tension through managing men’s expectations of their relationships, while capitalizing on the fantasies that make up the framework of the men’s desires. Finally this thesis speaks to the longstanding debate about whether underprivileged women are agents of change or victims of a

global system of inequality. I show that women are able to capitalize on global inequalities based on gender, race and class while reproducing them in their relationships with foreign men, thereby tapping into the privileges that a global force such as tourism provides.

In the following sections, I provide an overview of the historical context that circumscribes my informants' lives in Cuba today. Much English academic literature concerned with Cuba is biased due to the polemic nature of the country's tense political-economic relationship with the United States. Inadvertently, much scholarly work tells more about these polemics in themselves and the politics of its authors, than about the Cuban situation, *per se*. The objective of my account is not to gauge the successes and failures of the Cuban revolution, but to provide a historical context for understanding how my informants are affected by socio-political discourses prevalent in Cuba today. I do not claim to provide an objective overview of the historical context for my analysis, but have been conscious about referencing literature by authors that are positioned differently politically and geographically *vis-à-vis* the Cuban revolutionary project.

A Revolution Within The Revolution?

One of the promises of the Cuban revolution³ was to ensure gender equality. A first step for the newly established revolutionary government was to eliminate widespread prostitution, which had come to characterize Cuba and make the country known as “the brothel of the Caribbean”

³ The Cuban revolution triumphed on January 1st 1959 after six years of armed revolt and guerilla war against the dictator Fulgencio Batista. The revolution was initiated by the 26th of July Movement, lead by Fidel Castro and named after a failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on that date in 1953. The revolutionary movement enjoyed widespread support in Cuba and beyond and revolutionary soldiers were received as heroes when they marched into Havana on New Years Day 1959 to celebrate their victory and the flight of Fulgencio Batista. As a result of the revolution, Fidel Castro and his allies build a new Cuba based on principles of socialism.

(Pattullo 1996:90). Many authors claim that North American visitors were the ones who predominantly indulged in gambling and carnal pleasures in pre-revolutionary Cuba (Clancy 2002:64; Facio et. al. 2004:124; Stone 1981:6), but Lois Smith and Alfred Padula argue that this is a myth sustained by the Cuban revolutionary government, blaming foreign intruders for internal social problems and political conflicts:

The revolution's attack on prostitution was an earnest attempt to improve the lives of thousands of women as well as a symbolic gesture to end Cuba's role as carnal playground of the Caribbean. Although there had been periodic hand wringing over prostitution by Cuban politicians, little had been done to check what was, after all, an important feature of *machista* society. The revolution portrayed prostitution as a shameful legacy of Cuba's colonial and neocolonial past. By claiming that North American visitors were the principal exploiters of Cuban women, the revolution avoided any serious analysis of sexuality and social power. In truth the principal clientele of Cuba's sex industry was Cubans themselves. (1996:40)

In 1961 a campaign was initiated, which was designed to “rehabilitate” women who engaged in prostitution, spearheaded by the newly instituted Federation of Cuban Women (*Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* or FMC)⁴ (Lewis et. al. 1977:xvii; Smith and Padula 1996:40 – 41). Some women entered the programs voluntarily, while others left Cuba in the early years of the revolution (del Olmo 1979:35, 37). The revolutionary government increased punitive measures against pimps who were sent to prison or work camps in the countryside, but from an ideological standpoint women who engaged in prostitution were considered hapless victims of both uncontrollable economic circumstances and exploitative pimps (del Olmo 1979:36). The rehabilitation programs offered ideological education, instruction in basic etiquette and job training. Subsequently, the women were employed in government factories or in gendered trades such as waitressing, hairdressing and sewing (Fusco 1998:153; Lewis et. al. 1977:279).⁵ The

⁴ FMC has since its beginning primarily been a government agency for mobilizing women for education, the work force and defense of the revolution through neighbourhood committees known as Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (*Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* or CDRs) (Craske 1999:12; Smith and Padula 1996:33; 44, Lewis et. al. 1977:xiii).

⁵ The narrative of Pilar Lopez Gonzales in the second book “Four Women” in the trilogy *Living the Revolution: An Oral History of Contemporary Cuba* (1979) by Oscar Lewis, Ruth M. Lewis and Susan M. Rigdon, is a powerful

objective of the campaign was to integrate Cuban women into the labour market, while educating and mobilizing them politically. The campaign lasted approximately six years, after which the government proudly proclaimed that prostitution had successfully been eradicated in Cuba.⁶

On a number of fronts Cuban women have won the battle for gender equality, or what has been named “a revolution within the revolution” (Espín 1991:1). This is particularly true in light of women’s status prior to the revolution, a comparison that Vilma Espín, director of FMC until her death in 2007, was eager to stress. In an interview by *Claudia*, a Brazilian women’s magazine, she provided the following answer to the question, “How do Cuban women live these days?”:

To answer this it is necessary to recall the circumstances existing in the years prior to the revolution’s triumph with respect to the female population. According to the 1953 census, women represented 12.4 percent of the workforce, which was the highest figure for before the revolution [...] In a society that had nearly one million unemployed men and others only employed for part of the year, there were few possibilities for women. Many were unfortunately forced by the need for subsistence to work as prostitutes. The existing concepts of the times reinforced the role traditionally assigned to women, whose highest aspiration was to marry and care for children and the home. Even education was considered unnecessary and for that reason women made up more than half the illiterate population and families gave priority to their sons in education for economic reasons [...] Then from 1959 a dramatic change came about in the life of the whole society, especially for the masses of women for whom possibilities of real participation opened up. Encouraged by the enthusiasm generated by the revolutionary victory, and conscious that the tasks ahead would require the involvement of everybody, women sought to organize themselves, anxious to participate in the great work of the revolution. (Espín 1991:5 – 6)

I quote at length because Espín points to a number of truths and myths of the supposed gender equality that the revolution brought about. As a result of the revolution, Cuban women, not only those considered to be prostitutes, have gained access to the educational sector; have entered the job market in considerable numbers; and are ensured reproductive rights in the universal health care system, including free abortion (Espín 1991; Kaiser 1975; Perna 2005:207; Smith and

testimony to the experience of one woman who worked in a brothel in Havana at the time of the triumph of the revolution and who completed the rehabilitation program to later work in a garment factory.

⁶ When prostitution experienced a resurgence in the 1990s following the economic crisis known as the Special Period, the Cuban government, aided by the FMC, reopened the rehabilitation centers.

Padula 1996:73 – 77; Stone 1981; Swanson 1981). Outside observers have been especially impressed with the enactment of The Family Code (*Código de la Familia*) of 1975, which establishes equality between husband and wife and require men to partake in household chores (Holt-Seeland 1982; Rains and Stark 1997:78 – 79). Some contend that there is still widespread discrimination against Cuban women, both in the labour market and in the political sector (Rains and Stark 1997). On top of that, racial equality is also to a large extent a popular revolutionary narrative, more so than a reality, which means that women of colour experience double discrimination (Adams 2004; de la Fuente 2000; Perna 2002:218). It is beyond doubt, however, that the Cuban revolution improved living standards considerably for a large portion of the Cuban population and women have been a priority group for the government since its earliest days.

In the last two decades, economic changes have reconfigured Cuba's socio-economic landscape and potentially put the promised gender equality into jeopardy. On the one hand, a chronic economic crisis has again made it a daily struggle for Cuban families, many of which are headed by women (Benítez Pérez, n.d.), to make ends meet. On the other hand, these socioeconomic changes have created new desires among Cuban women, which cannot be fulfilled by the government, because they go against the moral tales of fifty years of revolution. Instead, women seek to meet their controversial individual and material desires in relationships with foreign men. It is not without irony that Cuba seems to have come full circle, again being a sexual playground for foreigners (Clancy 2002:64). Cuban exiled intellectual Rafael Rojas pessimistically describes the situation this way: "Between the old Cuba and the new, a bridge is visible: the cadaver of the Revolution" (1998:134).

The Special Period in Times of Peace

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Cuba lost its lifeline. The country entered into a severe economic crisis when the big sister in the east halted importation of Cuban sugar in exchange for oil and stopped all monetary support through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).⁷ The crisis was named “The Special Period in Times of Peace” (*El Periodo Especial en Tiempos de Paz*).⁸ It forced the Cuban government to introduce economic reforms that deviated from socialist policies. Entrepreneurship in a number of small business categories was allowed, and a parallel “free market” (*mercado libre*) in agriculture opened up (Pérez-López 2001:48 – 49; Powell 2008:181). Perhaps the single most important measure was the legalization of the US dollar in 1993.⁹ Hitherto, possession of dollars had been a criminal offense for most Cuban nationals. Only people in certain professions were allowed foreign currency and were able to shop in so-called “diplomat stores” (*tiendas diplomáticas*), where products that did not constitute the basic necessities distributed nation-wide through state-run shops (called *bodegas*) were available. With the legalization of the US dollar, the divide between those who had access to them and could shop for “luxury items” such as shampoo, dish detergent and certain food items in the new dollar stores (colloquially known as *shoppings*) and those who relied solely on

⁷ From its foundation in 1949 until its demise in 1991 CMEA (sometimes abbreviated COMECON, in Spanish called *Consejo de Ayuda Mutua Económica* or CAME, and in Russian *Sovet Ekonomicheskoy Vsaymopomoshchi* or SEV) was an economic trading organization designed to create cooperation and facilitate trade between socialist and communist states. The CMEA membership spanned the Soviet Union along with other eastern and non-eastern socialist countries, although the organization was dominated by the large economy of the Soviet Union. Cuba was a member of the organization since 1972. Cuba benefitted greatly from favourable trade agreements that allowed the government to buy oil cheaply in exchange for sugar and resell it on the global market. Cuba also received developmental aid from the Soviet Union (Pérez-López 2001). Cuba experienced an immediate hard currency crisis when the CMEA ended all special concessions to Cuba in 1992 (Susman 1998:187).

⁸ Hereafter referred to as the Special Period.

⁹ From 1993 until 2004, the Cuban currency was split between the Cuban peso and the US dollar. In 1994, the convertible peso (*peso convertible* or CUC, colloquially called *chavito*) was introduced. It is on par with the US dollar, but exchangeable only within Cuba. Today two currencies circulate officially in Cuba: pesos and convertible pesos. Convertible pesos are also commonly referred to as dollars, which is why I choose to use that term.

government salaries and nationally distributed ration cards became even more pronounced. Access to dollars hence became a primary objective for many Cubans. For many, the boom in Cuba's tourism industry would provide such opportunities (cf. Ghodsee 2005).

In order to rescue the economy in the face of near paralysis, the Cuban government invested heavily in tourism, which had declined drastically since the revolution in 1959 (Anderson 2002). The influx of tourists to the island has been increasing steadily over the years and today more than two million tourists visit Cuba annually. The boom in the tourism industry has created new markets in Cuba, not only for the government, but also for ordinary Cubans whose daily lives are immensely impacted by the presence of tourists. Cuban individuals and families generate a dollar income through a limited number of sources. Some work "on their own account" (*por cuenta propia*), for instance with licenses to run a small family restaurant (*paladar*), provide room and board for tourists or drive a taxi. Those who have family members living outside the island receive remittances. Others, such as members of the Communist Party of Cuba (*Partido Comunista de Cuba* or PCC), military personnel, and certain categories of professionals may be salaried in dollars or receive bonuses such as packages with sanitary items or extra food items. Many Cubans rely on entrepreneurial businesses they themselves or family members conduct in the informal sector, mostly with foreigners who bring foreign currency.

Jineterismo is another way in which some Cubans are known to take advantage of their personal relationship with foreigners and thereby acquire access to dollars. *Jineterismo* translates directly as "horseback riding," but refers symbolically to how *jineteros* (men) and *jineteras* (women) ride Cuba's new dollar economy and maybe tourists in a more literal sense. As opposed to illegal, but socially accepted economic activities in the informal sector that most Cubans participate in, the flows of gifts and money in personal relationships between Cubans and foreigners is highly contested in the Cuban public discourse and create a lot of tension in

relationships between Cubans and foreigners. Although the term *jineterismo* is a product of the revolution, describing individual efforts to navigate a planned economy, it has changed meaning over time. Today the female *jinetera* is a more prominent and perhaps more contested figure than the male *jinetero*, as she is perceived to provide commodified sexual services or companionship to foreign men in return for financial and material benefits (Cabezas 2004:993). For some, *jineterismo* represents a return to pre-revolutionary times, when foreigners would come to Cuba to exploit its natural resources, among them Cuban women.

Social researchers and political commentators in Cuba worry about and criticize this new economic situation that they believe has led to increased individualism and materialism, particularly among young people (Arés Muzio and Benitez Pérez 2008). Such tendencies are understood in a revolutionary narrative to be “anti-social behaviours.” Meanwhile, non-Cuban scholars have argued that it is precisely because young people have been educated by the revolution to be agentive and independent that they now feel disenchanting with the Cuban government because it cannot fulfill their material desires, nor allows its individual citizens certain freedoms (Allen 2007:194). My informants often aired such disappointment, repeating that they dreamt of a life where they could “do what I want” (*hacer lo que me de la gana*), be it exercising consumer power in purchasing goods commonly unavailable or unaffordable in Cuba, avoiding social services such as army enrollment, or traveling abroad. Robin Moore explains the trend, from a less ideological viewpoint, as a consequence of the government’s shifting politics to incorporate aspects of a market economy, thereby itself betraying revolutionary ideals:

Much of what socialism once stood for in Cuba – equality of income, sacrifice for the common good, the gradual creation of a more humane society – is now in question as the country adopts a mixed economic system. Faith in the revolutionary experiment has faded precisely because, with each day passing its principles less directly reflect the experiences of the people. Political discourse and everyday reality tend ever more frequently to be at odds. In response, individuals concern themselves more with their own welfare and that of their immediate families, deprioritizing other issues. The revolution politicized life so completely and for so long that many Cubans have reacted by rejecting politics altogether. (2006:247)

I have briefly sketched out some important political, economic and social reconfigurations in Cuba in the last fifty years and the country's internal discussions of equality to provide an overview of the socio-economic context that frames my research. I have described *jinetismo* as an element of a new discourse on individualism and materialism, and a symbolic affront to the aging revolution. However, in my own research, I focus on the personal and interpersonal experience of these developments and their consequences for the individual. This perspective showcases Cuban women as agentic players in a larger system. In order to do so it is necessary to understand the mechanisms through which individual women are singled out as *jinetas* and how they respond to such stigmatization.

***La Jinetera* – A Prominent Social Figure in Contemporary Cuba**

The *jinetra* is a prominent figure of almost mythological proportions in Cuba's new socio-economic landscape and has attracted not only male tourists to the island, but also a number of anthropologists. Most scholars have analyzed the *jinetra* as a social commentary on the introduction of aspects of a market economy in socialist Cuba. Mette Louise Berg Rundle (2001, 2004) interprets the *jinetra* as the antithesis to the revolutionary New Man (*Hombre Nuevo*)¹⁰ and as a negation of the revolutionary narrative of social and racial equality. Cuban female military and political heroines have inspired a revolutionary female ideal and popular image of a New Woman, a counterpart to the New Man. She is devoted both to the revolution and hard work. She is selfless, modest and sacrifices herself for the revolutionary project (Thomas-Woodard 2003). Symbolically the *jinetra* defies these ideals. She is "selling out" by letting Cuba

¹⁰ The New Man is a socialist ideal citizen, the image of which was created by Ernesto Che Guevara (1977) and embodied by his persona.

be invaded once again by foreign intruders who can buy her pride and independence with their dollars. The *jinetera* not only represents certain socio-political problems in contemporary Cuba; actual women accused of engaging in *jineterismo* are being treated as social problems. The problem is located in the women themselves, who are understood to have fallen prey to individualism and obsession with materialism (Díaz Canals and Gonzáles Olmedo 1997). Amir Valle rhetorically asks:

Why haven't other Cuban women, who are also affected by the scarcity of goods and the limits to their standard of living, prostituted themselves? Why, if it is true that Cuban women assume responsibilities for their home and family when they are on average 22 years old, do most Cuban women prefer to work and not to prostitute themselves? If it is true that a large percentage of the *jineteras* have university degrees or other higher education, why doesn't the majority of university graduates or professionals, prostitute themselves? Moral reasons inhibit them from doing so. These reasons have much to do with human dignity and self-confidence, which, it cannot be denied, are some of the purest achievements of the revolutionary process. (2002:121, my translation)

In this discourse, supposed *jineteras* are accused of being greedy individualists, ungrateful for the revolutionary gains of Cuban society and preoccupied only with their own enjoyment and personal economic gain.

While the *jinetera* symbolizes the antithesis of the revolutionary New Woman in a popular discourse, her earning power embodies the desires of many young Cuban women of obtaining certain material goods and a disposable dollar income, dressing well, being part of “el hi-life” (Fusco 1998:164), traveling and in general “doing what you want.” In discussions about *jineterismo* I often heard the phrase repeated: “I don't criticize anyone” (*yo no critico a nadie*), implying that *jineterismo* was an understandable survival strategy and that the desires of *jineteras* were widely shared. In fact, the phenomenon has gained popular resonance and the term is widely used, often in a joking manner, to describe the kinds of activities that many Cubans, otherwise not identified as *jineteros* or *jineteras*, engage in occasionally if the opportunity arises.¹¹ In this

¹¹ I once overheard a professor at the University of Havana laughingly ask a colleague who he would have to *jineteer* in order to get his new book published outside of Cuba.

case, it is often the verb *jinetear* rather than the noun *jinetero* or *jinetera* that is used, emphasizing this identity as one that can be played out and performed in convenient situations, not a fixed dimension of one's personhood (Padilla 2008:788). However, it is important to understand that this popular use of the term *jinetismo* does not answer the more important questions of how and why certain people are singled out as *jineteros* and *jineteras*, while others escape such stigmatization.

I shy away from using the term *jinetera* to describe my informants, in part because none of them auto-defined as *jineteras*, even if they were known as such to others. In fact, I argue that the use of term requires the kind of anthropological reflection that destabilizes its analytical applicability and exposes its emic complexities and ambiguities. In this thesis I try to understand the desires and the strategies that women employ to reach their goals in life, sustained in a complex interplay with the stigmatization they experience from society at large and their subjection to foreign men's fantasies of Cuban women. This analysis may lead us to a qualified critique of the categories usually applied to understand relationships between Cuban women and foreign men.

Research Questions

The work presented in this thesis has been guided by the following research questions, providing the foundation for the arguments I present:

How are categories of people and their relationships applied to interactions between Cuban women and foreign men? What are the social implications of various interpretations and usages, including Cuban women's strategic manipulation and application, of such terms?

I question whether these categories hold any analytical validity, even if they are part of the emic vocabulary in a Cuban context and guide the ways in which Cuban women and foreign men, as well as outsiders to these relationships, imagine and interact with each other. While these categories have obvious emic value, as they are widely circulated in and outside of Cuba, how can anthropologists meaningfully employ the terms? And, what are the methodological implications of engaging with these categories of people anthropologically?

What are the components of relationships between Cuban women and foreign men and in what ways do cultural notions of love and reciprocity shape their interactions?

In order to answer the above questions, it will be important to understand and clearly describe how Cuban women and foreign men engage with one another. During fieldwork I spent much time learning and understanding the contours of such relationships. Tim Wallace has proposed applying the term “scripts” to touristic encounters, as a means to evaluate the quality of such interactions without resorting to old fashioned and problematic evaluations of the actual or perceived authenticity of such relationships (Casteñada and Wallace 2007). I will elaborate on the scripts that Cuban women and foreign men enact toward one another, which influence the values and emotions with which they interpret their experiences.

How are we to understand Cuban women as agents of change immersed in a global system of inequality that they simultaneously challenge and reproduce?

Given that the engagement with the above questions results in a more nuanced understanding of the complexities and ambiguities of relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, and

the women's evaluation of their own role in them, we can begin to ask questions about the broader implications of such touristic encounters in Cuba. Women who participate in sex work have not always been recognized as active players in the seemingly exploitative relationships they are part of. Cuban women are desired subjects to foreign men, but are also desiring subjects, whose life projects inform their relationships with foreign men. The women's desires are in turn impacted by the recent socio-economic changes in Cuba and are expressed in an atmosphere of capitalist reform and individual opportunity. These individual desires often collide with a revolutionary discourse, but are at the same time very commonplace in Cuba today. Is it possible to demonstrate Cuban women's agency in a way that allows for their double-sided positioning in inequitable relationships with foreign men as both producers and challengers of desires?

Locating the Field

I went to Cuba in January 2008 and stayed for six months. I had arranged beforehand to stay with a host family, who housed and fed me while answering all my questions about daily life in Cuba with great patience, as well as providing me with a number of contacts to Cuban family members or friends of the family who had particular knowledge of my research interests. My Canadian partner came to visit me three months into my fieldwork and stayed for two months. I arrived in Cuba as a tourist, but enrolled in two courses at the University of Havana (*Universidad de la Habana*) and obtained a study visa, which allowed me to remain in Cuba for the duration of my fieldwork.

It is a longstanding tenant of anthropology that the location of the field requires more consideration than mere place-naming (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Scandinavian anthropologists are able to linguistically differentiate between the field as a spatially defined location (*felten*) and

the field as the conceptualization of the kinds of socio-cultural processes that the researcher is interested in (*feltet*). The same linguistic differentiation does not exist in the vocabulary of English-speaking anthropologists; nonetheless, in practice all anthropologists work with this distinction when designing, conducting, and using research to produce analytical arguments. I had selected a popular dance club as my field site, and envisioned that I would conduct most of my observations there, as well as establish contacts with the Cuban women that patronized the club. As it turned out, most of my informants rarely went to the club because they could not afford the entrance fee and I established contact with them in various other places. They encountered foreign men with whom they established different kinds of relationships in a number of spots in and outside the city and I quickly decided that I would learn more about their lives and relationships if I followed them to where they went and spent time with them in their own localities. I ended up spending time with a circle of ten women in four different neighborhoods in Havana, in their homes, on the street, with their families and friends and sometimes with the foreign men that they dated. My field was made up of the relationships these women were engaged in, their social networks and the gateways I used to access information and gain experiences within these networks, implicating myself in the research process.

Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter I: Methodology and Fieldwork, I discuss the methodology that formed the basis of my research and outline the techniques I used during and after fieldwork to make sense of the data I gathered. I also provide a more detailed description of my informants. I pay close attention to ways in which anthropological methodology and theory intertwine in the practice of doing fieldwork and require the researcher to improvise many aspects of the research process. By

questioning the assumptions of my work, I enhance the analysis of my findings. During fieldwork, this exercise led me to the pivotal realization that my use of specific categories in describing the lifeworlds of my informants inhibited a more exploratory analysis of their lives and relationships, contributing to the very stereotyping that I would go on to accuse such categories of perpetuating.

In Chapter II: Discourses on *Jineterismo*, I start by looking at how Caribbean people have been represented as hypersexual racial others in a colonial discourse that continues to inform touristic encounters in the region today. Many case studies have paid attention to the racialized, sexualized and gendered stereotypes of the Caribbean subject, that reproduce inequalities in interactions between locals and foreigners. Newer literature, however, encourages us to recognize ambiguous experiences in the analysis of touristic encounters in the Caribbean broadly and in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men specifically. I examine how Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men have been treated discursively in two different sites: in official Cuban rhetoric and in academic literature produced by non-Cuban scholars. Finally, I test the analytical applicability of the category *jinetera* by discussing how this identity is negotiated empirically. My data demonstrates that the category cannot be used as a self-evident marker describing my informants' life situations and choices, but can be interrogated as an example of the political and normative negotiations of social relationships that they are part of.

Chapter III: Managing Tourist Hearts: Valentina's Story is a detailed account of my relationship with one particular informant and her interpretations of her relationships with various foreign men. I use Valentina's narrative to highlight the empirical importance and complexity of themes that emerge in the analysis in the following chapters.

In Chapter IV: Notions of Love and Reciprocity in a Cuban Context, I continue to analyze the empirical use of certain cultural classifiers to describe relationships between Cuban women

and foreign men and question their analytical applicability. I interrogate two prevalent emic categories: *por amor* (for love) and *por interés* (with ulterior motives). The normative and moral implications of categories used to describe people and their relationships, as well as strategic uses of these, must be interrogated in order to help us understand the intertwinements between discourses of *jineterismo* and the interpretations Cuban women apply to their situations. On the surface, Cuban conceptualizations of love and reciprocity contrast with idealizations of love relationships devoid of economic interests and exchanges. I suggest that we have to differentiate between the ideals and practices of love that Cuban women as well as foreign men employ in their relationships, both at the empirical and analytical level. Only then can we understand how is it possible for Cuban women to successfully manage relationships with foreign men.

The previous chapter will foreshadow the discussion in Chapter V: Fantasy Island, where I propose to use the concept of fantasy as an analytical lens to consolidate the apparent contradiction between Cuban women and foreign men's expectations of their relationships. While fantasy has been equated with falsity in tourism studies, I believe fantasy shows itself as a productive force empirically in encounters between Cuban women and foreign men. I suggest that we need to validate the concept analytically to capture the production of desire. Through this analytical application of the concept of fantasy I show women as agentive subjects in their interactions with foreign men.

Chapter I: Methodology and Fieldwork

In this chapter, I describe the research techniques I used during my fieldwork in order to discuss some broader methodological concerns stemming from my experience doing research in Havana. These considerations further enabled me to theorize certain aspects of my informants' lives, in particular the way in which their relationships with others and myself were influenced by the classification of people into culturally specific categories.¹²

I begin by discussing some particularities of anthropology as a cumulative knowledge-producing discipline, particularly the practice of ethnographic fieldwork.¹³ My discussion pertains specifically to the disciplinary research traditions of socio-cultural anthropology. This exercise is important because the discipline encompasses the intent to understand cultural processes as well as a commitment to showing how such insight is gained (Hastrup 1992:8). Anthropological theories are closely interlinked with the methodologies applied to specific research projects, because anthropologists recognize that it is impossible to separate our knowledge from the conditions under which it has been produced. Hence, the objective of this chapter is not solely to describe the research techniques I utilized, but to engage in a broader methodological discussion of the value of doing ethnographic fieldwork and the challenges of doing what Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki call “improvising theory” (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007).

¹² Cultural categories of people are, for example, “the poor,” “the homeless,” “immigrants.” In this thesis I concentrate on categories of particular relevance to my informants' lives.

¹³ In North America, anthropology is studied and practiced from a four-field approach including socio-cultural anthropology, archaeology, physical anthropology and linguistic anthropology. These different fields have traditionally been split into different departments at European universities.

How Anthropologists Know

Anthropology's attention is turned to people as members of social communities. The concrete focus of anthropologists can lean more towards the individual or the community, but it is always somewhere in between (Hastrup 2003:9). This has important implications for the validity of anthropological theories. Anthropologists study people's thoughts and actions in the context of their social relationships. They focus on the unfolding of events in people's lives and the ways in which people make sense of them. A central premise of this work is to recognize multiple ways of knowing, both in data collection and data analysis. Anthropology's theoretical contribution to the larger body of scientific knowledge is hence much more than a compilation of facts about different peoples of the world.¹⁴ Much anthropological theory focuses on the way that science is produced and derived from empirical research (ethnographic fieldwork). As a reflexive practice, it is essential for the discipline of anthropology that the knowledge we produce is grounded in the everyday lives of the people we study and about whom we theorize. While anthropologists are often challenged on the representative validity of their findings, the aim of much anthropological methodology is a qualitative analysis of relationships that undergo continuous change, often as a direct consequence of the presence of the researcher.

I want to highlight the importance of what Kirsten Hastrup (1992) calls "amazement" to the anthropologist's ability to reflect. According to Paul Willis, the element of surprise is the reason why anthropologists do fieldwork: "Of course, the point of engaging in fieldwork, what impels you to face its difficulties, dilemmas and jeopardies, is to give yourself the chance of

¹⁴ Although such a contribution has been made, one example of which is The Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). The organization was founded in 1949 at Yale University, and manages an ever-growing and cross-indexed catalogue of ethnographic data, sorted and filed by geographic location and cultural characteristics. The project has been widely criticized within the anthropological community for its static approach to the concept of culture and its decontextualization of cultural phenomena. See www.yale.edu/hraf/ for more information.

being surprised, to have experiences that generate new knowledge not wholly prefigured in your starting positions” (2000:113). Such surprises can be scary to novice anthropologists, who try through carefully developed research designs to predict and control their upcoming fieldwork. However, it is by losing control and going into the field, if not empty handed, then without preconceived notions and categories to explain the lifeworlds of the people we wish to study among, that anthropologists gain valuable, and as Willis stresses, *new* knowledge (2000:113). In this and the next chapter I evaluate how I grappled with this unique skill myself. It was only through realizing the hindrance of my own assumptions about my informants’ social positions and my own position in relation to them that I was able to discover new information and gain a new perspective on my findings. This situation in turn became clear to me through a number of surprises.

While ethnographic fieldwork continues to be a cornerstone in generating anthropological knowledge and constructing anthropological theories,¹⁵ it is not easy to explain its value in a uniform way and describe exactly how it is done, because, as Malkki writes:

Since the manuals for ethnographic research that are widely used and respected by anthropologists are few and far between (to put it conservatively), and since ethnography is not usually taught as a set of standard or universally applicable methods, there is little that anthropologists can point to (other than the finished product) in explicit, ready defense of the methodological power of ethnographic work. (2007:163)

Malkki also points to the many understandings of what anthropology is and what anthropologists do that go without saying within the community of anthropologists, as constituting an internally shared anthropological sensibility (2007:163). Such a sensibility is concerned in particular with the ways in which empirical data and anthropological theory are woven into one another,

¹⁵ Meanwhile, the concrete studies that anthropologists undertake today represent an ever-broadening array of engagement with the world. This includes new ideas about the constitution of field sites; a break with the notion of fieldwork as a symbolic identity marker for the fieldworker; new mobilities and interdisciplinary approaches (Faubion and Marcus 2009).

resulting in distinct anthropological “ways of problematizing inquiry and conceptually define its objects” (Marcus 2009:5).

Anthropological knowledge is grounded in the lives of the people we study among, in their thoughts, experiences and ways of communicating them, as well as in the researcher’s interactions with his or her informants. It is born out of human interaction, not just because that is the object of our research, but also because that is a primary medium through which we obtain our knowledge. Donna Haraway (1991) coined the term “situated knowledges” to describe how knowledge is always partial and linked to the contexts in which it is created. The term has been used to defy the myth of the possibility of an omniscient, detached observer stance in scholarly research. It recognizes that, “the possibilities of knowing never lie within an imagined totality, that knowing can be achieved only in parts” (Peterson 2009:40). Furthermore, the positionality and subjectivity of the researcher frames the apprehension of such parts. In the 1980s, this recognition led to a reflexive turn in anthropology, which was at times criticized for being “navel-gazing” (Okely 1992:2). But I believe this to be a major strength of the discipline.¹⁶

Most anthropologists would agree that the power of a critical, reflexive anthropology lies in the questions we are able to ask, rather than the answers we can provide. Unni Wikan stresses the need to attend to people’s multiple, compelling concerns and to follow them as they move, if we are to grasp the concept of relevant data:

If [...] we anchor our interpretations in *praxis* (Bourdieu 1977), we may hope to better illuminate how an actual range of events, and the specific interpretations imposed upon them by the actors, together create the experience that makes up a socially and culturally mediated ‘reality’. It is by observing the practice of others, noting the interpretive frames into which passing events are placed, attending to the conversations, deliberations, and reminiscences of contextualized episodes

¹⁶ So does Hastrup. She argues that anthropology is constantly re-evaluating its own object of study and methodology, because the science is linked to a world that is constantly moving. The people and societies that we study are constantly changing, and so must anthropologists change their research questions and designs. Unlike other sciences where an already written body of texts can be scrutinized using new and improved methods, anthropology has a different rhythm. Anthropology is self-reflexive, both theoretically and methodologically, because it must constantly adapt and respond to a continuously changing world (Hastrup 2003:10 – 11).

in the lives of particular people that we may hope to go *some* way toward participating in the movement of their experience. (1990:20)

Such a reflexive methodological approach leads to what Cerwonka and Malkki call “improvisation,” and which Malkki argues is the anthropological tradition, more so than a fixed set of data collecting techniques (2007:179 – 180). Improvisation is the creative and necessary answer to the fact that many anthropologists do not apply a closed set of techniques in their research. They remain open to the possible use of many techniques such as interviews, household surveys, mapmaking, photography, life histories, linguistic analysis of speech acts, extended case methods, etc. This repertoire of methodological possibilities is applied in a flexible and context dependent manner, because the fieldworker is always implicated in social situations out of his or her own control. One must learn to do what Max Gluckman told his student: “Follow your nose wherever it leads you” (Handelman 2005:62).

The emphasis on improvisation was critical in my own use of interview techniques. Before I began fieldwork I had developed a set of research questions and interview probes that had been presented to the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (HREB).¹⁷ A number of these questions focused on Cuban women’s activities in the dance club in Havana I had chosen as my field site. However, it turned out that my informants rarely went to this club because they could not afford it. In fact, our conversations about what happens in the club were on more than one occasion the result of my invitation to accompany me there. Another set of questions I had prepared before setting out on fieldwork was concerned with Cuban women’s relationships with foreign men. I did indeed discuss these relationships in detail with my informants, but it turned out that they also had relationships with Cuban men that they often wanted to discuss with me, sometimes to tell me about the joys and troubles of these

¹⁷ See Appendix for the sample interview questions.

relationships, at other times to seek my advice. I had not envisioned that I would talk to women about their relationships with Cuban men, but as the importance of these relationships became clear, I recognized that I would have missed a great deal of important information about the women's lives had I ignored the subject. I had to improvise new questions and continuously adjust my research focus while accepting that in ethnographic fieldwork such mistakes are often one of our most productive tools for gaining new insight. Improvisation can be nerve wracking for the novice anthropologists because one must let go of a degree of control over one's research project, and maybe for this same reason improvisation can seem random and unscientific for scholars in other disciplines. Judith Okely remembers witnessing an interaction between a professor and student:

Recently, I watched an economics professor rebuke an anthropologist postgraduate. She was supposed to sharpen her hypothesis before embarking on fieldwork, otherwise she would be in danger of 'drifting'. Yet it is that very drifting which brings unpredicted and grounded knowledge. (2008:66)

In the following section, I describe the techniques I applied and the circumstances that influenced my methodological approach in the field. This discussion is meant to give an idea of how I concretely conducted my research, but also how the way that the research project unfolded led me to question not only my own methodology, but also my findings.

Being a Stranger: My Position in the Field

During my entire fieldwork I stayed with my Cuban host family consisting of my host mother, my host father and my host sister. However, as is the case with many other Cuban families, my host family was located within an extended network of family and friends, who lived in the neighbourhood or would spend a large portion of their time in our house. I chose to stay with a

host family because I envisioned that I would easily learn about the daily life of ordinary Cubans this way. I imagined I would be able to quickly pick up on colloquial terms and slang that was absent from my otherwise fluent Spanish and would possibly also be able, through my host family, to get in touch with women who could participate in my research project. I was right on all accounts and spent a great deal of the first half of my fieldwork learning to behave adequately as a “daughter” in the house: cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry, addressing my host parents appropriately, and chattering with my host sister about her boyfriend’s whereabouts. My home-stay furthermore facilitated many contacts with women who my host mother, in particular, deemed suitable for my research project (although only those who volunteered after consultations with me became part of my research project). I was lucky that my host family’s higher-level education and general open-mindedness enabled us to find a common language and have many in-depth discussions about my research project and experiences during fieldwork. Our conversations served not only as a way to cross-check the data I gathered about the life of my informants, and gain a local perspective on my findings, but also as a way of collecting much needed information about daily life in Cuba and popular discourses about *jineterismo*.

Georg Simmel (1950) has written a wonderful essay entitled “The Stranger,” familiar to many anthropology students. He argues that the stranger is a sociological figure; a special position within cultural and social units occupied by those who do not belong to the group *per se*, but manage to achieve rapport with its members and play an important role in their social life. The stranger, as Simmel poetically puts it, is “the person who comes today and stays tomorrow” (1950:402), a person who immerses himself or herself in the lives of a foreign group of people and becomes part of the group, even though he or she does not have social obligations nor owns property within the group. The point taken by most readers is that even if we as anthropologists are strangers to our informants, we obtain exclusive access to other peoples’ worlds and find

ourselves at the core of their lifeworlds. In fact we gain this access *because* we are strangers. As Simmel writes: “He [the stranger] often receives the most surprising openness – confidences which sometimes have the character of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person” (1950:404). This description of the relationship between the stranger (or fieldworker) and his or her informants might represent the “anthropologist dream.” In my experience, however, being a stranger is a more ambiguous and troublesome experience than the romantic image Simmel paints of the outsider who magically (and without effort it seems) gains exclusive access to intimate spheres of people’s lifeworlds. Hastrup notes that although it is essential for anthropologists to become part of the lifeworlds they study in some measure, not all positions in any one community are open to the researcher (2003:10). Despite the warm welcome I received from my host family, my experience during the first months of fieldwork included a constant nagging feeling of being more of a tourist than an anthropologist.

The close kinship between tourists and anthropologists is troublesome to our self-understanding because of the moral values we attach to tourism as superficial, uninformed, disinterested, exploitative and so on (Clifford 1997; Crick 1989:311). Although tourism differs from anthropological fieldwork adventures in significant ways, the desires of tourists resemble those of anthropologists. The fascination with other lifeworlds is common for the tourist and the anthropologist alike. Perhaps more importantly, visited destinations and populations are sometimes indifferent to the self-validation of their visitors. To much regret of many anthropologists, myself included, our informants do not always distinguish between tourists and anthropologists.¹⁸ I had a hard time accepting that for most of my informants I was just passing by. I was often advised to do the same things I heard other tourists being advised to do, although

¹⁸ Malcolm Crick remembers, with an appropriate amount of self-irony, how he was greeted on his first visit to Sri Lanka by a young monk with the words “hello hippie” and asks provocatively: “What is the difference between being an anthropologist, being a tourist, and being an anthropologist studying tourism?” (1985:74).

I ambitiously tried to come off as a “poor student.” In hindsight my attempts to escape the category of the tourist, just as many tourists try to escape themselves, shows that I, along with my informants, tended to think of foreigners in Cuba stereotypically. These stereotypes are no more nuanced than the same stereotypes tourists apply to Cubans. I soon learned, however, that the “foreigner” (*extranjero*) was an important emic category, and I slowly warmed up to the fact that the category might be a useful one to assume in order to understand relationships between Cuban women and foreign men.

Informants

Although it may seem like a straightforward question, it is not easy to summarize who my informants were. There are various reasons for this, which will be discussed below. My key informants were a group of ten women between the ages of 21 and 35. They self-identified as black or *mulatas*, while one self-identified as white. Six had children and one became pregnant during my fieldwork. Four had stable relationships with Cuban men, but only one with the father of her child. All except two lived with their extended families. They resided in four different neighborhoods in Havana; two suburban areas; one very marginalized neighbourhood; and one more central area of town. Their location within the city was, however, less important in defining their social status than whether they could claim to be from Havana or had immigrated there. Two had come to Havana within the last five years, and were subject to prejudice against their provincial origins from native *habaneros*. Most of my key informants were unemployed, while one was a cashier in a supermarket; one a dancer in a cabaret; and another a freelance singer. It is not uncommon in Cuba that people choose to be unemployed, because they find that government salaries are too low to make a living. Many prefer to rely on other sources of income, as did my

key informants who all derived economic support from their personal networks and relationships with foreign men. While these ten women shared in some life experiences, their life situations were different as were their social positions and class affiliations.

The people who provided me with information about daily life in Cuba and the life of women who have relationships with foreign men were not only those who formally became part of my research project by signing a consent form, as the ten women described above. In order to give an impression of the extent of the networks that I became part of, I provide the following list:

1. *My host family.* I have already mentioned my host family and their personal networks as important sources of information about daily life in late socialist Cuba and popular discourses around the phenomenon of *jineterismo*.
2. *Young people.* I socialized with and talked to a number of youth between the ages of 19 and 25 who I made friends with at the university, met through my host family, or through my partner after he had established himself in a scene where he attended lots of public events such as free concerts and raves and made connections there.
3. *Professionals and academics.* I was in continuous contact with a number of professionals who were willing to do interviews with me or talk informally about economic, historical and cultural aspects of the Cuban state apparatus and social policies. I got to know a scholar and professor in the University of Havana's Department of Economics (*Facultad de Economía*), a history professor, and a research fellow studying family relationships at the Center for Demographic Studies (*Centro de Estudios Demográficos*). Furthermore, I conducted interviews with several professional dancers who worked officially in the tourism industry or were self-employed.

4. *Acquaintances and friends*. I already had an established network of friends from my past trips to Cuba. I had visited Cuba three times over a ten-year period previous to my fieldwork and knew three different families from these visits. They belonged to different strata of Cuban society and held different political views on the country's social policies, as well as on my research interests and experiences during fieldwork. Thus, our conversations provided me with very valuable insights into the popular discourses on Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men.
5. *Foreigners*. I socialized to a great extent with a number of other foreigners in Cuba, especially men. I easily made contact with them when going to dance clubs or through those of my Cuban informants and acquaintances who worked in the tourism industry. These connections were of utmost importance to me. On the one hand, they introduced me to their girlfriends, some of whom agreed to talk to me about my research interests. On the other hand, these men themselves, both those that I stayed in touch with for an extended period of time and those I met briefly, provided very valuable information about their experiences in Cuba. I did not, however, conduct any formal interviews with them.

Two things emerge from this list. First of all, my sources of information were not solely a sample of individuals with some kind of expert knowledge or unique experience. They were, in a much broader and complex sense, the networks and relationships between individuals that I became an active participant in. In an oft-cited paragraph, Clifford Geertz points out that "anthropologists don't study villages (tribes, towns, neighbourhoods...); they study *in* villages" (1973:22), which is what I did analogically. My object of study, as well as my sources of information, were people's relationships, specifically those between Cuban women and foreign men. Methodologically it made a lot of sense to me to try to immerse myself in such relationships and

obtain knowledge about them from this immersion, rather than through de-contextualized conversations with individuals about relationships with people I did not know and which I did not have a chance to see unfold.

Second, I hope that the list highlights the fact that my relationships to my informants took many shapes and encompassed multiple ways of relating to one another other than through the roles of researcher and informant. I encountered most of my informants in socially amiable spheres and during the course of fieldwork some of them slipped into the category of friend. This is a normal outcome of the fact that ethnographic fieldwork takes place in people's homes and the researcher becomes an integral part of people's lives, even if only temporarily. It was also a natural consequence of the fact that in late socialist Cuba personal relationships are always embedded in complex systems of reciprocity (Fosado 2005:64 – 65). When relationships form between Cubans and foreigners, such expectations often become heightened and more pronounced. In relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, they often center on monetary or material exchanges. In my case it meant that my informants expected me to take a personal interest in their lives and respond to queries for economic support. There is no denial that there were inherent inequalities in our ways of relating to one another. I was, after all, privileged to be able to travel to Cuba and study their lifeworlds. Furthermore, it is I who write about them, mostly in my own and not their words, because I rely more heavily on the data gathered from participant observation than their statements recorded in formal interviews. While I aspire to present my informants' perspectives on their relationships, constructions of self and other are "rarely innocent of power" (Abu-Lughod 1993:5).

My informants were quite willing to refer me to their friends, and I met new informants through the snowballing method (using many different snowballs: the women, their foreign boyfriends, Cuban men, etc.). All my informants were self-selected for the research project.

Keeping in touch with informants did not prove too difficult during fieldwork, although it required me to move around the city a lot and spend a considerable amount of money on transport. Since returning from Cuba, I have encountered more problems in keeping in touch with informants, as most of them do not have access to the internet, and it is expensive to call Cuba from Canada. However, I often send letters and material tokens of appreciation through other travelers to Cuba. Furthermore, I am planning to return to Cuba post-graduation to deliver a Spanish summary of my findings to my informants, as they otherwise have little possibility of interrogating my thesis work.

Building Rapport

Participant observation is a longstanding method in sociocultural anthropology, which breaks with the idea of the researcher as a detached observer. Anthropologists immerse themselves in people's lives and participate in their day-to-day activities in order to get an intimate and nuanced understanding of their lifeworlds. This participation is dependent, among other things, on people trusting us and welcoming our company, what we call building rapport. Building rapport cannot be done successfully by signing carefully developed consent forms, but relies on the anthropologist's ability to relate to her informants as fellow human beings. Wikan (1990, 1992) calls this an ability to create resonance. Although we may come from different national or ethnic backgrounds, speak different languages and hold different values from our informants, we can still appreciate shared life experiences and similar emotions. Resonance demands that both parties to communication are willing to engage with another lifeworld and put effort into using shared experiences or emotions to understand (Wikan 1992:463). I would add that creating

resonance is also crucial for making our informants want to convey their ideas and interpretations of events in their lives to us.

I learned this lesson one evening while sitting in Mayra's kitchen together with Amelia having a beer and discussing what we usually discussed: the men in their lives. My fieldwork experience had been that way for the first couple of months. I would listen to my informants talk and ask them questions about their lives. They would answer and I would note their answers down. As the conversation unfolded that particular evening I detected a certain hesitation on both Mayra and Amelia's parts to share their stories with me. I speculated whether they were trying to protect their reputation in each other's eyes. Their life situations differed radically. Amelia was a young aspiring artist, had a Cuban boyfriend and had never had an intimate relationship with a foreign man. She said it was not for her although she had received offers, and she generally acted shy with the foreigners who took private dance lessons from her mother. Mayra lived independently, a rare situation for young people in Cuba, and took pride in being able to look after herself and keep her home. She was known to have relationships with various men, both Cuban and foreigners, who supported her in different ways. She was both the subject of envy and despised in the neighbourhood. Amelia had on previous occasions speculated to me that Mayra was a *jinetera*.

Amelia was telling us about her jealousy over her boyfriend's work as a drum teacher for foreigners and her heartaches when he spent the night in town with students. She was speculating what would happen if he cheated on her with a foreigner and said such a situation would be unacceptable. I was listening, but decided to add my two cents on the subject. I revealed that I had experienced unfaithfulness myself, but advised that Amelia could perhaps avoid the heartache of feeling compelled to leave her boyfriend due to her suspicions, if she was willing to give the relationship a second consideration despite her jealousy. I felt somewhat anxious about

telling the women intimate details of my own love life. Up until this point I had been careful not to provide much information about my personal life. I wanted to present myself as serious about my research and committed to my work. To my great surprise, the conversation turned 180 degrees. The two women got excited and they started revealing details about various affairs of their own and those of their partners. They both admitted to accepting their partners' infidelity, especially with foreign women, because of the financial security these relationships brought them. While infidelity on the women's part was normatively unacceptable, Mayra cynically stated that it could happen "any time and in no time," and she herself engaged in relationships with various men at the same time for the sexual enjoyment and economic convenience. I was taking down notes frantically and the women were laughing at me.

I realized that in showing my own humanity, by giving up the sort of prudish image of myself that I had projected hitherto, I got access to a wealth of data. Mayra and Amelia had not been hesitant to share this information because they were protecting their reputation in each other's eyes, but because they were protecting their public image in mine. They were only interested in sharing intimate details about their lives after they realized that I would understand them, because I grappled with the same kinds of personal problems they did.

Recording Data from Daily Activities

Staying with a family, in close contact with an extended network of friends and kin as is common in Cuba, meant a severe lack of privacy. This was mentally exhausting and sometimes made it difficult for me to stick to the research design that I had carefully constructed before venturing out. I could not always take down notes and reflect upon them to the extent that I had envisioned and solitude also eluded me.

I aspired to keep two different journals in the field. One was a research log, in which I would record my daily experiences and my reflections on them. I took this log with me everywhere I went. In it I would record all my impressions and thoughts, making note of whether these observations constituted empirical data, analytical or theoretical reflections, or methodological notes. When I had time, mostly in the evening and early morning, I rewrote the impressions from my log onto computer files, so as to be able to more easily work with the data upon returning from the field. Secondly, I kept a diary, which I left at home and in which I recorded random impressions and my emotional state of being before bedtime.

Not surprisingly, my system quickly disintegrated as I realized I could not always record notes or have time to re-write them in the evening, especially not when I did nighttime observations in the clubs. Upon returning from the field I ended up with over two hundred pages of field notes written in computer files, a bundle of full smaller note books (my research logs), along with pieces of paper, napkins, flyers and scratch paper upon which I had jotted down a host of impressions at times when I had nothing else. I had collected multi-media material such as newspaper articles, brochures for tourists distributed in hotels, letters written by my informants to foreign acquaintances, taken photographs, etc. Furthermore, I had long e-mail conversations stored in my inbox, not only with my supervisor, but also with my partner, friends and family at home, to whom I had reflected upon my experiences and in that way constructed more data. My notes consisted of recordings of all kinds of observations I did during my daily activities. I recognize that in recording from one's memory, the fieldworker is already selecting certain pieces of data, giving more importance to some experiences over others and thereby in some way constructing the framework for analysis. Consequently, we can only aspire to present what James Clifford (1986) has called "partial truths" in our published work. This process, although subjective, can be helpful when analyzing the data. I was able to trace how my focus changed and

new questions emerged as I learned more about daily life in Cuba and the lives of my informants in particular.

My weeks would usually pass by in a somewhat routine manner. I spent mornings at home, talking to my host family about everything under the sun, but my research interests in particular. I attended classes at the Faculty of Philosophy and History (*Facultad de Filosofía y Historia*) twice a week and talked to my professors about my project. During the day I would make rounds in different neighbourhoods where my informants lived and worked and I would hang out with them for hours. In the evening I mostly ate dinner at home, but would occasionally do so at a restaurant with friends or in my informants' homes. The nights and weekends were more unpredictable. I would often go out with friends and informants, mostly just to hang out in the street or walk around the city, but sometimes to a club.

I moved around in the city a lot, both by foot, public transportation and local taxis known as *máquinas* in order to gain an intimate understanding of the geographical landscapes that made up the framework of my informants' lives. I tried to go to a dance club once or twice a week, but would sometimes substitute these visits if better opportunities arose (a free concert; a house party; a religious celebration) or I would spend time with my host family in case there was a special visit at home. My daily activities depended on what my informants were up to, but since many of them did not have regular work hours, their days were unpredictable too. On the weekends I would often go on excursions, to the beach or to nearby cities. The weekend was also a popular time for religious celebrations that I attended with informants who were affiliated with the *Santería* religion.¹⁹

¹⁹ *Santería* also known as *Regla de Oché*, is a syncretic religion. It merges beliefs from the Yoruba religion, which was brought to Cuba by West African slaves during colonialism, with Roman Catholic and Native American traditions. The basis of the religion is worship of a number of deities (*orishas*), which were melded with Catholic saints during colonialism, as a way for slaves to mitigate religious oppression by the Spaniards. *Santería* rites feature representation of the more famous *orishas* (*Eleguá, Ogún, Ochosi, Babalu Ayé, Oyá, Yemayá, Oshún*, and *Shangó* among others), each

Three months into my fieldwork my partner came to stay with me. His presence gave me the opportunity to understand my experiences from yet another perspective, that of a first time visitor to Cuba, and to learn from his interactions with my host family, as well as friends of mine. Since he quickly and easily adopted a circle of friends of his own, I also became part of yet another youth scene in Havana, where electronic music, drugs and a certain way of dressing as “punks” (*punkis*) or “hipsters” (*roqueros*) were the main focus. During raves and in underground nightclubs I met young men and women who had various kinds of relationships with foreigners. These and other daily occurrences required a great deal of improvisation on my part and willingness to grab opportunities to participate in activities that did not seem to have direct relevance to my research interests, but allowed me to construct and ask new and important questions nonetheless.

Doing Interviews

The analysis in this thesis is based more so on participant observation and statements recorded from my memory than on interview transcripts. During the second half of my fieldwork I conducted fifteen formal, tape-recorded interviews with my key informants and five “experts,” a history professor, an economics professor, two dancers working formally in the tourism industry and one young man who worked informally in the tourism sector. I gained more information data when engaging my informants in informal interviews, which would take the shape of casual

identified by certain colours, costumes, attributes and dances. *Santería* has gained wide popularity in Cuba in recent years and serves as a cultural ambassador of sorts. Initiates to the religion, always dressed in white and wearing symbolic necklaces, are very visible in the street and attract curious looks from tourists. Tourists are furthermore invited to familiarize themselves with *Santería* through attending rites and consultations with *Santería* priests called *babalawos*, taking dance classes in which they learn the moves associated with various *orishas* and buying *Santería* souvenirs (Brandon 1993; Perna 2005).

conversations during my daily rounds of visits. However, the conversations were rarely completely “innocent,” because I mostly always had my notebook out during our conversations, as a reminder to my informants and myself, that everything that was said was important information that I would use in my research unless I was told specifically not to. This routine had the positive effect that once I took my notebook out, people tended to believe (rightly) that what they were saying was of great importance and they ventured into long explanations of their perspective on some issue. On the other hand, my obsessive note taking also deterred people from talking freely with me at all times. This was the case especially later on in the fieldwork, when I had established closer relationships with a number of informants. They would occasionally ask me not to record our conversation in my notes because they felt it was too personal. Taking notes also confused people, as did my status as a researcher and perhaps the sensitive subject of my study. Various times I was called upon by my host family and friends who thought that there was something I should see or hear, whether they had found a book for me or wanted to introduce me to somebody. I was always willing to receive any kind of information, but sometimes these situations turned somewhat awkward. I was all of a sudden being told about Chinese immigration to colonial Cuba, the details of the *Santería* religion or other things that were not directly relevant to my research interests, although they were indeed important matters to my informants.

Back From the Field: Data Analysis

It is important to acknowledge that anthropological analysis starts during data collection, if not before. As a spiral, theory and empirical data replace each other constantly in anthropological analysis of social phenomena (Ryan and Bernard 2003:88, 100). While gathering data in the field

I would constantly be reminded of literature and theories I had become acquainted with in designing my research project. When I followed up on situations or conversations I had experienced with informants, my approach was often shaped by this familiarity with the literature. Likewise, I would from time to time test a preliminary analysis of certain findings on informants, by asking their direct opinion on my understanding of a phenomena or emic categories. Upon returning from the field I engaged in a more systematic analysis of my data.

Gery Ryan and Russell Bernard (2003) outline a number of techniques to identify themes that are directly applicable to the kind of data anthropologists collect. However, as the authors note “theme identification does not produce a unique solution” (Ryan and Bernard 2003:103) or an unambiguous interpretation of empirical data. The emergence of themes from data collection is, as already mentioned, a process driven by the researcher. As Ian Dey writes: “There is no single set of categories waiting to be discovered. There are as many ways of ‘seeing’ the data as one can invent” (1993:110 – 111). As such, in dealing with the piles of field notes and various other material accumulated during fieldwork, I developed a set of themes to be further elaborated upon in my theoretical analysis using a number of techniques described by Ryan and Bernard. After reviewing all my material, looking for preliminary answers to the general question “what is this expression an example of?” (Ryan and Bernard 2003:87), I cut and sorted all my notes into piles and categorized them according to their commonalities. These categories were of course inventions on my part and were a first step to making analytical and theoretical sense of the material. They were, for instance, “reciprocity between Cubans and foreigners,” “popular culture,” “bureaucracy,” “consumption patterns,” “racial categories and relations,” etc. Throughout the process of analysis I used mapping exercises to see connections between themes and recurring expressions in my material. I constructed several mind maps at different scales (overarching themes and sub-themes) and kept the maps in chronological order to see how my

thinking around each theme developed over time. These maps served both to form the arguments that I present in this thesis and to structure the individual chapters.²⁰ It was through constant oscillation between familiarity with the theoretical literature and reviewing the empirical data that I was able to see the repetition of themes in my informants' utterances and activities. Furthermore, the identification of themes allowed me to understand vocalized statements or single instances of activity in a larger context, and as parts of more general discourses surrounding, and being reproduced by my informants.

Learning Through the Body

Above I have described concretely how I spent my time in the field and I have discussed my methodological perspective and some of the techniques I made use of. The application of such a methodology and the use of certain techniques consoled me when I felt nervous, a loss of control and unsure as to what exactly an anthropologist would and should do in the situations I encountered. In many ways my body was the best tool I had in the field. I would like to briefly discuss the importance of learning through the body when doing ethnographic fieldwork.

There is a widespread, almost commonsensical, agreement among anthropologists, that the personal experience of 'being there' and bodily sensory mechanisms are indispensable in the field, in much the same way as note-taking is necessary for the researcher's limited ability to remember everything that happens during long-time fieldwork. Tim Ingold has written extensively on a sense of being in the field, which lends cultural understandings to the researcher that "depends less on the acquisition of schemata for constructing the environment, as on the

²⁰ There are computer programs today that do the same work, for instance *NVivo*, which I purchased and toyed around with. In the end, however, I decided that I wanted to stay closer to my original field experience by handling the data manually.

acquisition of skills for direct perceptual engagement with its various constituents, both human and non-human” (1993:221). Wikan concurs:

As Ingold shows, it is by painstaking engagement on a day-to-day basis in events and routines, which are ‘theirs’ so that we come to share as much as possible in them. Sharing a world with others means learning to attend to it in the same way. Such a practice dispels any mystique of ‘resonance’ as field technique and epistemology. It is a down-to-earth concept, grounded in practical action. (1992:471)

It was through shared sensory experiences that I often was able to understand my informants’ lifeworlds. For instance, many of my informants cited the opportunity to access spaces, attractions or goods otherwise reserved for tourists as one reason they engaged in relationships with foreign men and as a positive aspect of their interactions. In Chapter III: Managing Tourist Hearts: Valentina’s story, I describe my own enjoyment of a lunch I shared with Valentina and a Spanish man. Perhaps the delicacies that the man had brought with him to Cuba from home would not have tasted so good to me if I had not at that point grown sick of the rice and beans I was served for most of my meals.

Okely (1992, 1994, 2008) has written quite extensively on doing fieldwork. In one of her latest works she writes on the use of field notes and, more specifically, those instances when notes are not enough. Even if the fieldworker tries to meticulously record all of his or her experiences and thoughts in notes, such notes are always subjective and already interpreted to some degree by the interests and foci of the researcher. In analyzing his or her data after fieldwork, anthropological theoretical knowledge, textual scrutiny and the application of various data analysis techniques are inadequate, according to Okely: “The ethnographer, as former participant observer, judges the authenticity of his or her conclusions and interpretations in terms of that total experience” (1994:31). In the midst of trying to make sense of my field notes post-fieldwork, Okely’s work had perhaps more resonance for me than any of the manuals I read prior to fieldwork. I thought about what Jacquelin told me about a German she had known for two

weeks: “I didn’t think that I was going to meet someone from another country that would get my hopes up. Benjamin thrills me in the sense that he takes me away from my problems. He takes me away from the stress that I experience.” I could appreciate what that meant to her because I was able to compare many hours spent with Jacquelin on the street corner outside her house with nights out in the company of Benjamin. When I went to see Jacquelin where she lived, she usually greeted me with an apathetic attitude and a reference to the immense boredom she felt at home. I was able to verify and understand this sentiment because I was indeed often bored myself when we hung out. This was a bodily sentiment stemming from hours of sitting down, not knowing what to talk about. In contrast, I was as excited as Jacquelin when Benjamin invited us out, and enjoyed our partying together fully.

In the remainder of this chapter I pick up the discussion on how theory and empirical data are in a continuous conversation, prompting the anthropologist to constantly question his or her theoretical as well as methodological approach. My experience of this way of improvising theory was prompted in the first instance by the process of applying and receiving ethics approval prior to embarking on my fieldwork. I place this discussion in my methodology chapter in order to show how anthropology is always guided by a shifting attention between theory and empirical data, resembling the swing of a pendulum.

Ethical Obstructions

Ethical approval is not just a requirement for conducting research at all North American universities, but is also crucial in making the researcher think through ethical issues surrounding the research project and ensure that neither project participants nor the researcher suffer any physical or emotional harm as a direct consequence of the research. However, the process of

applying for ethical approval posed a specific analytical and methodological problem for me. I had to put the carriage in front of the horse, thinking about my research participants in categories, before discovering through fieldwork in which ways they would auto-define and describe their relationships.

When applying for ethical approval, the applicant is asked to limit the scope of his or her research by categorizing research participants as belonging to specific groups of people who share certain salient characteristics. Such categories are of course not self-evident. They are constructions produced by the researcher that are based on social categories that might already circulate in society or that other researchers have utilized. Malkki describes how social units often come across as natural and self-explanatory categories in anthropology. She questions the utility and validity of references to, for example, “the tribe,” “the village,” “the ethnic group” or indeed “the nation” as unproblematic social units that the ethnographer can study (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007:74 – 75; cf. Abu-Lughod 1993:9). Such generalizations are tempting in their simplicity, but dangerous in as much as they eliminate variation within groups and function as identity markers that individuals might not relate to (Anderson 2004:71). Lila Abu-Lughod writes:

What became for me the most troubling aspect of ethnographic description was that it, like other social scientific discourses, trafficked in generalizations. Whether ‘seeking’ laws of human sociality or simply characterizing and interpreting ways of life, our goal as anthropologists is usually to use details and the particulars of individual lives to produce typifications. The drawback [...] for those working with people living in other countries is that generalization can make these “others” seem simultaneously more coherent, self-contained, and different from ourselves than they might be. (1993:7)

In fact, I would argue that categories of people are mystifying in their simplicity. Take such a presumed unity as “Cubans.” Racialized and sexualized stereotypes of Cubans as fun-loving, sex-driven people tell us little about individual life projects and reduce human behaviour to an expression of perceived natural differences and geographical-cultural belonging. Interestingly,

such very general social units are often commonly accepted and appropriated by the people in question. My host family would be happy to tell me how their family represented an essential Cuban national identity (*cubanidad*). One day my host mother said: “You will notice that Cubans smile even though they have many problems. This is because it is the only way to survive.” Such a statement is generalizing almost to the point of provocation, but was importantly uttered by a Cuban. Malkki concludes: “That certain social categories and groupings that [*sic*] are socially or common-sensically meaningful is important to know, of course, but it does not follow that these should be swallowed whole as *analytical units*” (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007:75).

The general intent of ethnography is to approach the field and one’s informants with an open mind and with few assumptions in order to learn the emic terms and categories from doing fieldwork. The influence that Human Research Ethics Boards (HREBs) assert upon researchers goes above and beyond the need, not only to think about people in categories, but to think about them in specific categories. As such we tend to think of our informants as “research participants” and the researcher becomes obsessed with finding exemplary members of a given category (Anderson 2004:79).²¹ For me, the consequence of going through the application process was an almost permanent unnerving feeling of not having been able to sample a) the right kind of informants and, as a result thereof, b) the right number of informants. The women I worked with did not fit well into my idea of how *jineteras* looked and behaved. It took me quite a while to

²¹ Elsewhere I have developed this argument further (Hermansen 2009). HREBs have caused anthropologists grief for a long time because of their somewhat clinical perspective to what it means to conduct research with “human subjects” (Lederman 2006:487). The questions in the Application for Ethics Approval are designed in such a way that they correspond to research done in a controlled space, not the kinds of field sites that anthropologists tend to work in. Rena Lederman writes:

Situating themselves in everyday both as persons and researchers, ethnographers expect to learn how their interlocutors negotiate the tangles of social life by observing, listening, and getting partially caught up with them. Expectations of these sorts – the very framework that gives good work in ethnography its complementary value relative to other kinds of social research – simply cannot be translated in terms designed for experimental biomedical and behavioral science, in which good work depends on creating a demarcated, controlled space of research. (2006:489)

discover that it was not the women who did not fit the category, but the category that did not fit them. This realization not only made me question the ethics application process, but also made me more interested in understanding what made the category *jinetera* difficult to apply to real people. This was especially interesting as I was not short on informants who would willingly point out others as *jinetas*.

In the next chapter, I show how thinking about people in categories in one sense turned out to be fruitful, not in and of itself, but as a vehicle for understanding social prejudice and stigma in Cuba. Thereby I move into the analysis of my data. I also expand upon the description of late socialist Cuba and in particular the Special Period that I started in the Introduction, shedding further light on the different discourses on *jinetismo* at play in and outside of Cuba.

Chapter II: Discourses on *Jineterismo*

My fieldwork in Havana forms the basis of my analysis in this thesis. However, the kinds of questions I pursued during fieldwork and used in the analysis of my data also emerged from my knowledge of the anthropological literature on global sex work, gender, sexuality, love and touristic encounters in Cuba and beyond.²² Furthermore, my understanding of recent socio-economic changes in Cuba were foundational to my interpretations of the discourses on *jineterismo* that circulated among my informants and in Cuban society at large. In this chapter, I will draw on both academic literature, popular literature disseminated within and outside of Cuba and observations from my fieldwork to analyze the discourses on *jineterismo* that my informants were subjected to. I will also use this analysis to discuss the methodological and theoretical problems of thinking about people in categories, drawing on some of the ideas I presented in the previous chapter.

Research on Race and Desire in the Caribbean

Cuba is by no means the only Caribbean island that has been scrutinized by researchers interested in issues pertaining to tourism and sex work, even if Cuba represents a particularly interesting case study due to the country's political structure and history. Much research in the region has demonstrated how sexuality has been the modality through which racialized relationships between locals and foreigners have been understood and expressed since colonization (Brennan

²² While hundreds of publications deal with historical, economic and political issues related to Cuba and the Caribbean region, I have had to limit the scope of the literature reviewed and chosen to omit a large body of texts. I examine literature that deals directly with the questions this thesis raises, although background research on literature concerned with colonial Cuba, economic and political developments on the island in the last fifty years and popular culture, especially music and dance, informs my overall understanding of the questions this thesis poses.

2001; O'Connell Davidson 1996; Kempadoo 1999a, 2004). As Edward Said (1978) has powerfully illustrated, colonialism lives on in the creation of myths, stereotypes and fantasies about exotic others, and scholars in tourism studies have continued to provide examples of this (Taylor 2001:25). The gaze that Cuban women are subjected to today draws parallels to the discourses of colonialism in more than one way. Prostitution in the Caribbean is "inextricably tied to the power and control exerted by European colonizers over black women since the sixteenth century" (Kempadoo 1999a:5). Ann Laura Stoler contends that "colonialism was that quintessential project in which desire was always about sex" and that "sex was always about racial power, and that both were contingent upon a particular representation of non-white women's bodies" (1997:43). Stoler's research does not focus on the Caribbean, but many scholars have examined the prevalent neo-colonial gaze directed at women there.

Kamala Kempadoo has perhaps most rigorously interrogated the colonial gaze applied to Caribbean men and women and the incorporation of this gaze in Caribbean people's self-understanding and gender constructions. As Kempadoo eloquently demonstrates in one of her recent works, Caribbean men and women have throughout history been portrayed as hypersexual racial Others in the global imagination (2004:1, 7). This image prevails in today's male tourists' "master fantasies" of Caribbean women as naturally passionate and innately disposed to eroticism, an image that is accentuated by the counter image of white, non-Caribbean women as passive sexual beings (Kempadoo 2004:121 – 130).²³ Denise Brennan, who has analyzed a number of online forums and articles in the popular media about sex workers in the Dominican Republic, describes how "white German men" are motivated to book their trips to the Dominican

²³ This construction of Caribbean and non-Caribbean sexualities as binary oppositions finds parallels in other parts of the world. In an edited volume dedicated to representations of Asian sexualities in the tourism economy, Annette Hamilton writes that Thai women are thought to possess "an essence which women in the West have long forgotten" (1997:152). This essentialism refers to an imagined Thai hyper-femininity, kindness, loving docility, and sexual allure.

Republic because of the availability of “dirt cheap colored girls” (anonymous man quoted in Brennan 2001:643). In these men’s imagination, it is the particular coupling of sex, race and neo-liberal exploitation of Third-World women’s labour that attracts them to the Caribbean. Julia O’Connell Davidson observes similar racialized fantasies in male visitors to Cuba who are “fascinated by black sexuality, which is imagined to be ‘untamed’ and ‘primitive’ and therefore more uninhibited, exciting and abandoned than white sexuality” (1996:46). While an underlying principle of racial otherness is integral to foreign men’s fantasies of Caribbean women, this last quote obscures the fact that Cuban racial hierarchies include white and *mulata* women. It also ignores the fact that some foreign men who engage in romantic relationships with Cuban women are not white, but Latino or black. Interestingly, the quote exposes O’Connell Davidson’s racial stereotyping of relationships between Cuban women and foreign men that are, in fact, racially ambiguous.

The intertwinements between racial and sexual desire find concrete expression in the relationships that locals and foreigners establish with each other in Cuba and elsewhere in the Caribbean. Joanne Nagel refers to these as “ethnosexual encounters” (2000:165). Nagel contends that sexuality, and its concrete expression in a phenomenon like sex tourism, is not only a gendered system, but also a racialized, ethnicized and nationalized system: “The process of racing sex and sexing race are widely practiced in the contemporary global system both as legacies of colonialism and as ongoing aspects of postcolonial processes of globalization” (2000:160). However, scholars interested in sex tourism in the Caribbean and beyond have, for a long time, investigated such “ethnosexual encounters” in particular gendered ways. Most case studies focus on white men from Europe and North America, who travel to the Caribbean, Asia, Eastern Europe and elsewhere to engage sexually with local, racialized women (Opperman

1999:251).²⁴ In 1995, however, Deborah Pruitt and Suzanne LaFont revealed that the reverse gender-play took place as well, especially in parts of the Caribbean, where foreign women engaged in sexual relationships with local men. They coined the term “romance tourism” to describe such interactions between white women and black *beach boys* in Jamaica (Pruitt and LaFont 1995). In the last decade, studies of local men and women that self-identify or are identified by society at large as *sanky-pankys*, *rent-a-dreads*, *gigolos*, *pingueros*, *bugarrones*, *beach boys*, *jineteros* and *jineteras*, etc. have greatly expanded our vocabulary and understandings of the many possible heterosexual and homosexual relationships between locals and foreigners in the region.²⁵ This new body of work speaks directly to two main arguments presented throughout this thesis. First, that by using already established and biased categories to define locals and foreigners as “sex workers” and “sex tourists,” we limit the possibilities for imagining the extent and implications of their relationships. Second, a problematization of these categories is necessary for beginning to view local women and men as agents of change rather than “victims” of historical, neo-colonial and global economic structures of oppression. As Amelia Cabezas suggests:

Yolanda’s experience, and that of many *sanky pankys*, *pingueros*, *jineteros* and *jineteras*, indicates that the elements involved in what is termed sex tourism can be ambiguous and go beyond totalizing frameworks of victims and oppressors or of purely commercial exchanges for sex. An emotional economy is at work that problematizes simple assumptions. (2004:996)

²⁴ For examples of such case studies, see Bishop and Robinson (1998), Sanchez Taylor (2000), Cohen (1993), Lee (1991), Leheny (1995), Leung (2003), O’Connell Davidson (1996), Seabrook (1996), Truong (1990). Notable exceptions to these studies of heterosexual encounters between male tourists and local women exist that confirm the general trend. These include studies of Greek *kamaki*, *beach boys* in the Latin America and Gambia and gay cruising in European and North American cosmopolitan cities (cf. Brown 1992; Bunzl 2000; Meisch 1995; Luongo 2000; Zinovieff 1991).

²⁵ Cf. Allen (2007), Cabezas (2004), Fosado (2004), Frohlick (2007), Kempadoo (1999b for a first attempt at broadening the scope for conceptualizing sex work in the Caribbean and 2001a for a summary of this project), Padilla (2007a), Whitehead and Demirdirek (2004). See also Ratliff (1999) for a South East Asian example of how Filipina go-go dancers play with shifting identities in their relationship to foreign bar goers and Frank (2007) for an example of western “playcouples” who engage sexually with each other in tourist settings.

Jineterismo in Cuba

It is midnight at the Hotel Riviera, and the Palacio de la Salsa is finally in full swing, its entrance besieged by young women begging for admission to the disco's dark interior. They spill into the lobby, languid girls with golden ringlets, creamy mulattas with spindly arms and long legs, and big-breasted, big-assed black girls, their heads thrown back as if a harsh hand held them at the napes of their necks. The women wear neon-orange biking pants and black spike heels and ruffled off-the-shoulder shirts. They wear Daisy Mae-style checked shirts and tight spandex pants laddered with cutouts all the way up the sides, from ankle to waist. They wear shirred fifty-style conga dresses and black-and-white-striped anything. Their hair is pulled back or swept up or cascading over one eye or erupting in frizzy fountains and dyed all manner of blond. To walk through the strobe-lit darkness of the disco is to inhabit several simultaneous decades of hand-me-down Hollywood: Veronica Lake and Marilyn Monroe; Betty Grable and Whitney Houston. But there are no Madonnas; her taunting power-trip has no place in this garden of plaint goddesses. (Darling 1995:96)

Although Lynn Darling is reporting on Havana's nightlife in and around *Palacio de la Salsa* (today known as *Casa de la Música*) more than ten years ago and even though today's fashion no longer inspires Cuban women to wear neon-coloured spandex, her description is exemplary of the intrigue that many reporters and tourists in Cuba experience (as might the readers of the men's magazine *Esquire*, for whom Darling is writing). Other than the sexual allure of the physical features of "creamy mulattas" and "big-breasted, big-assed black women," the fascination lies within a seeming paradox. Cuban women, daughters of the revolution and recipients of universal healthcare and free education, young, independent and gorgeous, now try to tap into the Cuban tourism industry by subjecting themselves to a neo-colonial, racialized, gendered foreign male gaze. The very term applied to the activities of these women, *jineterismo* rather than prostitution, alludes linguistically to the ambiguity of their existence. As David Forrest remarks, the literal translations of *jineterismo* as "horseback riding," along with other verbs often used in conjunction such as *pescar* (to fish) or *cazar* (to hunt), "conjures up images of strength rather than of weakness [...] The action of riding horseback is a proactive pursuit – that of commandeering the horse, letting it do all the hard work while the rider reaps the benefits of its strength and speed" (2002:102). The symbolism is striking. Even travel guides such as *Lonely*

Planet do not quite know how to advise its readers on this Cuban phenomenon, featuring “impossibly attractive Cuban prostitutes” and “ageing ‘sugar-daddies’ from Torino or Dusseldorf” according to the 4th edition of the travel guide to Cuba:

Not surprisingly the ‘rules of engagement’ have a number of peculiarly Cuban characteristics. Unlike other financially disadvantaged countries in the developing world, Cuban prostitutes – or *jineteras* as they are popularly known – are not part of any highly organized network of pimps. Furthermore, Cuba is not a society where sex is sold to fuel a drug habit, or procure the next square meal. On the contrary, many of these illicit rendezvous’ are innocuous and open-ended couplings perpetuated by young girls looking for friendship, blind opportunity, or a free pass into some of Habana’s best nightclubs. (Sainsbury 2006:136)

Cuban women, who engage in an opportunistic manner in relationships with foreign men that are ambiguously sexualized and commercialized to various degrees, do not conform to the stereotypes of sex workers in other tourist hot spots around the world, who operate under different forms of indentured labour in institutionalized spaces of sex work (Cabezas 2004:996 – 997). O’Connell Davidson remarked on the difference in one of the early studies of sex tourism in Cuba: “no network of brothels, no organized bar system of prostitution: in fact, third party involvement in the organization of prostitution is rare [...] Most women and girls are prostituting themselves independently and have no contractual obligations to a third party” (1996:40). Or, in the words of Teresa Marrero: “The fact that *jineteras* are free agents without a pimp, allows them to redefine standard economic, capitalist notions of (sex) consumerism” (2003:245).

Both academic publications and reports in popular media try to disentangle the special properties of commercialized sex in Cuba. They attempt to answer how historical processes, in particular the construction of socialist Cuba and the Special Period, have led to the unique face of transactional sexual encounters between Cubans and foreigners. In this section, I concentrate on scholarly literature written on the subject. This is not to say that other publications in more popular media are not influential, both on the perception that foreigners who visit Cuba hold of the possibilities for sexualized experiences during their vacation time and academic analyses of

the subject. I have chosen to focus mainly on scholarly literature because although popular or highly politicized writings serve as excellent data on how Cuba is portrayed and what the different discourses on *jineterismo* are, they serve less well to inform a critical analysis of the relationships between Cuban women and foreign men.

What I refer to as the “official Cuban discourse”²⁶ on *jineterismo* differs quite radically from the conclusions drawn in foreign scholarly literature on the subject. This discourse is manifest in a number of speeches, newspaper articles and publications that have been distributed more or less widely in Cuba and on the internet. The internet is not accessible to most Cubans, but it is a space where many students of Cuban affairs and other people with a vested political or scholarly interest in Cuba follow the situation and current issues of debate on the island. The discourse is highly politicized and uses a revolutionary lingo. It is of particular interest to me because it points to important arguments and perspectives prevalent in the Cuban public debate about *jineterismo*, which impacts the way relationships between Cuban women and foreign men are perceived by the authorities, relatives and friends.

The Cuban government’s stance on prostitution has changed as the country’s dependence on tourism became pressing and the impact of tourism on daily life became apparent. Fidel Castro was Cuba’s official face for fifty years,²⁷ and his persona embodies the state apparatus to most Cubans. When Cuba turned to tourism in the face of dire economic crisis, Castro was laissez-faire in his attitude towards the resurgence of prostitution in the wake of increasing

²⁶ I use the term “discourse” in a Foucauldian sense to describe broadly accepted statements within a community. Such statements and ways of talking about certain issues in turn impact and regulate people’s behaviours.

²⁷ During my fieldwork Castro announced in his weekly “Message from the Commander in Chief” (*Mensaje del Comandante en Jefe*) in the national newspaper *Granma* on February 19th 2008 that he would not accept another term as Cuba’s President. His brother Raul Castro became his successor. However, at the time of writing, Fidel Castro still retains a great deal of political power as the First Secretary of the PCC and as a close political advisor to his brother.

numbers of visitors to the island. In 1992 he said in a speech to the National Assembly of People's Power (*Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular*):

There are no women forced to sell themselves to a man, to a foreigner, to a tourist. Those who do so do it on their own, voluntarily and without any need for it. We can say that they are highly educated *jineteras* and quite healthy, because we are in the country with the lowest number of AIDS cases [...] Therefore, there is truly no tourism healthier than Cuba's. (Quoted in Paternostro 2000:20)

The year before, *Playboy Magazine* was officially invited for a photo shoot in Cuba, featuring topless Cuban women on a beach in Varadero that were published in an article titled “Cuba Libre”²⁸ (Cohen 1991). Social commentators have echoed Castro in locating the cause of *jineterismo* in women's individual desires, rather than explaining it as an imperative for sustaining families and households. In conversations with US researcher and activist Jan Strout, Mirta Rodríguez Calderón, a prominent Cuban journalist, portrays *jineteras* as young women who engage in transactional sex motivated by their desire to wear fancy clothes and enjoy themselves in exclusive tourist spaces, not in order to survive or support their families (Strout 1995:10). In the official discourse “survival sex” was a thing of the past (Espín 1991:5). It would be very difficult for the government, which is supposed to provide universal welfare for its citizens, to admit that some Cuban women, because of the chronic commodity scarcity, may choose to engage in transactional sex in order to provide for the families or improve their living standards.

In later years, however, the official discourse on *jineterismo* has been more preoccupied with *jineterismo* as a moral issue. Only a few years after Castro had advertised Cuban women as “healthy” sexual partners for foreign visitors, the symbolic affront to the revolutionary project that *jineterismo* represents had become a much more troublesome problem. Castro proclaimed in

²⁸ The title of the reportage translates as “Free Cuba.” It is a wordplay that simultaneously refers the images of topless women as allusions to the supposedly relaxed Cuban attitude towards public displays of sexuality and the popular signature cocktail drink made with rum and coke.

a speech in 1999: “A pair of high heels, a luxurious little shoe, a seductive perfume, a new dress cannot be the price of honor and the sustenance of a nation” (quoted in Paternostro 2000:18). The loss of honor consists partly in the symbolic “rape” of Cuba by foreign men’s exploitation of Cuban women’s bodies. Castro also referred to the idea that *jineteras* dishonor Cuba when they are unwilling to endure the communal experience of shortage in the name of solidarity and equality. By now, it has become a statement of symbolic proportions to refer to the motive behind *jineterismo* as being the possibility of acquiring “a pair of blue jeans” (del Olmo 1979:38), a commodity of little value in comparison to national dignity. The official discourse on *jineterismo* has rooted itself deeply in a more popular discourse on the issue, as this excerpt from self-proclaimed independent journalist, Miguel Fernández Martínez’s article “Prostitutes for Dignity,” shows:

The whores of today are very different from the ones in the bars and canteens of the 1950's [...] The prostitutes today, nymphs who are barely 20 years old, raised under the socialist doctrine, used to repeating since infancy, wearing the pioneer's banner, the pioneer slogan which proclaims 'We will be like el Che', and they are girls who never knew capitalism, who don't know what racism is, and who never knew what class divisions were until they had to experience the pleasures of accompanying a wealthy Spaniard or a Mexican businessman to those places in Havana which are unknown to Cubans. They are girls who want to spend their youth without shortages, with [*sic*] the goals of any adolescent. Other prostitutes throughout the world would be amazed to find out that Cuban prostitutes sell themselves for a pair of blue jeans or for a plate of food at a second rate restaurant. They are young women who dream of finding in their promiscuity their knight in shining armor who will free them from the blackouts and the pea soup without any meat. (May 16 1996, translation by CubaNet)

Even if Fernández Martínez intended to call upon the government to alleviate the material and economic needs that motivates *jineterismo*, his arguments target the specific desires and activities of supposed *jineteras*.

The accusations against *jineteras* for their “antisocial” and “immoral” behaviour seem to expose a fear that the activities of *jineteras* will make apparent the failures of the socialist project to fulfill its proclaimed goals of prosperity and equality. It is not without irony that the legislative basis for targeting and arresting supposed *jineteras* derives from a provision in the Penal Code

(*Código Penal*) called a “state of dangerousness” (Cabezas 2004:1006).²⁹ *Jineteras* embody desires of a large section of Cuban women (and men) that the revolutionary government has not been able to fulfill. The problem for the Cuban government is, in the words of Silvana Paternostro, “not what the jineteras are doing [...] but what they want to do with what they are doing” (2000:21). However, in an effort to explain *jineterismo* within a revolutionary narrative, the discourse takes a rather aggressive turn. In the words of FMC researchers Carolina Aguilar and Isabel Moya, Cuba’s *jineteras* are young women “who have been neglected by their families in several ways, and are characterized by a lack of ethics and moral values” (quoted in Jennissen and Lundy 2001:193).

This official, and in a Cuban context, politically correct discourse on *jineterismo* does not speak to the complex issues at stake in the lives of Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men. Rather, it reduces these issues to some Cuban women’s luxury problems or lack of social(ist) values (Elizalde 1996:25; Valle 2002:121). In its effort to explain the reoccurrence of prostitution in Cuba after it was supposedly eradicated in the years following the triumph of the revolution³⁰ as an event unrelated to the undisputable success of the Cuban socialist project (Elizalde 1996:19), these public voices locate the problem entirely in the actors engaged in *jineterismo*. The discourse scolds the women and degrades their choices. However, what is particularly striking about this official discourse is the way it breaks with a common understanding of women who engage in prostitution as victims. In other contexts, women have been considered either victims of systemic poverty and patriarchy, or the same supposed victims

²⁹ Article 72 reads: “A dangerous state is considered the special proclivity in which a person is found to commit crimes shown by their conduct in observed contradiction manifested with the norms of socialist morality” (quoted in Cabezas 2004:1006). Judicial authorities can sentence women who have been given a “warning letter” (*carta de advertencia*) three times to therapy, re-education or imprisonment and institutionalize them for any length of time up to four years (Cabezas 2004:1005; Smith and Padula 1996:40).

³⁰ See Introduction.

have been blamed and stigmatized as “vectors” of disease (Kempadoo 1999a:16; Zalduondo 1991). But in Cuba, *jineteras* are not believed to be victims in the politicized, public discourse. Rosa Miriam Elizalde, a Cuban journalist and the author of one of the few Cuban publications on the subject, writes:

It was not even us Cubans who invented this distinction [between Cuban *jineteras* and sex workers elsewhere]. In a broad study of prostitution in Madrid, Amparo Comas, researcher with the Spanish ministry that oversees women’s issues, distinguishes between two types of prostituted women: the *victim* – who has been forced into prostitution and cannot resist it because of her sociological fragility and her lack of elementary means of subsistence – and, the *responsible*, who, regardless of her internal fragility, is bold and assertive and who does not do it so much to cover her basic needs as to maintain a level of consumption above and beyond the average. (1996:72 – 73, my translation)

The official Cuban discourse delegitimizes and stigmatizes the women, but does not victimize them. Rather it outlaws their behaviour as opportunistic and individualistic.

Non-Cuban scholars have analyzed the phenomenon of *jineterismo* as a commentary on the socio-economic changes in Cuba in the last couple of decades, in particular the Special Period. Ingrid Kummels, however, reminds us that even in the earlier and prosperous days of the revolution,³¹ a phenomenon akin to *jineterismo* existed known as *titimanía*.³² The label referred to the tendency of young women (known as *títis*) to seek the company of older, affluent men, often high-earning Cuban professionals (Díaz Canals and González Olmedo 1997:173). The phenomenon was a consequence in large part of the growing contradiction between the official

³¹ Many of my informants looked back at the 1980s as the “good old days” of growth and development, when one could buy imported apples from the Soviet Union and go to the movies and eat ice cream for five Cuban pesos at the world famous ice cream place *Coppelia*. In fact, between 1980 and 1987 per capita income grew at an annual rate of 4.4 percent while in the rest of Latin America it fell at an annual rate of 0.7 percent (Zimbalist 1989). But as Andrew Zimbalist points out, the Cuban revolutionary economy is “in the eye of the beholder” (Zimbalist 1989). Other commentators who have followed its development argue that Cuba’s post-revolutionary economic progress was closely tied to subsidies and developmental aid from the Soviet Union, along with favourable trade agreements within CMEA, and had less to do with the centrally planned economy (Mesa-Lago 1993, Pérez-López 2001). As a result, Cuba’s economy suffered greatly from the collapse of the Soviet Union, as described in the Introduction, and living standards deteriorated enormously during the 1990s.

³² A number of publications describe prostitution in Cuba before the revolution. Cf. Díaz Canals and González Olmedo (1997); Fernández (1998); Lewis et. al. (1977). A popular song by the band *Los Van Van* called “La Titimanía” also speaks to the phenomenon.

image promoted by the government of full employment (despite the government's inability to completely eradicate discrimination based on gender and race in the labour market) and a rapidly expanding informal economy. Due to social differentiation between those who lived up to the ideal of a socialist citizen and held party membership or were actively involved with revolutionary organizations (such as the FMC or their local CDR) and those who did not, only one sector of society had access to certain goods and services, but could extend this access to their relationships (Kummels 2005:15). According to Damián Fernández, the term *jinete*, defined as an “individual whose strength is an ability to develop social relationships that will lead to being able to obtain goods and services in short supply” (2000:115), has been around in Cuba since the 1960s. Originally the *jinete* was someone who operated on the black market and worked his predominantly Cuban relationships, but as such activities evolved to the phenomenon of *jinetismo* it acquired special symbolic meanings, which are related directly to the influx of foreigners to the island.

In her analysis of encounters between Afro-Cuban women and foreign men, Rundle proposes that *jinetas* challenge the revolutionary narrative of social and racial equality, by representing a complex interlocking of discourses of morality, race, class, gender and nation (2001:3). Rundle interprets the figure of the *jinetas* as the antithesis to the revolutionary new man, envisioned by Ernesto Che Guevara, himself a revolutionary hero, as a selfless, hardworking, co-operative and morally pure supporter of the revolutionary project (2001:5, 2004:47). Other authors have presented a female version of the revolutionary new man, embodied by Cuban military and political heroines (Lewis et. al. 1977:xxvi – xxvii; Thomas-Woodart 2003). They have inspired a revolutionary female ideal of devotion to the revolution and hard work, selflessness, modesty and sacrifice for the family and the revolutionary project. According to Rundle, the *jinetas*, as a social, symbolic figure, defies these ideals. She is “selling out” in

pursuit of material and ‘luxurious’ desires, displaying (in the official discourse) an unmistakable anti-social and anti-revolutionary behaviour. What is perhaps worse, the *jinetera* meets her individual goals by letting Cuba, represented symbolically by the *jinetera*’s body, be invaded once again by foreign intruders who can buy her pride and independence with their dollars.

This symbolic association between the nation and women’s bodies is a long-standing trope in nationalist rhetoric, as demonstrated by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis: “Women do not only teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic and national groups. Very often they constitute their actual symbolic figuration” (1989:9). Gustav Thaiss (1978) detects a similar metaphorical use of women as the beholders of national honour (and shame) in Iran in the 1970s. During this time of rapid social change, religious leaders would rhetorically describe the Muslim community by analogy to the female and entice Muslim men to take action to protect the “virginity” and “purity” of their women (their community), which was supposedly under sexual attack from the intrusion of western values in society (Thaiss 1978:6 – 7, 12). Moreover, the analogy is used to propagandize a number of social dangers within a religious rhetoric. Different sexual acts are used to metaphorically represent different social violations of community boundaries: “For females, sexuality involves a foreign element entering the body, for males it involves part of the body entering that which is outside” (Thaiss 1978:7).

This image finds striking resemblance when contrasting the figure of the *jinetera* with the *pinguero*, a Cuban male sex worker who caters primarily to gay tourists.³³ Derrick Hodge argues that although *pingueros* participate in homosexual activities, they assume normalized heterosexuality in claiming to always take on the penetrative role in intercourse with male clients.

³³ The term *pinguero* derives from the word *pinga* (cock). The suffix *ero* denotes that this is what the individual specializes in, much like a *cocinero* specializes in cooking or a *salsero* is an expert at dancing salsa. The personal noun *pinguero* can only belong to a man, as it is someone who provides sexual services using their cock. Many interesting analyses have been conducted on the lifeworlds of Cuban *pingueros*. Cf. Fosado (2004); Hodge (2001; 2005); Allen (2007).

Gisela Fosado also witnessed how *pingueros* would almost categorically, and always publically, claim to be the dominating “top” partner in sexual intercourse, whether this was indeed true to the facts of reality or not (2004:50). Here the sexual act rather than the sexual object is more important in determining a man’s sexuality (Hodge 2001:21). This social construction of male sexuality, which weighs more heavily on gender performance than biological difference, is not unique to Cuba. It has been empirically evidenced among Brazilian transvestites (*travestis*) (Kulick 1998:229), and as a discursive strategy to preserve masculinity among Nicaraguan queers (*cochones*) (Lancaster 1997). The construction takes on specific symbolic meaning in Cuba, when coupled with the notion of the nation as woman, in danger of sexual attack. Hodge argues that whereas the *pinguero* defends his own and the nation’s pride by being the one, symbolically and literally, who “screws” the tourist, the *jinetera*’s body is invaded by tourists. In the words of Rundle: “In the nationalist logic of the government, *jineteras* are prostituting the *Patria*, Fatherland, when they are seen to be engaging in sex with foreigners and are therefore presenting a threat to the national order of things” (2004:47).

The gender bias is interesting because it leads to singular stigmatization of Cuban women who engage in romantic relationships with foreigners, according to Allen (2007). He has researched gendered and sexualized self-making projects among black men and women during Cuba’s re-entry into the global market in recent years. He argues that because of the way Cuban society is patriarchally structured, men enjoy easier access to and greater social legitimacy in the public sphere, known in Cuba as “the street” (*la calle*) and opposed to domestic life or “the home” (*la casa*). It is in “the street” that goods are bought and sold illegally and that informal connections with foreigners can be established (Allen 2007:189). While it is acceptable for men to look for different ways to solve (economic) problems (*resolver*) in the street, it is less so for women. It follows that:

Men effectively excluded from the center of dollar producing activities may choose various hustles other than the sex trade, whereas women are left few choices for play-labour. This certainly impacts the differentiation in stigma against an economy of women's sex labour, relative to that of men described here. (Allen 2007:189)

Although I think Allen is overlooking the fact that many women occupy specific roles in the public sphere in Special Period Cuba, such as lining up in front of the *bodega* to get their allotment on the ration card or searching for goods (*buscar*) through alternative avenues, I believe that women and men are stigmatized differently, when they engage in relationships with foreigners, at least when this engagement is heterosexual: "Fundamental hegemonic constructions of Caribbean masculinity are not questioned or denied to the male heterosexual prostitute. An exchange of sex for material and financial benefits with a female tourist instead reaffirms notions of 'real' Caribbean manhood" (Kempadoo 1999a:24 – 25). Men who have relationships with foreign women can capitalize on their presumed masculinity and dominant role in sexual interactions to avoid the stigma attached to commercialized sex. Women, however, who engage in relationships with foreign men, are questioned on their motivation, moral stance and psychological well-being. When one of my informants, who did not engage in relationships with foreign men, said: "I couldn't imagine sleeping with a man I didn't love," she was referring to the experience of women specifically. Few people would in the same way question whether Cuban men can enjoy sex with foreign women they do not love, as they are thought of as pleasure givers. A British woman I befriended even theorized that, when Cuban men could not assume the role of provider for their families as successfully as they used to, because goods were scarce and money even more so, they became first class lovers as a way of making up for their inability to provide. This lack of stigma towards Cuban men who have relationships with foreign women is evident in the fact that the majority of published literature on *jineterismo* focus on relationships between Cuban women and foreign men. Scholars may have overlooked the potential for studies

in the realm of sexual liaisons between Cuban men and foreign women or lesbian engagement between locals and foreigners.

People as Categories

I now turn to an examination of my informants' own appropriation of and resistance to the term *jinetera*. The objective of the discussion is not solely to evaluate the methodological usefulness of the category for my research, but to explore in what ways Cuban women and foreign men may use categories such as *jinetera* and *extranjero* (foreigner) to relate to each other and to imagine one another. I believe that it is precisely via such questioning that anthropologists are able to improvise theory, as Malkki writes:

It [ethnography] is also theoretical from the start, because self-questioning about the form and the "object" of knowledge, about *the categories that structure the enquiry*, and about (as we would say today) one's will to knowledge are continually activated and reactivated by the socially situated, embodied practices of anthropological fieldwork. (2007:170 – 171)

The feminine noun-phrase for a woman engaged in *jineterismo*, a *jinetera*, is a stigma.³⁴ As Rundle shows, its properties depend on "a complex interlocking of discourses of morality, race, class, gender, and nation" (2001:3). My host family and friends who wanted to help me with my research would often point out supposed *jineteras* to me, telling me that they were easy to spot because they wore fancy clothes and had expensive habits (for instance taking cabs and drinking whiskey). Cuban women who had relationships with foreign men often received presents from them, such as perfumes, purses, clothing, jewelry, etc. These items were "luxury goods" because

³⁴ We can understand stigma as an attribute, a behavior or a reputation that is socially discrediting to the stigmatized person (Benoit 2009). Stigma usually overshadows other aspects of a person's identity, which are invalidated by the stigma. As an example, if a woman who participates in commercial sex is being called a "prostitute," this pejorative pertains to all aspects of her life, so that even if she has children, studies, is an artist or holds other jobs, people will still know and refer to her as a "prostitute." Calling the same woman a "sex worker," on the other hand, may indicate that her participation in commercial sex is but one aspect of her life.

they could not be purchased in Cuba or were too expensive for the average Cuban to afford. The situation resulted in my informants experiencing stigmatization as *jineteras*. Various aspects of their life situations contributed to this stigmatization; for instance their self-identification as black or *mulata*; their provincial origin or residence in poor, suburban neighbourhoods in Havana; their lack of employment; and their civil status as single mothers. The stigma hides the fact that many Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men, do so on occasion when the opportunity arises and may simultaneously occupy other professional or social roles.

My informants' emphasis or suppression of certain features of their lives contributed greatly to the way in which others perceived them. This was important because, as I will show below, it seems like they took the bull by the horns and appropriated the term *luchadora* (a namechild of the revolution) to argue that their behaviours and relationships with foreign men were not the result of their rejection of revolutionary ideals, but were in fact an adaptation and a remodeling of these ideals to fit new and heightened economic needs. They used the stereotypical image of the *jinetera* to prove that in the light of their own circumstances they did not belong to this category, but rather to the more respectable category of *luchadora*. In the public imagery, the *jinetera* embodied the 'newly rich' in Cuba, and was believed to engage in illicit activities that were damaging to her health and well-being simply to obtain luxury goods. This image of the *jinetera* is best understood in opposition to the image of 'every' Cuban woman or at least 'good' Cuban women as being *luchadoras*.

The *luchadora* is a well-known figure in Cuban society, probably older than that of the *jinetera*. The noun-phrase refers to the emic term "the struggle" (*la lucha*), which has become the common understanding and description of daily life in Cuba, especially after the onset of the

Special Period.³⁵ During this period (which has yet to officially come to an end), Cuban citizens grew accustomed to state-regulated power outages, a reduction by more than half of the available public transportation and extreme shortages of food and other household necessities (Moore 2006:226). Daily life in Cuba presents itself as a struggle to make ends meet for many families and requires the ability to “invent” (*inventar*) alternative life strategies. It is in this scenario that the figure of the *luchadora* acquires meaning. Through sacrifice, black market activities and hard work, Cuban women (ideally) try as best they can to resolve their economic problems and feed their families. Concretely, they do this in various ways, but what is important is that the term *luchar* (to struggle) and the idea of the *luchadora* are widely recognized and positively associated with hardworking women, devoted to their families.

Recounting my first meeting with Dolores will serve to highlight the way in which Cuban women can play with well-known emic categories to present themselves in a desirable way and escape the stigma of *jinetera*. Dolores was a friend of my host mother and one day when visiting with family in the neighbourhood where Dolores lived, my host mother told me that we should go see her because she “had the kind of experience I was interested in.” She was referring to the fact that I had said I was interested in the phenomenon of *jineterismo* and in talking to women who had relationships with foreign men. As my host mother introduced me to Dolores she explained to Dolores and me simultaneously, that I was interested in studying “*jineterismo* and all that” and that I would like to speak to Dolores (at this point she directed herself to Dolores only) because “you also struggled for a while” (*tu también luchaste por un tiempo*). My host mother showed great sensitivity in phrasing her request on my behalf this way. Even when it was common knowledge that Dolores had acquired every piece of furniture in her house through

³⁵ Nancy Scheper-Hughes reports that in Brazil, the Portuguese equivalent *luta* is used to denote everyday experiences of poverty, portraying “life as a veritable battleground” (1992:188).

activities of *jineterismo*, my host mother did not directly tell Dolores that I wanted to talk to her about her illicit acts and experiences. Instead she framed her actions as acts of ‘struggle’, a term that has positive connotations in Cuba. Dolores understood this, and although she would become a key informant and willingly talk to me about her experiences with foreign men, she always referred to herself as *luchadora*. She often made reference to the hardship she endured and the many sacrifices she had made for her children in trying to resolve her economic problems, prostitution being just one strategy of many.

Despite these insights that I gained from talking to Dolores and in trying to understand her situation, I was frustrated because she did not fit into my proposed category of research participants. Her experience with foreign men was in the past, and she did not want to talk much about it. She had more pressing and current problems with her Cuban husband that we often discussed. It took me a long time to realize that the category of *jinetera* was inappropriate, and the stigma attached to it was highly undesirable to my informants. Sally Anderson writes that in anthropology, theoretical and analytical research questions often boil down to practical issues about where one would go to do fieldwork among the people one has chosen to focus on (2004:79). Some anthropologists go out of their way to find the “authentic” West Africans, immigrants, gays and lesbians, children or others that they want to study (among). Whether or not one feels in the right place or among the right people most often depends on the properties of the category one is using to describe one’s informants, rather than the daily lived experiences of the people one studies and their understanding of themselves. Anderson relates how she was often confused when doing fieldwork among children in Denmark because “authentic children” are often to be found in places and at times when adults are also present, intruding on the children’s space and thereby disturbing the image of a group of informants as being on their own, thinking, speaking and behaving among themselves (2004:79). Anderson was looking for children in

places where she assumed children would be on their own (without adults) and in certain numbers which verified her idea of children as a kind of ‘people’ in their own right (2004:83, 85).

Was Dolores a *jinetera* or a *luchadora*? Was she both or neither? She did have the experience I was interested in knowing about, but was not willing to fit herself into the category of *jinetera*. Her insistence on defining herself as *luchadora* taught me a lot about her situation and the stigma that *jinetera* holds. Dolores insisted on being a *luchadora* and cleverly counteracted the stigma of *jinetera* by inverting the traditional understanding of the term *luchadora* from being a term describing the struggles of revolutionary women, to describe her struggle as a woman who had had engaged in prostitution. Dolores conflated the two categories and argued that she was a *luchadora* because she had been a *jinetera*. I had gotten stuck in thinking that I was looking for *jineteras* in Havana, although in hindsight it is clear that I needed to understand the discourse of *jineterismo* and the way it was applied in social relationships before I could understand the function of the category *jinetera* in such relationships. Whether I could call any one of my informants a *jinetera* post fieldwork is irrelevant, as *jinetera* is a stigma no one willingly subscribes to.³⁶

This discussion has wider theoretical implications. Cabezas (2004) argues that sex tourism researchers in the Caribbean must confront the challenge that locals and tourists in the region do not self-identify as sex tourists and sex workers. Our discussions must demonstrate that sex work, on a global scale, takes on multiple forms and does not allow for easy and biased categorizations

³⁶ Elizalde reports on similar findings. Her interviewees wanted to be recognized as *luchadoras* or sex workers, rather than prostitutes because “the concept in itself seems derogatory to them” (1996:26, my translation). However, Elizalde does not grant them this favor, but instead concludes: “Is this concept [*jineterismo*] new? Do we have to approach it critically as a folkloric trait, innocent and optional? In my judgment: no. It is prostitution, it does not conceal itself otherwise, it is at the root of the concept and, I would add, one of its worst and most cynical expressions” (1996:71, my translation).

of sex workers, their motivations, emotions and lifeworlds, nor those of their clients. Cabezas reminds us that locals' and tourists' lack of self-identification as sex workers and sex tourists can, in some measure, be explained by the stigma these categories hold. This is, however, only a partial explanation:

Researchers must keep in mind that our evaluations need to have some connection to the way people understand themselves. We cannot employ categories to understand diverse cultures by ignoring how people make sense of their lives. The opportunity is ripe for researchers to analyze the adequacy of their categories and to listen more closely to their informants. (Cabezas 2004:1010)

In this thesis I attempt to do this and approach the category of *jinetera* as one in need of exploration and explanation, rather than as a self-evident label applicable to my informants. It seems fair to conclude that we cannot take the categories we encounter in fieldwork for granted, but we can explore them to learn about the relations between our informants and their networks and our own position within these.

Chapter III: Managing Tourist Hearts: Valentina's Story

In this chapter I recount in detail the story of one of my key informants, Valentina. Valentina's story highlights a number of themes that prevailed in most of my informants' lives and which will be examined in the subsequent chapters. Although I did not record the life histories of any of my informants,³⁷ I spent a great deal of time with Valentina during which she narrated many experiences and memories from her life to me. She did this on her own initiative, and I can only speculate as to why she chose me to be her listener. The idea that I was a "stranger," in Simmel's sense of the word, who would not hold her accountable for her confessions or question the consistency of her narratives, springs to mind. She told me intimate details of her life history, but I do not suspect she did this with a therapeutic objective in mind, because she did not need therapy. I think she did it because toward me, she could play with different representations of herself that she found desirable (cf. Behar 1990:253).

My meeting Valentina proved particularly important because it enabled me to experiment with a methodological strategy for understanding Valentina and other women's lives better. This

³⁷ Recording life histories is a well-known technique in anthropology. I considered utilizing it early on in the planning of my research, but was discouraged from doing this by reading the book *Ethnography and Prostitution in Peru* (2001) by Lorraine Nencel, and in particular her later, confessional article "Feeling Gender Speak: Intersubjectivity and Fieldwork Practice with Women Who Prostitute in Lima, Peru" (2005). Nencel had originally chosen to record the life histories of her informants based on an idealistic objective of de-objectifying them by studying their situations not only from the perspective of their work in prostitution, but also in the context of the community they lived in and their individual narratives (Nencel 2005:348 – 349). However, Nencel had her ideals challenged by the women's silence and lies about certain aspects of their lives, which were in part an expression of resistance to the research project and the unequal relationship of power between them and Nencel (Nencel 2005:349, 351). She was never able to record the life histories as she had intended, because of the women's resistance to her project, which according to Nencel, was based on their negative feelings towards their work in prostitution: "Doing a life story would force the women to recognize what they were doing and accept it as something more permanent. A life story can function as a catalyst that forces them to come to terms with the way they earn a living, which the majority of the women would rather avoid doing. And a life story creates a dimension of permanence, which in their enactments as prostitutes they try at all costs to avoid" (Nencel 2005:352). While I am not convinced that my informants would have resisted recordings of their life histories because they wanted to disassociate with their experiences of dating foreign men, I do think that life histories may create a false sense of historical factuality and causality in individual life projects. This would translate badly the opportunistic ways in which my informants engaged in relationships with foreign men and the narratives they constructed around such experiences.

approach differed from the participant observation and informal as well as formal interviews I otherwise conducted. During the time I spent with Valentina I did not focus on her as an isolated individual, but on her interactions with other people. In fact, I spent a lot of my time with Valentina in the company of other people, both foreign men, her friends, her Cuban partner, her three children and grandparents that lived in her home town outside of Havana, and some of my acquaintances I introduced her to. I discussed these relationships with Valentina and observed her interactions with different people of importance in her life. In this way I saw Valentina and her lifeworld both through her eyes, and I saw her the way other people saw her. This double perspective helped me contextualize her life and her narratives and enhanced my understanding not just of her life, but of the lives of women in situations similar to hers.

Anthropologists before me have focused their work and their writings on one person in particular (cf. Behar 1993; Crapanzano 1985; Kendall 1988; Wikan 1990). It may seem curious for researchers who supposedly dedicate themselves to studying social issues to limit their sample size to one. But long time spent with one person, during which the anthropologist is able to watch and participate in that person's networks, may grant us a greater understanding of the kinds of social processes that guide people's lives. In writing about Bedouin women with a similar focus on their individual narratives as the one with which I approach Valentina's story, Abu-Lughod contends:

Reconstruction of people's arguments about, justifications for, and interpretations of what they and others are doing would allow clearer understanding of how social life proceeds. It would show that, within limited discourses (that may be contradictory and certainly are historically changing), people strategize, feel pain, contest interpretations of what is happening – in short, live their lives. (1993:14)

I believe that Valentina's story will provide a gateway to exploring the ways in which Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men manage their relationships both with foreign and Cuban men and with others, such as an anthropologist who becomes part of their life

temporarily. I hope that Valentina's story, in a little way, can convey the complexities and ambiguities inherent in her and other Cuban women's relationships to others (cf. Abu-Lughod 1993:1 – 2). I also believe it shows that she is not merely being acted upon or 'exploited' by foreign men, but is an active player in a larger system of interaction.

High Expectations

I met Valentina one night when I went to *Casa de la Música* with Ryan, an Irish man. Valentina was Ryan's date and he filled me in on how they had met before she arrived. They had met on the street, he said. He had been sitting on a corner drinking an orange juice and he had seen her and called her over. They had chatted and he had invited her out. This is what he knew about her: she came from an eastern province, she was a social worker, but now she worked at her aunt's food stand in Havana. She was smart and funny and they had had a great time going out together. I asked if she was beautiful and Ryan said "of course" with a big grin on his face. He said she had swept him away with her wit, which to Ryan made Valentina different from other Cuban girls he had met. When Valentina arrived she impressed me too with her friendly and fun loving attitude and her openness in speaking about herself. We became instant friends.

We all agreed to go to the beach on the weekend and there I got a chance to speak much more with Valentina. I presented my research to her and to my surprise she was more than willing to keep talking to me, although she never said that she fitted into the category of women I wished to speak to or that she engaged in any illicit affairs with foreigners. We talked about the prospects of her relationship with Ryan. She asked me to talk to him on her behalf and explain what she could not because her English was limited and so was his Spanish. She wanted to be honest with Ryan and not give him any false hopes about their future together. I was to explain to

him that she liked him and was having a great time with him, but that love was not enough in order for a relationship between them to work. She had economic needs and had to think about them when planning for the future. She would love to keep in touch after he left, but she could not promise to wait for him if she met someone else who could help her out financially. I talked to Ryan and he said he understood Valentina's situation. By giving me this opportunity to help (with my translation service) Valentina showed me that I was to be trusted as a person to whom she was willing to strengthen emotional and reciprocal ties. I followed the development of Ryan and Valentina's relationship on the sideline and when he left Cuba after three weeks, I continued seeing Valentina.

A couple of nights after Ryan had left I met up with Valentina and she seemed disappointed. She said that she had talked to a friend who had advised her that if Ryan had really loved her he would have given her 100 dollars daily to cover her needs. "Can't he see what kind of situation I have?" she said in a frustrated voice. All that Ryan had given, she said, was bus fare so she could go back to her hometown and see her children. Ryan called Valentina a couple of times after he had left Cuba and he looked for her every time he came back to Cuba which he did frequently because he worked for a foreign hotel establishment south of Havana. But when Valentina remembered Ryan she repeated a Cuban phrase to me: *esa relación no sirvió*, which can mean, depending on one's interpretation "that relationship didn't work" or "that relationship wasn't worth it." It was clear to me that Ryan and Valentina had very different expectations of their relationship. Ryan told me about gifts he had given Valentina. He had taken her out on excursions and said he was sure she liked this treat because it was something she could not normally do. On their last evening together he had given her a burned CD with songs they had listened to together on his iPod. Ryan was trying the best he could to be romantic and was concerned about how he could make a long distance relationship with Valentina work. He was

not even sure if he wanted to get very involved with her because she had three children and he had never before dated a woman who was a mother. Valentina did not seem to have the same worries, nor did she seem to be very impressed with Ryan's gifts. She talked about her frustration over the fact that Ryan did not give her any money, which was what she really needed. Ryan did not want to think about Valentina as someone who expected him to give her money; he wanted her to love him without any economic expectations, but Valentina clearly reasoned the reciprocity of their relationship differently. She liked Ryan, but could not afford to be with anyone unless there was some kind of financial gain. She did not feel that she "tricked" Ryan in any sense. She believed that he had not understood her situation well enough to do what it took to make the relationship worthwhile.

I quickly learned that Valentina had many foreign friends and admirers, some of whom came back to Cuba on a regular basis, some of whom she had spent weeks or even months with in Cuba, others only days or a single night and most of which she kept in touch with over e-mail. She knew so many different men that I got confused when she mentioned them by name. She showed me a book she had where she wrote down the names of everyone she met, where she had met them, where they were from and what she had told them about herself so that she would not get confused and would not later say something that did not coincide with what she had initially related to them. Valentina did work occasionally for her aunt and took me to her food stand once, but most of her time was spent going out with foreigners to bars, discos, theaters, the movies or different tourist attractions. She spoke differently about her various partners; some she talked about with excitement, telling me how they had met and what they had done together. She told me about their looks and manners, and whether or not she thought they were good in bed. Others she talked about with respect or as good friends that helped her out when she needed it and showed her a good time out. Finally there were those she talked about with disappointment or

rancor, those who had promised things that did not materialize (such as coming back, inviting her to visit them abroad, sending her gifts, etc.) or those who had not lived up to her expectations of reciprocity, as in the case of Ryan where Valentina felt she had spent a lot of time with him and in return he had given her nothing, or at least not what she wanted.

One of the men that Valentina had established a satisfactory relationship with was a Spaniard who came to Cuba often. He came every two or three months, lived in the same place in Havana and rented a car. I was introduced to him one afternoon when I had been helping Valentina with writing e-mails to her other admirers on my wireless connection. Miguel came to meet us in the hotel lobby where we were sitting and after chatting for five minutes Valentina said she was hungry and Miguel suggested that we go to his place where he would serve us lunch. Before leaving the hotel, Valentina said she had to show us a purse you could buy in one of the hotel's boutiques and we admired it together. Valentina did not ask Miguel to buy it for her, but she asked the woman in the store to take it out of its glass cage and asked what it cost. Finally Miguel said: "Okay, then you'll get it... because it is Saturday." Once I got into Miguel's car, I knew I was in for a treat. The car was nice and drove smoothly and we were at Miguel's place in no time, a villa that distinguished itself from other houses I had been in by being clean, spacious and well furnished. Miguel cooked us lunch with *chorizo* sausage and *serrano* ham he had brought with him from Spain, along with a good red wine from his home province and delicious dark chocolate for dessert. Valentina and I stuffed ourselves while Miguel kept cooking and bringing more treats. Valentina entertained us with stories from her childhood and showed off some jewelry that Miguel had given her. She told me about their plans for the week; they were going to a cabaret; they were going out to buy some things she needed to bring back home; and they were going to hang out with one of Valentina's friends. It sounded like fun and I caught myself thinking that if this was the life of a *jinetera*, it was a sweet one. I had a moment alone

with Valentina in the car before Miguel drove me home and she told me that Miguel always took her out to places and gave her gifts. She drove in his car, ate good food and got to do things in Havana, which were otherwise for tourists only. Apart from that, Miguel was nice and respected her. She had not yet slept with him.

Valentina's relationship with Miguel was not problem free. She explained to me that she had to manage his expectations. Whenever I was out with them, I noticed that Valentina avoided touching Miguel or being touched by him, even though he seemed anxious to do so. She did not hold his hand when they walked together and when sitting down in a bar or a restaurant, she talked and told stories from her life but did not lean against Miguel or kiss him. One time she tried to get rid of Miguel at a party, because she had agreed to see an Italian man later that night. She asked me to play along when she pretended to be sick and finally Miguel left because he realized they would not be able to enjoy each other's company that night. Valentina said that she needed to control Miguel this way because every time she went out with him she ran the risk of bumping into other lovers and she was also less likely to be stopped by the police if she kept a physical distance from him.

But while keeping her distance, Valentina needed to keep Miguel interested in going out with her. Valentina herself said that her advantages were her sensual eyes and mouth, her seductive way of smiling and gesturing and her entertaining stories: "I always approach them discretely. I let them look at me so that they can appreciate me. They like my eyes and my mouth, which is my biggest advantage, or my slim figure or my height. When I see that they look at me, their gaze is very revealing, you know." I think Valentina's spell went far beyond her physical advantages. Valentina successfully maintained relationships with a large number of foreign men by coming off as an independent woman, different from all other Cuban women. She was no servant to any man and let them know that she had secrets she would not let them in on. Men that

wanted to be with Valentina were eager to get under her skin, both in a metaphorical and literal sense, but they also liked how she stimulated their fantasies of who she was without giving in to their every command. Valentina said she would eventually sleep with Miguel, but she also had to tell him later that if he wanted to continue the relationship he would have to give her something more than little treats, because last time he visited Cuba he had left her with only 200 dollars and if he wanted her to come see her in Havana every time he was there that was not enough to cover her expenses and make the visit worthwhile for her.

Valentina was very willing to “help me with my project” by telling me just about everything about herself and her life and answering all of my more or less intelligent questions.³⁸ She told me about an experience to exemplify the dangers she was able to get herself out of by confronting honesty in a practical manner. She had been caught by one of her foreign lovers with another foreign man. Her lover had looked for her in a place where he knew she often came and there he had bumped into her while she was walking around with another foreigner and a friend of hers. He had gotten angry, but Valentina was even more offended than him, or pretended to be. She explained to him that the other foreigner was her friend’s boyfriend (this was a lie) and that her lover knew that if he wanted to see her he could make a date with her, but that he had no right to spy on her or control her actions when they were not together and if he had not asked beforehand to see her. I admired Valentina for being able to skillfully manage her lies so as to

³⁸ I also learned things of personal use to me from Valentina, because she was not only streetwise and knew how to conduct herself in Havana and with foreign men, but was also a good advisor and a friend. She came with me to the university one day where I had a meeting with an unfriendly secretary who asked me for documents I could not provide. After the meeting I was distressed and I asked Valentina how she felt about having to lie on a daily basis. She said that no matter what lies one had to tell, one had to show one’s face to the sun and could not hide away. She prepared herself by always thinking her lies through and knowing how she would explain herself if she was caught one day. She said it had happened to her that she had needed such an alibi, once when the police had caught her when she was out on the town and had taken her to the station. They had found condoms in her purse and had asked her why she carried around condoms, expecting that she did this because she solicited. Valentina told me laughingly that she had acted semi crazy and had said to the officer: “I just love sex!” Finally the police had let her go because they could not prove that she had solicited or perhaps because they found her explanation so charming.

keep her many different relationships with many different men conflict free. For her, it was also a question of respect: “What I am not going to allow is that they abuse me, or that they tease me. Nobody is better than me. If there is one thing you must have, before you go with anyone, it is self-respect. So that they respect you.”

I can of course not be sure that Valentina was in any way honest with me. In fact, I think that her willingness to talk to me stemmed from the opportunity our relationship provided her to play with different representations of herself that she found desirable (cf. Behar 1990:253). I never asked for the “truth” about her, as opposed to many of her foreign companions. They wanted to test her in order to find out “who she really was,” although they might have accepted her lies in order to keep believing that they were special to her or that they had successfully escaped the demeaning category “sex tourists” via true love with Valentina. Eric Ratliff (2004) describes how Filipina go-go dancers perform select identities for their clients through narrative strategies. I believe that Valentina in the same way used her narrations to influence my opinion of her and chose to do so because of my willingness to listen non-judgmentally to any story about herself she would tell me.

In the beginning I was eager to see Valentina “backstage” (MacCannell 1976) and I liked to think that she took me places where no one else had gone with her, or at least where none of her foreign partners had been with her. I had many days with Valentina during which we talked and hung around in Havana, but also during which she showed me her world. One night she took me to a restaurant on the top floor of a high building in which she sometimes sat and drank a beer or two alone. She told me that she always chose a table by the window because the glass reached almost down to the floor and she could see all of Havana from there and said that she liked feeling free as if she was flying over the city. This same night she also took me to a hotel pool and said that she often came here and was allowed in because she made herself pass as a

foreigner.³⁹ She put on an Italian accent and because of her fresh attitude and her “shamelessness” (*sin vergüenza*) she got away with the trick. Another night we went to one of the discos she frequented, but she said that we might have trouble getting in because only couples were allowed into this disco.⁴⁰ I said that we could just say we were a couple, nobody said that lesbians could not get into this club. Valentina laughed, but kind of liked my idea and maybe she was also a little impressed with my ability to think creatively because she was usually the one to teach me how to earn street credit in Havana. In this way Valentina, little by little, let me into her world. All the time, while taking me to places or introducing me to recreational possibilities in the city, she talked to me about her experiences with foreign men. Sometimes I almost suspected her of giving me quotable phrases on purpose, such as one time when she said: “I don’t lie to the men that I date, but I know that I sometimes play with their feelings” or when she said that even though it might sound sweet to me when she told me about all the places she got to go to and all the good food she ate when with foreigners, it was sometimes boring and what was worse: “sometimes I don’t even reach an orgasm.”

Valentina invited me to the place where she lived in Havana, a rented house, on a day we had scheduled a formal interview. I asked her if she ever took any of her partners here, but she said no. In this place she had all her personal belongings and this was also where she kept the money she got from her admirers or other business she was involved in. She sometimes ate here by herself, but when I opened her fridge I realized that all she ate was “fast food” together with a bottle of red wine that she kept cold. Valentina showed me her perfumes and clothes and a little

³⁹ Until April 2008, Cubans were not allowed access to certain hotels, beaches, restaurants and shops. Those were restricted to tourists. Many still gained access, however, through bribery or when accompanied by foreigners. Raul Castro lifted this ban when he assumed presidency; however, many of my informants noted that the cost of entering these spaces was still so high that they were effectively excluded from them.

⁴⁰ The couples only rule was supposedly a way of limiting the number of single Cuban women in the disco, but many women enter in the company of their husbands or a family member who also can act as a broker for them in trying to pick up a foreign man.

heart shaped box where she kept the receipts from when she went to the bank machine to get her account statement. I pointed out the irony in the fact that the box was shaped like a heart and how that was associated with the way in which Valentina got the money and she laughed and said: “Ah yes, love can make wonders” (*el amor hace maravillas*). We talked, cooked and ate together and I interviewed her. I tried to convince myself that sitting here in Valentina’s kitchen in her rented house in Havana I had gotten “backstage” because I had seen her when she was not dressed up and drank wine directly out of the bottle because she liked it, and no one was around to tell her not to do so. Later, I got to see yet other sides of Valentina’s life. I learned that the rented house in Havana was just one of many stages on which Valentina’s life played out (cf. Goffman 1959). While she had talked openly to me during the interview, I do not think she showed me her “true” self as opposed to an “untrue” self she shared with foreign men.

By the end of my stay in Cuba, Valentina invited me to visit her in her hometown, a small city in one of Cuba’s eastern provinces. While she spent most of her time in Havana, she went back home on a monthly basis and wanted me to come see her there. Valentina picked me up at the bus station together with a Cuban man, who I figured was the one she had hitherto called “the doctor” and about whom she had told me she had an undefined relationship. However, when Valentina had first given me a big hug she presented the man to me as her “husband” (*marido*)⁴¹ and afterwards smiled and laughed nervously. He left for work after greeting me, and Valentina exclaimed: “I didn’t know how to introduce him!” I was not quite sure whether she found it awkward to introduce the man as her husband because of what that would make him think about

⁴¹ It is common for couples to refer to each other as “husband” (*marido* or *esposo*) and “wife” (*mujer* or *esposa*), regardless of the legal status of their relationship. In fact, Cubans often use this terminology to indicate their commitment to a person whom they have only been engaged with romantically for a short period of time. This terminology furthermore serves to legitimize sexual relationships, show respect for another person or indicate the reciprocal expectations. Younger people may refer to their partners as “boyfriend” (*novio*) or “girlfriend” (*novia*), but also frequently make use of the formalized language of consensual marriage.

their relationship or because of what it would make me think about their relationship, but I came to the conclusion that she had chosen to do so out of respect for “the doctor.” Valentina showed me around the city I had arrived in, but it turned out that she actually lived in a suburb. She lived with her grandparents and her children, and now her husband stayed in the house with them too. During the three days I spent with Valentina I got to know a new side of her – new to me because I had not seen her in the context of her hometown before; I had only heard about her family and her life there. I had thought on my way to see her that I was now going to see her real “backstage,” away from Havana and in her own environment. I soon learnt that it would mean very little to apply this term to Valentina’s life in the province.

Valentina had told me all along that she loved her hometown and the day she bought a house for her and her children it would be there and not in Havana. Valentina liked her hometown, I assumed, because it was small and pretty, but at the same time it had a city feel to it. There was less hassle than in Havana and she had her family and friends there. As for many Cubans, Valentina’s family was scattered over different houses. We visited her mom, but stayed the nights over in Valentina’s grandparents’ house. Her nephew ate dinner with us, even though Valentina told me that he lived with his mom elsewhere. Valentina’s dad came by after dinner, he lived with his new wife in another house nearby. Just as I could easily understand why Valentina liked her hometown, which seemed like a peaceful place compared to Havana, I quickly realized why Havana would sometimes seem like a welcome escape for someone like her. She had a strained relationship with her father who seemed to be watching her every move and to be judgmental of her life choices.

Valentina explained to me that she had worked for her family’s survival since she was a little girl, starting out by selling mangos on the street. She felt that her father had never taken good care of her and did not appreciate all that she had done for their family. She had chosen to

go to Havana and to start dating foreign men to take care of her children. Her husband at the time, the father of her children, had been in agreement. But her father had given her name to the local police, accusing her of soliciting. She had been interrogated, but had been able to explain why she had been in Havana by showing a false document stating that she was legally married to a Mexican man who she claimed to have been visiting. I was horrified by the fact that Valentina's own father could do such a thing to her, but Valentina seemed to expect nothing less from him. Valentina's decision to go to Havana and make money by going out with foreigners may not have been easy as it would take her away from her children and had a negative influence on her reputation. She had made the choice with the thought of improving her family's living conditions, but I realized that Valentina might also have welcomed the opportunity to get away from family problems and enjoy herself in Havana.

She told me that her husband, the "doctor," was a great help in the house. He always cooked and took good care of Valentina's medical problems that gave her frequent migraines. He also handed over his entire salary to her when he got paid, so that Valentina could buy food. However, it was clear that Valentina was the one with the most money in their relationship. I asked her if she had talked to her husband about where she got her money from and what she did when she was in Havana, but she said that she had made an agreement with him early on about not asking questions. She let him do what he wanted and she had asked him to give her the same liberty. I think that he had agreed to her conditions because he was in love with her. She had demanded that if he wanted to be with her and live in her house, she would act as his wife when she was home, but she wanted no questions asked about her whereabouts when away in Havana. Simultaneously the money that Valentina brought home could also help them built a comfortable life together.

When in her home province, Valentina would leave the suburb where her family lived and go into town every so often. She went to check her e-mail in an internet café and maybe see a few of her friends. I went with her one day and first we said goodbye to her husband who was going to run some errands. Afterwards we went to pick up a package with some medicine that Miguel had sent to her and finally we met up again with her husband at the internet café where Valentina wanted me to help her write some of her admirers. On the way to the internet café we bumped into a guy Valentina knew. She talked with him for about ten minutes and kissed him on the mouth when we left. She told me that he was an old boyfriend of hers and that she sometimes went out with him because he invited her out for drinks and had a car that he would pick her up in. Now she was together with her husband (whom she had known for eight months) and she said that she could only be involved with one man at a time; otherwise she would get confused. I assumed that she meant Cuban men and that she was talking about being involved in a formalized relationship that would also be public knowledge. At the internet café, I was surprised at how easily Valentina could read and reply to e-mails from her many admirers without her husband paying attention to what she was doing. I thought that he was keeping himself busy checking out the medicine that Valentina had received because he knew that whatever e-mail she was reading or writing it was not meant for his eyes.

When the two of them followed me back to the bus station the next day we stopped by a shop selling electronics to take a look at the computers for sale. Together, they explained to me that they were thinking about purchasing a computer so that they could burn CDs and sell or rent music and DVDs on the black market. I was slightly surprised even though I knew this was a common way of making money in Cuba. I calculated that for Valentina, this was a business with a slower and smaller payout than what she got from her foreign admirers. I knew that she would be the one who had to invest in the business, because she was the only one who could afford to

buy the computer and I did not quite understand her interest in such an investment. I did not talk to her about it (because her husband was present), but I later thought that Valentina might be planning this kind of business because it was a socially acceptable way of making money, despite being a black market activity. She could share the work and the earnings openly with her husband as opposed to the relationships with foreign men, which forced her to calculate her time and her lies constantly.

I came to the conclusion that Valentina's hometown was not her "backstage" and that Havana was not her "front stage" either. Neither was the suburb where she lived with her family her backstage (as opposed to the bigger town where her husband worked being the front stage), nor was her house, or her mother's house where she had grown up or any other place a place in which she showed her 'true self' as opposed to the role she played as a lover to foreign men in Havana. Valentina's life played out on many stages and she acted out different roles, all true to her life and living conditions. When I met her in Havana, she was a charming, beautiful, intelligent and fun loving Cuban woman and she dedicated herself to spending time with foreign men who enjoyed her company and were in love with her attitude and energy. Valentina liked to play this part of her life, more or less, depending on the company and the economic outcome of her efforts. She liked going out and felt good about "knowing all there was to know about Havana," having been to every single bar, hotel or tourist attraction worth visiting. However, she also missed her children and found it depressing sometimes to be in Havana or even frustrating to try to close all the deals she had with different admirers or business partners that did not always willingly pay her what she thought she deserved for her favors. Back in her hometown she acted out a different role, that of responsible mother and caring wife. This was also a role she liked. She loved her children above everything else and she felt comfortable with her husband who was good to her, as opposed the father of her children whom she had left after six years of marriage

when she found him in their bed with an “ugly black woman” (*una negra fea*). She was no more or no less her “true” self back home, but she had other responsibilities and other daily tasks to take care of. Her different roles sometimes came into play simultaneously or maybe even into conflict; for instance, when she had to deal with phone calls from foreign men when her husband was present. But despite such tensions, Valentina managed to keep her integrity intact. Maybe this was possible because she truly did not lie, neither to her foreign admirers, nor to her husband or family, nor to herself. She was self-confident and even though she offered one story about herself to one man and another to another man, these stories were all true in the sense that they were what she deemed appropriate for the situation and corresponded to some aspect of her life. She gave out as much information about herself that her family and partners would feel they got to know her and at the same time they did not have to be troubled by her ‘double’ life. Valentina was herself on all stages, but since she experienced different possibilities or restrictions for acting out sides of herself on each stage, she allowed only restricted access for others to the different stages respectively. Valentina’s admirers would not have gotten ‘closer’ to her by seeing her home in Havana, but they would have seen her wearing dirty clothes and eating fast food and being depressed when missing her children. This was an image of Valentina they would probably rather avoid, because it would have ruined their fantasy of Valentina as a resourceful, energetic and healthy young woman.

Emergent Themes

A number of themes emerge from Valentina’s story. Here, I will foreshadow how they fit into the overall argument of the thesis, before I contextualize the issues and discuss them in depth in the next two chapters. I want to reiterate that neither Valentina’s experience and attitude, nor those of

any other of my informants, can be reduced to a representation of all Cuban women. Ruth Behar points out that such an assumption has flawed the analysis of life histories in much ethnographic writing:

Ironically, many life histories, despite the fact that they focus on individual actors, fail to do just this. The problem lies in the nature of the frame that the ethnographer feels called upon to produce to lend weight, meaning, and credence to the native's words. The purpose of such a frame is, too often, to show that, although the account bears the signature of a single actor, it ultimately is representative of, and undersigned by, some larger social whole. (1990:225)

Furthermore, Valentina's story does not provide us with an objective account of the lives of Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men. No less than any other sort of ethnographic writing, the recounting of one individual's narratives and experiences is shaped by the point of view taken in the representation. The women's individual narratives, as they related them to me, and as I interpret them in this thesis, teach us about themes of importance in the ongoing and constantly moving relationships that these women have with foreign men, Cuban men, friends and relatives, and me. Because human relationships are constantly evolving and do not have the same chronology, these themes do not explain the relationships in any final way, nor is it possible to deduce the outcome or implications of other encounters between Cuban women and foreign men by looking at them. It is, however, possible to understand how the women's particular worldviews and life projects influence and are influenced by their relationships with foreign men.

Valentina's story provides us with an account of the challenges Cuban women encounter in trying to manage their relationships with foreign men and the skills that they employ to do so. One topic of conversation that constantly emerges is the differing expectations of the reciprocity between the women and their partners. In her relationships with Ryan and with Miguel, Valentina experienced disappointment when these men, in her understanding of the situation, did not understand her financial needs and failed to help her out accordingly. Ryan, on his part, seems to

have wished for a love relationship with Valentina free of economic expectations. While Miguel seemed more comfortable with the economic transactions in his relationship with Valentina, he did not reciprocate sufficiently according to her. In the next chapter I analyze this common tension in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men. The tension is, however, dependent on other complicating factors as well. The stigmatization and police harassment that such couples experience in Havana is a constant concern for the women, if not also for the men. How does the social control women are subject to, both from the Cuban government and their family and friends, and the mistrust they are often met with by foreign men, influence their strategies for making the relationship “work”?

The analysis leaves us to question how relationships between Cuban women and foreign men persist (sometimes for a long time), despite the tension that seems to prevail in their interactions. In Chapter IV: Fantasy Island, I discuss whether the men’s acceptance of the relationship as a kind of a spectacle in the larger context of discourses of *jineterismo*, economic inequality between Cuban women and foreign men and the Special Period, is not in fact the basis for the success of many relationships between Cuban women and foreign men. The trouble for Valentina and other women is not to pretend to love the men, but to manage their expectations. One of Valentina’s admirers went looking for her and ended up being told off by her when he put up a stink regarding her whereabouts. The situation is intriguing, because the apparent problem (that Valentina had lied and thereby exposed her admirer’s naiveté or confirmed his suspicions, depending on how one sees it) was not the problem. In fact, Valentina did not excuse her lie. She understood that the basis of their relationship was the man’s acceptance of her lies or omissions of information about her relationships with other men. She was not upset because he caught her, but because he sought her out and destroyed the foundation of their relationships, which was an acceptance of a fantasy of falling in love in Cuba. I believe this man actually wanted to be fooled

in his relationship with Valentina, so he could continue to enjoy their time and experiences together, but he got too curious and could not help himself but to go looking for her. I use fantasy as an analytical concept to demonstrate that it is a myth that foreign men should exclusively desire to get “backstage,” but that they too accept that the women’s realities play out on different stages (Goffman 1959). Valentina engaged in different social roles at different times and in different places, none of these roles more or less true to her “self” but simply different aspects of her life. She furthermore played with these different representations and interpretations of herself towards her foreign partners as well in her relationship with me. The concept of fantasy proves particularly powerful in analyzing how a desire for difference is articulated in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men. I develop an analytical concept of fantasy that is not in binary opposition to the notion of authenticity and which has often been reduced to “falsity” in tourism studies. I argue that it is a productive concept on its own, and an inspirational one in trying to understand how Cuban women are able to maintain relationships with foreign men, despite the tension that seems to prevail in these relationships.

Chapter IV: Notions of Love and Reciprocity in a Cuban Context

Upon arriving in Havana I visited the parents of a Cuban friend of mine, Adrian, a student of English with whom I had a teenage romance on my first visit to Havana for a high school trip. Our relationship was short lived, but over the years and when re-visiting Havana I managed to keep in touch with him and his parents. Now I learned that Adrian no longer lived in Cuba. He had married a French woman and lived in Europe. I was surprised because the last time I had seen him, a few years before, he had confessed to me that he had no desire to leave Cuba like so many of his fellow countrymen. He was doing very well for himself working as a tour guide for a state-owned agency. Sometimes he earned as much as 1000 dollars a month in tips from North American and European tourists. This immensely high income in Cuba had secured him a privileged position. He lived by himself in one of Havana's most desirable neighborhoods and he was able to generously support his parents. I believed that Adrian had not had intentions to leave Cuba, although I was sure that through his professional engagement with tourists he would have made friends and had probably been invited abroad numerous times.⁴² Having coffee with Adrian's mother in her kitchen, she told me everything about the wedding in France, which Adrian had paid for his parents to attend. This marriage, she assured me, was "for love" (*por amor*). Adrian had not even had problems getting a visa to go live in France with his wife, because the immigration officials could tell that he and his wife loved each other sincerely and that the relationship was not one "with ulterior motives" (*por interés*).

⁴² In order for Cuban nationals to travel abroad they need an "invitation letter" (*carta de invitación*) from a foreign individual or institution. Furthermore, they must apply for permission to leave the country from Cuban authorities, and obtain the relevant visas needed. This process is slow, bureaucratically bothersome and expensive.

In Cuba, relationships between Cubans and foreigners are generally assumed to fall into these two categories. Relationships *por amor* are understood to be romantic engagements based on genuine, mutual feelings of affection, whereas relationships *por interés* are believed to originate from the Cuban person's desire to benefit materially or economically. The terms are directly related to the phenomenon of *jineterismo*. They are not neutral markers, but, as I will show, serve to single out certain 'suspect' relationships and certain 'suspect' individuals as immoral. The anecdote above illustrates two things. First, relationships *por amor* are believed to be morally superior to those *por interés*. A relationship *por interés* is deemed disingenuous as well as unviable and the Cuban person is subjected to the suspicion of being a *jinetera* or *jinetero*. Second, the anecdote demonstrates that one of the two categories were applied almost automatically to each and every relationship between a Cuban person and a foreigner, although exceptions existed, mostly to prove the rule. Adrian's mother defended her son's marriage as one *por amor* in the face of her assumption that I would evaluate the turn that Adrian's life had taken according these categories and automatically suspect the relationship to be *por interés*. She was quite right in doing so, because subconsciously I had already framed the story within these emic categories and found myself surprised that someone in such a privileged position as Adrian would marry a foreigner. Cubans presumably pursued this kind of marriage because it provided an opportunity to leave Cuba or obtain financial security, privileges Adrian already enjoyed because of his job.

The emic categories *por amor* and *por interés* are ideal constructions that do not necessarily correlate to the complex lived reality and shared experiences of people who engage in such relationships. However, such cultural conceptualizations provide a framework for actual lived experiences of love, sex and partnership. Their impact on relationships between Cuban women and foreign men must therefore be interrogated. In this chapter I explore how love is

conceptualized among Cuban women in order to understand the tension prevailing in their relationships with foreign men, and question how Cuban women overcome this tension. I make the case that the suspicion Cuban women meet from their foreign partners regarding their emotional sincerity is based on culturally divergent conceptualizations of love, which are themselves rooted in the partners' different realities and their unequal social and economic status.

Por Amor or Por Interés?

Whether a relationship between a Cuban woman and a foreign man is *por amor* or *por interés* seemed to be a crucial question for the foreign men that I knew, as well as for those Cuban people I talked to who had friends or family members with romantic relationships with foreigners. In talking to me, foreign men expressed anxieties about two issues. First, they wanted to make sure that the woman they had a romantic relationship with was truly in love with them and hoped that I could confirm this to them because I was friends with their girlfriends. Second, they wanted to convince me that their girlfriend was in love with them and had no interest in their money because they suspected that I thought their girlfriend was taking advantage of them. Simultaneously, Cuban people who had friends or family members who dated or had married foreigners also seemed keen on convincing me that these relationships were based on love and not economic needs, like Adrian's mother, in the face of their suspicion that I would judge these relationships negatively to be *por interés*.

Yet, my key informants seemed to be less decisive about the status of the relationships they had with foreign men and less interested in defining it. They rarely categorized their different relationships as relationships *por amor* or *por interés*. They talked about some of their partners with enthusiasm; they liked them because of their looks, manners, gestures of chivalry,

etc. They treated other men as clients that would pay an amount of money agreed upon beforehand for sexual services. They outrightly disliked some, but put up with them because of the financial prospects of the relationship, or they had started out liking a guy they later grew tired of. Economic issues were not necessarily the deciding factor in whether they liked the men they engaged with or not, but at the same time, the women's economic needs (*necesidades*) were an important issue in their relationships with all men. No matter what kind of emotional attachment they felt to the men they had romantic relationships with, they considered the financial exchanges in the relationships as either an asset to being with a particular person or an obstacle in making a relationship "work" (*servir*).

The tension which arose from the suspicion on the part of foreign men and others that the women were mostly interested in the economic outcome of their relationships with foreign men reflected badly on the way in which my informants conceived of the situation. For them, this tension existed, but in their view it relied on whether the men had a good understanding of their expectations of reciprocity and were able and willing to alleviate their always pressing economic situation. When foreign men talked about being "ripped off" by a girlfriend or that Cuban women were "after their money," my informants talked about their frustrations with the men's understanding, or lack thereof, of their economic situation and the men's responsibilities to "help them out." Of course linguistic differences in how expectations are expressed account in part for the discrepancy between the men and the women's statements, but I believe that fundamentally different expectations of the roles of the two partners in the relationship were at play as well as different conceptualizations of what should constitute a love relationship. These expectations were framed by economic inequalities in and the stigma attached to their relationship as well as the policing of the couple's interaction in Havana by Cuban authorities and family and friends that might suspect the Cuban woman of being a *jinetera*. I follow Cabezas who suggests

questioning the notion of love itself rather than pass judgment on the quality of relationships between local (Dominican, in Cabezas' research) women and foreigners:

I suggest that we need to examine our notions about the separation of love, romance and money. The refusal to commodify all sexual relations with foreigners, the insistence on procuring gifts instead of cash payments, and the creation of flexible identities for themselves and their tourist *amigos* challenge our notions of love devoid of economic interest and of work devoid of sexuality. (2004:1003)

Contextualizing Love

Although William Jankoviak and Thomas Paladino (2008) have recently argued that an idea of romantic love is universal, I choose to treat love as an emic concept in need of explanation. If we are to begin to understand the power of fantasy in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, we must first understand how they conceptualize love (a concept that many of their fantasies revolve around) and how such conceptualizations influence their expectations of their relationship and their negotiations around how to express and experience love.

“What is love?” ask the editors of *Love and Globalization: Transformation of Intimacy in the Contemporary World* (Padilla et. al. 2007:ix). Love has only recently been a concept that anthropologists seriously engage with, an issue that emerged out of the by now enormous body of literature on gender and sexuality. The issues in earlier writings on gender relations, kinship, courtship and so forth have been connected to the idea of love, but that does not mean that love, as a cultural construct in itself, has always been interrogated. Usage of love as a symbolic reference has found its way into linguistic representations of kinship and companionship in other cultures. In Mexico, for example, where Jennifer Hirsch claims that one effect of globalization is a discourse in the popular media (*telenovelas* and magazines for women particularly) repeating that “love makes a family” (2007:93). Recently, however, new and interesting literature in

anthropology has started to explore the concept of love, not as an unproblematic descriptor of one component of kinship, gender relations or courtship, but as an extremely potent and productive concept through which to explore other key issues in contemporary anthropological debates, such as globalization, modernity, consumption, gender and sexuality, etc. (Padilla et. al. 2007:ix).

The notion of love anywhere is a construction that depends on various contextual features. It will probably come as no surprise to the reader that Cuban women, in considering whom to love and how to love, find their choices limited in as much as they are not only looking for a sexual partner, but a partner who can offer them emotional and sexual satisfaction along with material support. The relative poverty of many Cuban women and the economic hardship they endure in their everyday lives plays an important role in their choice of spouse or lover. Cuban women are, however, not all in exactly the same economic position. It would be a mistake to assume that Cuban women constitute a coherent group and share the same interests and desires regardless of their class location, religious or political affiliations, race and age (Mohanty 1984). Supposedly the revolutionary process eradicated economic and racial hierarchies, but such distinctions continue to exist. However, partnerships across the lines and limitations of what would usually be expected to influence Cuban women's choice of partner occurs on a regular basis. In the neighborhood where I lived, two women were known to have a lesbian relationship and my black host mother was married to a man who would describe himself as white, a coupling which contradicted the usually strict racial hierarchies and moralities in Cuba. These examples serve to remind us that even a cultural trope such as love is not uniformly conceptualized, nor

uniformly enacted within culturally constituted groups, although some authors contend that the notion of romantic love is universal (Jankowiak and Paladino 2008:8).⁴³

Many factors are at play when it comes to how Cuban women live their love lives. However, my informants, as well as the Cuban population as a whole, share in an experience of economic inequality with the foreigners that visit the island. This difference in economic and social privilege has led some authors and many Cubans to describe and criticize their daily experience of what has been termed “tourism apartheid.” While looking at the intricate details of how Cuban women negotiated their conceptualizations of love and reciprocity with foreign men, it is important to understand this fundamental difference in economic status and social privilege between my informants and the foreign men they were with. Border crossings facilitate predictable and unpredictable encounters between people from different social and economic background, because the inequitable relationships between Cuban women and foreign men do not necessarily correspond to the economic and social status of the men in their home countries (Demirdirek 2007:19). We should be reminded that in analyzing relationships of exchange, the favours and commodities that are being exchanged constitute just one piece of the puzzle. The actors engaged in exchange constitute an equally important piece of the puzzle and therefore it is imperative to examine the cultural conceptualizations and contextual factors that inform their interpretations of the exchange.

In the following section, I consider what Cuban women might understand by “love” and what kinds of expectations they have of their romantic relationships, both to foreign men and Cuban men. As we shall see, certain characteristics of these different relationships are similar

⁴³ Likewise, Patty Kelly describes how gender and sexual practices have multiple expressions in Mexico despite an official canon and public discourse that seeks to create a more homogenous picture of gender identities and relations in Mexico (2008:22).

despite the almost dichotomous, yet complex, social and economic status of foreigners and Cuban men.

Un Hombre Para Resolver Tu Problema: Every Woman Needs a Man to Solve Her Problems

I heard the phrase above for the first time one day when I was walking Magdalena to work. Magdalena lived with her children, her son-in-law and her grandson on the outskirts of Havana. She had been divorced for a number of years and had no intention to re-marry. As we walked along, she told me that she did not even feel any sexual desire anymore, and so she did not need a husband for sexual pleasure or emotional comfort. “I need a man to solve my problems,” (*necesito un hombre para resolver mi problema*) she admitted, but men with such capabilities were hard to come by. Thus, Magdalena preferred to take care of her problems on her own and save herself the effort of trying to find a man who could help her out. In Magdalena’s logic, the pros and cons to having a partner were not solely the emotional support such a partnership might provide or the sexual outlet a husband could give her. In fact, she cared little about this as her family and especially her three-year-old grandson fulfilled her emotional needs. She would only consider a husband in as much as he could aid in her family’s economic maintenance. The phrase “[every woman needs] a man to solve her problems” was widely recognized among Cuban women and referred mainly to the economic contributions a man could make to the household, but also to the general sentiment of security a woman could feel if she had a partner who would look out for her and provide for her either by working or by securing goods on the black market, from their workplaces or through their personal networks.

Here, I discuss partnership (with Cuban as well as foreign men) as a strategy for women to advance economically. It should be noted that a variety of legal as well as illegal alternatives to securing one's livelihood exist. Some women may conduct entrepreneurial activities in the informal sector, while others aspire for government jobs salaried in dollars. One of my neighbors held a masters degree in French and worked at the Nigerian embassy. She was hoping to find work in the hospitality industry in the future, because she would prefer to speak French with tourists from Europe rather than diplomats from Africa that had a racial stigma attached to them.

Kummels (2005) demonstrates that in Cuba, marriage⁴⁴ is not only a way of framing an idea of love and romantic companionship, but has for decades been a legitimate way of securing a livelihood. In fact, it is expected that a woman would take into account a man's abilities to provide for her or help her out economically when considering him for partnership and it is expected that men provide for their lovers and wives.⁴⁵ These expectations are not necessarily replacing or acting against feelings of love and sexual desire, but form an integral part of the idea of love in Cuba. In this regard, my informants articulated some of the same concerns that have been expressed by women elsewhere in the Caribbean and in Latin America. Their participation in what has been termed serial monogamy as a way of coping with difficult socio-economic circumstances is common. Carla Freeman concludes, from a socio-political analysis of entrepreneurship in Barbados, that flexibility in sexual relationships can be a survival strategy for women (2007:9). Freeman is talking specifically about women's acceptance of their husbands'

⁴⁴ In this case "marriage" refers to consensual as well as legal marriages. Since property management and economic security are located with the government in socialist Cuba rather than in matrimony as in capitalist countries, many couples do not see any reason to get legally married. The same practice, although differently motivated, has also been evidenced in other parts of the world (Rebhun 2007:114).

⁴⁵ Such ideal gender roles are common throughout the Caribbean and Latin America (Kelly 2008:167, 172). However, it is important to note that this ideal is not necessarily based reality. Especially in the age of globalization many women in the Caribbean and Latin America try to cope with economic hardship and provide for their families by entering the domestic labour market or migrating outside of their countries to seek work (Deere et. al. 1990; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003).

extramarital relationships, but as has been shown in numerous other studies, this flexibility also translates into women having sexual relationships with various men who support them in different ways (cf. Brown 1975; Curtis 2009; Gregg 2003; Scheper-Hughes 1992). Furthermore, a number of scholars have pointed out that sexual relationships in the Caribbean are often constructed on the basis of explicit and conscious economic exchanges (Miller 1994; Senior 1991; Zalduondo and Bernard 1995).

The work that might come closer to my own in terms of explaining the complexity of the intertwinements between romantic sentiments and financial worries in sexual relationships between local women and foreign men is that of Brennan (2004). There are many parallels between Brennan's work among sex workers in the Dominican Republic and my own research findings, but there are also significant differences. Brennan describes a discourse among her informants that clearly diverts from a romanticized ideal of love and marriage as being free of economic interests. In the Dominican Republic, as in Cuba, a dichotomy between two distinct kinds of marriages seems to have developed recently as a result of a changing economy and a boom in the Dominican tourism industry to the extent that the country and individual Dominicans now rely heavily upon the monetary influx from visitors to the island. Dominicans speak about marriages that are "for love" (*por amor*) and those that are "for visa" or "for residency" (*por visa* or *por residencia*) (Brennan 2004:3). Brennan's characterization of Dominicans' conceptualization of these distinct kinds of marriages seems reminiscent of the distinction I observed my informants make between relationships *por amor* (for love) and *por interés* (with ulterior motives). While Brennan acknowledges that not all marriages in the Dominican Republic can easily be characterized as either "for love" or "for visa" (2007:207), just as there are sexual practices in Cuba that differ from official discourses of acceptable sexuality and gender relations, and that such relationships may change over time, she claims that her informants considered it a

(foolish) choice to fall in love with a foreign man (2007:204). In fact, ideas of love and romance and linguistic expressions thereof were absent from the women's conversations about their pursuit of male partners (Brennan 2007:215). Instead, they would express that they were looking for men who were committed to supporting the woman financially in a long-term relationship. This kind of men they called "serious men" (*hombres serios*) (Brennan 2007:215).

Brennan describes a situation that many women in Cuba, whether they are engaged in commercialized sex or not and whether they are considered by others to be *jineteras* or not, would be able to recognize. In the face of poverty, women who are often responsible for one or more children and for their household, use a variety of inventive strategies to sustain their livelihood. One is to have one or more partners support them economically. Brennan's informants come across as somewhat cynical when they, on numerous occasions, report to her that they are not in love with the foreign men that they have sexual relationships with, and that they are together with these men solely to get ahead economically and maybe to get a chance to leave the Dominican Republic and seek their fortune in Europe or in the US. But, of course, as Brennan argues, such cynicism is created by dire economic circumstances.

Implications of Cultural Classifiers

In comparison to my own data, I might suspect Brennan of failing to contextualize certain empirical categories, by taking her informants' cognitive explanations of their relationships at face value (Bloch 1991). Whereas the dichotomy between relationships *por amor* and relationships *por interés* were widely used to describe and evaluate specific relationships in Cuba, I do not understand these categories to be wholly accurate and unquestionable markers, but rather expressions of the status of specific, stigmatized and 'suspect' relationships between

specific stigmatized and ‘suspect’ persons in the eyes of others. To classify a relationship to be *por interés* was inherently a derogatory term in Cuba (whereas in the Dominican Republic it seems to be almost a neutral descriptor). Furthermore, the term *por interés* refers directly to the supposedly immoral person, who has ulterior motives and intends to take advantage of their sexual partners. This negative value is added to the otherwise commonly accepted monetary exchanges inherent in most relationships between Cubans or between Cubans and foreigners.⁴⁶ My informants did not label their relationships as being *por interés*, although they clearly and admittedly had specific economic interests in certain relationships. Rather they would tell me in detail about the monetary and emotional exchanges between them and their boyfriends, their lovers, or clients (different labels were used for different men). They would report on and often show me every gift they had been given, or would tell me exactly how they were planning on spending the money they had received. But as I shall discuss below, these statements were expressions of the women’s expectations of any relationship and of any man, expectations that, of course, grew if the women believed the man to have considerable financial resources. To me, their utterances did not express a special kind of relationship, but rather a common way of conceiving of the reciprocal aspects of marriage or partnership. The relationship women had with men they saw for one night only entailed more open and exact economic expectations, although the women did not use the term *por interés* to describe them, but would for instance tell me exactly how much money they had received and how that compared to what they expected to be paid for their services. Their relationships with boyfriends or lovers were more complicated. The women’s expectations of these relationships were monetary in part, but also included expectations of the person’s reliability, discretion, respect for the woman, and affection. My

⁴⁶ See Chapter I: Methodology and Fieldwork and below.

informants would not categorize these relationships as being *por interés* because they had a variety of interests in the relationship, not solely a monetary one.

They also expected and found it to be quite logical that if a person who spent time with them had more money than they did, that that person would pay for the entertainment and if the person was considerate, hopefully also help them out economically by giving monetary gifts. In fact, this expectation did not only come across in sexual relationships, but also in relationships between friends. Fosado (2005) theorizes that the revolutionary ideal of equality has found its way into personal relationships of exchange in Cuba. These are practiced widely on the black market, but also among family members, neighbours, friends and spouses: “people who have more than average resources should share them, since equality is the official, state inculcated ideal and since sharing is integral to loving someone, sexually or otherwise” (Fosado 2005:64). In this logic, foreigners are always expected to pay for a Cuban person who accompanies the foreigner to meals, to entertainment venues, to the beach or any other place. I was warned by a Cuban scholar (living and working outside of Cuba) before leaving for the field that people in Cuba would perceive me as “a walking dollar tree.” When I arrived in Cuba I did quickly discover that many of my friendships and other connections arose from, were based on, or incorporated monetary and material exchanges. Foreigners that I befriended would either express serious regret that their Cuban friends would ask them for money or ask them to pay for them when they went out together; some would refuse to do so and some were happily surprised at how little money would make a Cuban person happy (“she only asked for five dollars for medicine”). But according to the expectation that one should share according to one’s means (Fosado 2005:64), my informants did not find it odd to ask foreigners for money, directly or indirectly. Foreigners, after all, were the ones who had money.

What value then, does such a dichotomy as *por interés* and *por amor* hold in Cuba? I claim that these terms serve to single out individuals as moral or immoral citizens. One of my informants will serve as a good example of the many ways in which the dichotomy is used to determine the morality of certain people and their relationships. Maria had maintained many friendships with foreigners, most of whom she had met while working in Varadero (Cuba's most famous beach resort), a job she no longer held as the hotel where she used to work had closed down. She had dated a couple of Italian men (who she contended were crazy about *mulatas* like herself), but since she married a Cuban man who would not tolerate infidelity she claimed to have stopped all sexual liaisons with foreigners. Maria's lasting friendships with hotel guests had enabled her to purchase home décor and household items such as a laundry machine, in addition to the piles of clothes she and her son had received as donations from foreign friends. One day when visiting Maria and talking to her mother Magdalena in the kitchen, Magdalena assured me that Maria did not maintain her friendships with foreigners solely because of the presents and economic help they gave her, she did "love" (*querer*) her friends (platonically). The rest of Maria's family, who benefited immensely from her network of foreign friends, were not judgmental of her friendships either, but rather cherished Maria and said that she was such a sweet person who had tremendous difficulties asking for things, because she did not like to ask for help, even if she needed it. I wondered how Maria was able to defend her relationships with foreigners as falling into the category *por amor*, since her interactions with foreigners resembled those of supposed *jineteras*, minus the sexual activities. During an interview, Maria even told me that her and her colleagues in Varadero self-identified as "authorized *jineteros*" (*jineteros autorizados*):

We were, how can I tell you this, as we used to say 'authorized *jineteros*'. It's true! 'Authorized', because we were together with the clients [resort guests] all the time. I don't know if you know this, but if a Cuban person goes out with a tourist, it's a problem. If they are dating they must have

a document saying that they are dating or that they are going to get married and then if the police stops them, they won't have any problems. But us on the inside [resort workers], we didn't have this problem, not at all. We were together with them on the beach, in the pool, in a disciplined way of course, talking, doing different activities, dancing, whatever we wanted to do.

I believe Maria's relationships with foreigners were accepted as friendships devoid of economic interests because Maria was herself a 'respectable' woman and a known *luchadora*. She established this reputation through reference to the hard work, which she endured only in order to provide for her family. Oftentimes Maria would exclaim: "everything I do is sacrifice!" (*¡todo es sacrificio!*), a saying used as a positive descriptor of women's role in the family and in society in a revolutionary narrative. According to Maria, all her job pursuits presented some form of "sacrifice" (*sacrificio*). She fondly remembered the years she had worked in Varadero, although she said that she had cried after every home visit when saying goodbye to her son that her relatives took care of while she was working outside the city. Now she had to work for lower pay and under worse conditions for a dance company based in Havana, but sacrificed herself for the well-being of her family. This notion of sacrifice lent legitimacy to Maria's persona and enabled her to avoid the stigma of *jinetera* altogether. Her claims of finding it painful and embarrassing to ask for economic or material support from foreigners, expressed in one of her oft-repeated phrases: "I'm ashamed to ask" (*me da pena pedir*), solidified her moral standing.

Furthermore, this example provides evidence for the case that the emic categories *por amor* and *por interés* are not fixed classifiers, but are indeed terms to be negotiated. Jessica Gregg (2003) describes how women living in Brazilian *favelas* fiercely defend their reputation despite their need to divert from the behaviours expected of 'respectable' women in order to look after themselves. Likewise, my informants negotiated the difference between cultural ideal models and categories of partnerships and their fit with the ambiguous reality of their lived relationships. I follow Gregg when she writes:

These women joined the ranks of Brazilian women who have struggled throughout their history to reconcile competing notions of how, as women, they ought to behave and how, practically, they needed to behave. I suggest that to achieve this reconciliation, women in the *ilha* appropriated the vocabulary of honor and shame, altering the referents enough to expand the repertoire defined through the dominant construction of sexuality, but they altered the criteria by which a woman belonged to those categories, creating a better “fit” between circumstance, practice, and ideology. (2003:77)

Love is Just One Side of the Coin

The idea that marriage is a partnership or a friendship as much as it is a love affair exists, of course, outside of the Caribbean and Latin America too. Prominent North American psychologists, for example, advise couples to develop their friendship in their efforts to save their marriage if hostility and contempt is overshadowing love and passion (Gottman and Silver 1999). In the same vein, the fact that Cuban women looked for men that could help them resolve economic and other issues in their daily lives, did not mean that they did not feel love for their partners or that they did not fall in love or desire them sexually. Lily, a young woman with a sweet voice and gracious manners, told me her philosophy of love one night when we were out dancing. She received many offers partly because she was a pretty, young woman with a friendly attitude and partly because she worked in a hospital and had many patients or their relatives fall in love with her. But she could not allow herself to indulge fully in such compliments. She had a boyfriend who she thought was beautiful and who according to Lily was passionately in love with her, but she had made it clear to him that the relationship could not last forever: “There is no future in him,” she said. Although she experienced passion and love in the relationship, these feelings were accompanied by more practical considerations. Her boyfriend continuously asked her for money, as he did not work himself and to Lily this situation made the prospects of the relationship dim.

Young men also expressed the same kind of thinking about their possibilities for establishing a relationship with a girl. Mario was a young entrepreneur who worked informally as a tour guide and apartment broker for tourists and sold beef meat illegally to his neighbors. Despite his energetic attitude and his skills as an entrepreneur, Mario's personal economic circumstances were unstable. During a down time for him he told me that at this point he had no desire to date anyone. "What would I do with a girlfriend?" he said, "I can't take her anywhere, I can't even pay for a cab to go to the beach." He remembered better times, when he worked in a souvenir shop in the old part of town (*Habana Vieja*) and each day would give his girlfriend at the time a dollar to spend. "Not a lot of other students came with a dollar every day to the university," he said. In Mario's opinion there was no point in having a girlfriend if he had no money to entertain and treat her. In that case he preferred to be alone. In our conversation Mario was not only speaking about the absence of fun for poor lovers in crisis stricken Cuba, he was also speaking to the inabilities of young Cuban men to live up to their expected gender role. Another young man I met on the beach one day, made it clear in a memorable conversation that he was in a dilemma. He explained to me why a relationship to a Cuban girl would not work for him. In a poetic reference to his sexual abilities he said, "even if I can bring a woman to the seventh heaven time and time again [e.g. reaching orgasm] she will eventually fall from the sky." By using this metaphor he explained to me that although he could provide passionate lovemaking, when it turned out he could not provide any money, most women would be disappointed in him despite his virility. Recalling Lily's comments, he may very well have been right.

I have presented the young people above to make the case that in Cuba, from both a female and male perspective, "love never comes alone" (*el amor nunca viene solo*) in the words of Valentina. There is a monetary aspect to all love affairs. Cuban women who have relationships

with foreign men and who expect a monetary exchange to be part of these relationships are therefore not approaching such relationships with a radically different attitude than they would a relationship to a Cuban man. They do, however, expect a greater financial gain or security from the relationship with a foreign man. This shared understanding among Cuban women (and men) that love and money are inseparable, explains partly why people both stigmatize and abstain from criticizing *jineteras*. As mentioned before, a common saying among my informants, repeated in discussions about *jineterismo*, was: “I don’t criticize anyone” (*yo no critico a nadie*). This referred to the fact that although *jineterismo* was a stigmatized activity, the needs understood to be underlying such activities were widely recognized. People shared the same goals, although they might engage other strategies than *jineterismo* to achieve them. When my dance teacher one day told me that “all Cuban women are *jineteras*” the irony was loaded with a compliant recognition that every man and woman in Cuba had to do whatever was in their power in order to meet their needs. Olive Senior notices that Caribbean women’s survival strategies are based on “multiple sources of livelihood” (1991:134). Sex is just one of the many sources that women rely on. In Cuba, sex is many times also the most viable and lucrative source of economic security or advancement. Maria provides an example of a woman who struggles to reconcile these two notions, of *jineterismo* as immoral and disgraceful, while the needs of *jineteras* resemble her own.

Next, I look at how Cuban women’s conceptualizations of love also responded to a rather apathetic approach to the meanings of love that have become commonplace in Special Period Cuba. Their relationships with foreign men were framed by the economic and political context in which they unfolded, both the economic inequalities between them and the stigmatization of their relationship as being motivated by economic interests rather than affectionate feelings.

Love and Crisis

As discussed above, love is a concept to be explored rather than a concept to be understood. An important aspect of this exploration is the realization that a cultural construct such as love, as indeed any cultural idea or feature, is changeable and is constantly being negotiated. Because it is historically rooted, an idea of love will always be influenced by social, economic, political and cultural trends in society. Frank, the son of my downstairs neighbor, pointed this out to me one day when he began explaining his migration story out of Cuba by saying: “There is no love here [in Cuba] anymore” (*aquí el amor se acabó*). As a visitor from abroad on holiday in the country he grew up in, he was repeating a cultural trope in Cuba at the time about growing individualism and fading spirit in Cuban society. In this section I explore that notion. The purpose of the exploration is to illuminate how the intimate experience of love, or lack thereof, between Cuban women and foreign men is partly framed by ideas circulating in Cuban society around the possibilities of experiencing love and the restrictions on such an experience in a socialist state in transition.

Frank’s story goes as follows. Growing up as a young man in Cuba he had become increasingly disillusioned with his economic and social situation. He described how all he used to do was to hang out in the street with his friends “eating shit” (*comiendo mierda*), a colloquial saying which means to waste your time. He had no money to go to the clubs or to buy himself clothes acceptable for social settings other than the street corner. A friend had told him that he needed to do something to get out of the social and economic vacuum that he found himself in. He needed to start exercising, dressing more elegantly and going out to clubs where he had the possibility of meeting foreign women who could help him advance economically. Frank had done this and had had a number of experiences with foreign women, both good and bad ones, until one

day he met the woman who became his wife. Frank's friend had shown a Norwegian woman Frank's picture at a party and she wanted to meet him. The friend had called Frank immediately, who, despite being together with his Cuban girlfriend at the time of the call, had rushed over to the party. Frank eventually married the woman and moved to Norway to live with her. This move was, according to him, only one step on the way to his final destination, which was Spain.

In recounting his story to me, Frank was positioning himself as the prototype of the disillusioned youth in Cuba. Although he referred to his wife as a "tremendous woman" (*tremenda mujer*), he contended that long lasting love of the kind his parents shared had been "lost" (*se acabó*) in present day Cuba. In his own attempt to realize his dreams of independence, freedom and traveling, he had sacrificed love and now lived with a woman he respected, but would not have married if she had not offered him the opportunity to leave Cuba. It seems that the recent economic crisis has made young Cuban people disillusioned with love; meanwhile foreigners who come to Cuba are enchanted with the exotic possibilities of experiencing the same. This situation was discussed in public and academic circles as well, although it was framed as a social problem, namely an increasing trend toward individualism and materialism among Cuban youth. I attended a conference on family issues where the topic was covered passionately by Patricia Arés Muzio, a psychologist and senior scholar at the Center for Demographic Studies (*Centro de Estudios Demográficos*), a research center at the University of Havana. She sketched out a family and society in crisis, especially due to the new divide between those families that had access to dollars and those that did not, which in turn caused tensions between children in schools.

This supposed shift detected in young people's orientation towards economic and material comfort must be juxtaposed against the special emphasis on the nuclear family as a cornerstone of Cuban society that has been part of a revolutionary narrative. Maxine Molyneux remarks that

in Cuba as well as in other socialist national projects, the nuclear family structure has paradoxically been of vital importance as the “basic cell of society” (1985:47). In the first stages of a socialist revolution, old patriarchal family structures were sought to be broken down. This was supposedly done to liberate women from oppression and give way to new collective ways of living and working together, but really more so to make women available for the labour market and military service in order to help build a new socialist society. In Cuba, where extensive agrarian reform, housing and literacy campaigns, universal health care and labour protection followed in the wake of the revolution, women were certainly needed as labour power in all of these sectors (García 2010:176). But despite this need for women outside the home, the nuclear family has been an important site for state intervention as a unit of socialization and an instrument of socialist construction (Molyneux 1985:53 – 54). Molyneux argues that even if socialist reform such as the Cuban Family Code of 1975 was beneficial to women, such reform has been undertaken by socialist governments with a functional objective in mind: “Sexual equality is not a priority for socialist states – economic development and social stability are” (1985:51).

Thus in Cuba the nuclear family form is encouraged. Cuban families were, however, never constituted as nuclear entities. Most households are constituted by extended families and serial monogamy is the preferred kind of partnership. Furthermore, during the Special Period, this revolutionary ideal family structure is unobtainable due to the fact that even two government salaries are not enough to sustain a household. Cuban families are depending, to an increasing degree, on individual family members’ entrepreneurial skills in the informal sector. Although entrepreneurial activity does not have to be individualized (Ana María Peredo, personal communication November 25, 2009), it often is. In this sense, the reality of most Cubans’ lives require them to pursue individual goals, which are in turn condemned by the government and

social commentators. While revolutionary instruction would lead young people like Frank to think that “love is lost” (*el amor se acabó*) in this painful situation, I argue that love is merely finding new configurations in what could be conceived as young entrepreneurs’ timely and adequate answers to the structural and economic reform that the Cuban government is implementing. My discussion of Frank’s story highlights what could be considered to be a change in the trend of how love is discursively engaged with in Cuba at this particular historical juncture, which in turn impacts the way that my informants negotiated love with their foreign male partners.

For Love and For Money

The popular idea that love has been lost poses particular problems for my informants because expressions of love are already problematic in tourist settings: “Practices that are assumed to indicate romantic love in many cross cultural settings are suspected of having other purposes in a tourist setting” (Brennan 2008:174). Cuban women and their foreign partners are under constant surveillance by their peers as well as the police who critically evaluate whether their interactions signify a relationship *por amor* or *por interés*. Since the outcome of this kind of evaluation has less to do with the properties and prospects of the relationship, and more so with the normatively established reputation of the parties involved, the women have a hard time escaping stigmatization as *jineteras*. They face police harassment and accusations of anti-revolutionary behaviour, three warnings of which will get them expelled from the capital and returned to their provinces of origin or sent to rehabilitation centers (García 2010:192; Cabezas 2004:1005). What is more, this policing which targets the women’s personas more so than concrete criminal

activities, fuels their foreign partners' always present suspicion that they have ulterior motives in being with them.

How do Cuban women overcome this suspicion? In order to understand how my informants were indeed able to sustain relationships with various foreign men over long periods of time, I want to conclude this chapter by questioning the assumption that Cuban women's conceptualizations of love are indeed so very different from foreign men's. The ideal that "love is blind" effectively excludes monetary exchanges as a socially acceptable part of romantic relationships. In the English vocabulary, deviations from this normative construction cast women and men as "gold diggers" or "sugar daddies." Linda-Anne Rebhun describes how her Brazilian informants voiced a similar discourse:

People I spoke with in Caruaru distinguished between true love (*amor verdadeira*) and what they called 'interests' (*intereses*) or economic stakes in the beloved, saying that to mix love with pecuniary interest was to sully the purity of the sentiment, properly a selfless generosity. [...] The idea, which can also be seen in Christian biblical precepts as exemplified in First Corinthians 13:4-7, enjoys widespread secular currency as well and is hardly unique to this area. Many scholars interested in the sentiments that bind and separate members of social groups have unselfconsciously adopted this religiously based folk model, in which emotion and economic interest constitute conflicting, morally opposed forces. (2007:111)

Clearly, the ideal does not correspond to reality and the sharp boundaries drawn between "true love" and that which it is not, seek in many ways to disguise the fact that monetary exchanges are an integral part of most love relationships in many parts of the world. This is exemplified when North American young men wishing to date a girl are expected to invite her out for dinner and court her with presents, or when prospective spouses sign prenups or divorcees fight over child support and pension rights.⁴⁷ Compared to ideal romantic love, Cuban women's

⁴⁷ Times may very well be changing. Elizabeth Bernstein (2007b) has recently depicted new ways of legitimizing "love for money" in the now very diversified arena of sexual commerce. When buying the "Girlfriend Experience," clients are purchasing: "something notably distinct both from a purely mechanical sex act and from an unbounded, private-sphere romantic entanglement" (Bernstein 2007b:125). Bernstein calls this "bounded authenticity," an experience of human and sexual connection, restricted intentionally by the temporality of the interaction and monetary exchange between client and sex worker. Bernstein suggests that the desire of clients to purchase emotional and physical connection (and not get it for free!) relates directly to the changing organization and meanings of prostitution in the 21st century: "In

conceptualizations of love seem cynical. I have argued that they carry their own logic within the current Cuban context. Cuban women's vision of an ideal love relationship are influenced by their experiences of daily struggles to sustain a livelihood in the wake of the Special Period. While loving feelings and sexual attraction can be positive aspects of their relationships with foreign as well as Cuban men, economic considerations are also a factor in their choice of partner. In fact, I suspect that the need to explain the logic from which Cuban women operate and understand their romantic relationships stems from foreign men's, as well as anthropologists' and other academics' "othering" of Cuban women. While forgetting that romantic engagements outside of a Cuban context also entail numerous economic exchanges, it is assumed that Cuban women conceptualize their relationships with foreign men who they "pretend" to love radically different from how these men might live love relationships with non-Cuban women. But on closer inspection, only the romanticized ideal of love free of economic expectations differs from Cuban conceptualizations of love and reciprocity, not necessarily the actually lived experiences of loving partnership. In the context of Cuba's Special Period, Cuban conceptualizations of love are more pragmatic and less idealistic, as expressed by Frank, Lily, Mario, Valentina and so many others of my informants in their disillusionment and disenchantment with the possibility of encountering and loving someone free of economic expectations.

Foreign men, however, seem to often accept that their relationships with Cuban women do not correspond to their ideal love relationship, even if this causes them frustration. I believe that the men do, sometimes hesitantly and sometimes more willingly, accept that Cuban women engage in relationships with them for love *and* for money. We may ponder whether they accept this premise because the women are still able to satisfy the men's desires. An answer to this

postindustrial sexual commerce, emotional authenticity is incorporated explicitly into the economic contract" (2007a:192).

question relies on an examination of the men's desires, which may not be to live an ideal "true love," but rather a "dreamt reality" where their fantasies come alive. In the next chapter I analyze how notions of authenticity, and lived experiences of intimacy which incorporate elements of fantasy, play into the negotiations of love and money that Cuban women and foreign men undertake in their relationships. Obtaining the ideal "true love," proves less important to foreign men who are more concerned with their lived experiences of powerful fantasies and desires.

Chapter V: Fantasy Island

Tourism studies provide anthropologists with the opportunity to investigate in detail the commodification and consumption of cultural experiences and related processes, which “are basic to the tourism industry, as, indeed, they are to the anthropological researcher’s ethnographic industry” (Crick 1989:329 – 330). Furthermore, touristic encounters based on notions of and desires for various expressions of difference have created the basis for an extensive vocabulary for studying the components and consequences of such encounters at an empirical level. There is not one theory of tourism that explains all interactions in tourist settings (Urry 2002:124), but some powerful concepts can be extracted from tourism studies that are relevant for the analysis presented in this chapter.

The notion of authenticity has been fiercely debated in tourism studies since its beginnings, although the understandings and usages of the term have undergone changes. Authenticity is used in popular discourse to describe the true and genuine quality of an object, subject, experience or interaction (Meisch 2002:87). In the early days of tourism studies, scholars contended that the mere presence of tourists in places far away from home threatened the authenticity of local sites and peoples (Crick 1989:335, 338; Greenwood 1978:131, 135, 137). In so-called impact studies, authenticity was uncritically assumed to have an empirical quality, paralleling the cultural core of other lifeworlds. This assumption was challenged when developments in anthropology led to a shift in the conceptualization of culture, from a perceived empirical entity to an analytical abstraction describing social processes. The implications of a processual view of culture made for some fundamentally different questions to be asked in tourism studies. Rather than trying to determine the true or false status of tourist experiences,

images and so on, questions started to revolve around the meanings ascribed to encounters described by tourists as authentic (Abram and Waldren 1997:3 – 4; Bruner 1993:321, 324 – 326). Analytical attention thereby shifted from the perceived authenticity or lack thereof of visited sites and populations, to the meaningful applications of the concept by tourists to their experiences. In postmodern studies of tourism encounters, the concept of authenticity has lost analytical power, while it continues to be an important lens through which tourists make sense of their travel experiences and by which locals turn spaces into tourist places. Empirically the concept is still widely circulated among tourists, while anthropologists are searching for new concepts with which to explain interactions in tourism settings. This situation has created a void in the possibilities for explaining how locals and non-locals negotiate their emotions and interests in intimate touristic encounters. Locals and tourists continue to be regarded as each other's "others" and are analytically placed in opposition to one another. From this perspective we must pay attention to how locals and tourists feed each other's desires, as in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, but we need new analytical tools to critically reflect over the meanings of such othering.

Whereas the concept of authenticity is so charged by now that many scholars in tourism studies are avoiding it in their analyses or use it as a purely empirical construct, the notion of fantasy is analytically underdeveloped, although evidently it is quintessential to touristic encounters, and especially those between Cuban women and foreign men. I suggest exploring the potential of fantasy as an analytical lens to understand such encounters. Fantasy is not only an easily detectable marketing strategy in tourism, it is also a concept that is particularly adept at helping us understand why foreigners experience pleasure and frustration simultaneously in their interactions with Cuban women and how Cuban women manage such tense relationships. I argue that fantasy should be understood as a productive, powerful and positive force in relationships

between Cuban women and foreign men and not be disregarded as falsity. Cuban women are able to tap into Cuba's emerging market economy by capitalizing on economic, racialized and gendered inequalities between themselves and foreign men, perpetuated by tourist fantasies and desires that are the foundation of their relationships with foreign men.

The Racialized Tourist Gaze

John Urry (2002) argues that tourism experiences have a fundamental visual character. The tourist gaze is not a singular construction; a multitude of gazes are applied to sites, objects and people that are encountered by an increasing number of travelers. According to Urry: "Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered" (2002:3). The tourist gaze is constructed in large part by non-tourist practices of professional experts within and outside what we loosely term the tourism industry and which includes representations of peoples and places around the world in film, television, literature, websites and blogs, etc. and the practices of travel agents, tour operators, hotel owners, writers of travel books, tourism planners, academics, and of course, tourists (Urry 2002:1 – 3, 145).⁴⁸ Urry is not concerned so much with the individual motivation behind travel, but with the ways in which the tourist gaze provides a discursive framework for tourist experiences and

⁴⁸ Here, I refer to the tourism industry as it came into existence during the nineteenth-century industrialization of some parts of the world and was later globalized in the 1960s and 1970s through charter tourism. These processes relied on a democratization of travel, spurred by improved infrastructure and furthered by the affordability of geographical movement first by train and later by plane. Leisurely travel, as well as educational or professional touring and pilgrimage has, however, existed for much longer, but was only available to the elite. Casteñada and Wallace have criticized the academic subscription to the conceptual existence of a "tourism industry," which really describes processes of governmentality that contribute to the development of new markets for different kinds of tourists or recreational spaces. They suggest treating "tourism" conceptually as an interactional space for human encounters with people, places, objects and ideas (Casteñada and Wallace 2007).

encounters. He argues that, “It is the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are the relevant differences and what is ‘other’” (Urry 2002:145).

Urry’s attention to the tourist gaze as a constitutive and regulatory element in tourist encounters is a good starting point for an analysis of the important intertwinements of authenticity and fantasy in the creation of desire and the development of relationships between Cuban women and foreign men. The question is, of course, which gaze is applied to Cuban women and in what ways Cuban women respond to the gaze. Urry has been criticized harshly for constructing a notion of the tourist gaze that is disembodied (Jokinen and Veijola 1994), a critique that he himself acknowledges in the second edition of his seminal book, *The Tourist Gaze* (Urry 2002:152) and tries to address by adding a chapter concerned with the corporeal mobility in tourism in an era of globalization, of which tourism itself is a major force (Urry 2002:141 – 161) In this chapter I will loosely use Urry’s notion of the gaze to examine how fantasies about Cuban women are constructed through the engagement of various sensory mechanisms, not just in the exchanges of gazes.

In Chapter II: Discourses on *Jineterismo*, I presented various research on the Caribbean which has served to illuminate the intrinsic ways in which race and sex undergo discursive intertwinements and impacts the desires of foreigners as well as locals in the Caribbean who engage in intimate relationships with one another. However, I find the most intriguing part of Kempadoo’s argument to be that this image of Caribbean people as embodying simultaneously the “fetishized hot-blooded Latino and the sexually insatiable African” (Fosado 2004:118), which sexualizes, genders and racializes Caribbean bodies, is not just a relic from the past, but has been appropriated to a great extent by people living in the Caribbean and incorporated by post-colonial

Caribbean governments in their national strategies for competing in the global economy, not least in the tourism industry (Kempadoo 2004:1, 3).

The Cuban *mulata* is a prime example of this discursive process. The *mulata* is a figure which, in the words of Kempadoo, “emerged during slavery as the symbol of the prostitute – the sexually available, socially despised, yet economically profitable body” (1999a:6). The famous Cuban author Cirilo Villaverde cemented this image of the Cuban *mulata* in his nineteenth-century novel *Cecilia Valdés o La Loma del Ángel* (1882) and since, she has been a sexual object and a common trope in Cuban popular culture, which is abundantly exploited by the tourism industry (García 2010:175; Perna 2005:193, 210). Symbolically the *mulata* invites associations with sexual temptation and danger, which has been reproduced countless times in posters, brochures and postcards advertising Cuba as a holiday destination (Oppenheimer 1992:288 – 289; Fogel and Rosentahl 1994). There is even a brand of rum labeled *Ron Mulata*, which features a curiously light skinned woman as its mascot. More importantly, live *mulatas* can be encountered in the world famous *Cabaret Tropicana*, where her body, symbolizing the Cuban imaginings of a nation created through a process of transculturation, is celebrated in a show focused on exhibiting long-legged Afro-Cuban women of a wide range of complexions. In a detailed description of the show, which has “changed little” since the days of foreign spending and splendor before the revolution, Elizabeth Ruf writes:

Tropicana is still one of the most lavish nightclub spectacles in the world and retains from prerevolutionary days the suggestion of wealth and leisure, the glittering excess, the colonial-inflected costumes revealing yards of bare skin, and the idealization of the *mulata*. (1997:86)

Informants of mine had taken the imagery of the Cuban *mulata* fully to heart and understood her to be a woman of an especially sexualized skin tone. In concluding an informal focus group interview, a man urged me to write in my notebook that what attracted tourists to Havana’s dance clubs were “las mulatas.” He was echoing one of Coco Fusco’s respondents who told her: “No

one comes to Cuba for ecotourism. What sells this place is right on the dance floor – rum, cigars, and la mulata” (Fusco 1998:152). According to my informant, the *mulatas*’ special characteristics were their skin colour (which he defined as somewhat lighter than his own, darker skin) and their big behinds. The idea that these physical features were not only sexual, but also commercially marketable female assets, was not lost on me.

Kempadoo contends that Caribbean men and women’s ability to take advantage of the unequal relationships of power via their sexuality is a social mechanism that has existed in the region for over five centuries (Kempadoo 1999a:5 – 10, 27). Slaves during the colonial period as well as sex workers in today’s tourism industry employ sexual strategies that counter the existing social hierarchies of race and class. Through engagement in sex work, Caribbean people are able to profit to an extent that allows them financial freedom from restricting and exploitative national and global economies and access to the privileges and power otherwise unavailable to them (Kempadoo 1999a:27). Arguably, this is not the outcome for all sex workers and while such individual achievements prove the potential for agency, they do not eliminate the overarching relationships of power and economic inequalities between sex workers and their sexual partners. Analogically, Willis (1977) has proposed that English working class kids remain confined within structural constraints, and largely accept workingclass jobs, despite the fact that individual group members might move up the social ladder:

To the individual working class person mobility in this society may mean something. Some working class individuals do ‘make it’ and any particular individual may hope to be one of them. To the class or group at its own proper level, however, mobility means nothing at all. The only true mobility at this level would be the destruction of the whole class society. (1977:128)

In Willis’ view, individual actions feed into the capitalist system in a reproductive cycle. It is, however, important to recognize individual strategies to break the cycle, in order to make sense

of the narratives mobilized in personal relationships between Cuban women and foreign men.

Kempadoo writes:

I argue that we need a different lens for thinking about Caribbean sexuality – that we cannot simply view it as a fabrication of the European mind and imagination, or dismiss it as colonial discourses or metaphors, but need also to view hypersexuality as a lived reality that pulses through the Caribbean body. (Kempadoo 2004:1)

I want to take this hypothesis one step further and argue that Cuban women deliberately capitalize on fantasies of and desires for Caribbean hypersexuality in their relationships with foreign men. I believe, along with Kempadoo, that this strategy is not simply the result of centuries of colonial discourse that people in the Caribbean have been subject to and the neo-colonial discourse that reigns today, but also owes to the internalization of the colonial gaze that has resulted in the sexual self-understanding that many of my informants held. Katrina, for instance, told me that my self-imposed celibacy while in Cuba would not last long, “The flesh is weak, you know. Women have needs and soon you will be so weak that you are going to rip off all your clothes and have sex with the first man who crosses your path,” she said, while shaking her entire body to show me just how crazy I would be for sex if I did not get some soon. Katrina based her prediction on her own cultural understanding of Cuban women’s sexuality, which fits almost too well with many foreign men’s fantasies. However, Katrina’s analysis of my situation and the nature of (Cuban) female sexuality is not merely an example of false consciousness ingrained in a particular Caribbean brand of race fetishism, but is part of a discourse that Cuban women deliberately capitalize on in order to represent themselves in an attractive way to foreigners. In this sense, they are not just “victims” of a neo-colonial gaze, but actively appropriating the gaze to their own advantage. Patricia Gagné and Deanna McGaughey pinpoint this dynamic and outline an agenda for future research:

The problem with the male gaze is not the notion that looking is important but the patriarchal and heterosexist premise that actual and hypothetical men are the sole agents and beneficiaries of the

gaze. The extent to which actual and hypothetical women are agents and beneficiaries of a hegemonic cultural gaze has received little academic attention. Furthermore, outside of film, few if any scholars have focused on the processes through which women exercise agency by presenting themselves as objects of the looks of others. (2002:816)

I highlight Cuban women's agency in their co-optation of racial and national stereotypes that cater to foreign men's fantasies, but I do not mean to disregard the inequitable systems of racialized and gendered difference in Cuba and beyond that frame the women's behaviour and opportunities for exercising agency. Cuban women are reproducing these inequalities when they internalize and capitalize on racial and national stereotypes. I locate Cuban women's agency within a dialectical relationship between the restricting and enabling qualities of such structural inequalities. My goal is the same as Gagné and McGaughey's, "to move beyond dualistic conceptualizations of agency and power by demonstrating how power is exercised on women's bodies even as they exercise it themselves" (2002:815).

I now turn to a description of touristic encounters in *Casa de la Música*, where one can study processes of gazing as well as the intrinsic ways in which fantasy and notions of authenticity intertwine in the production of desire. My analysis of these interactions builds on the discussion of the analytical concepts and problems sketched out in this section, the ways in which Cuban women both negotiate authenticity and capitalize on notions of difference in managing foreign men's desires.

Constructing Desire in *Casa de la Música*

During my fieldwork, I spent a lot of time in *Casa de la Música* because I had envisioned the club as an appropriate site for watching relationships between Cuban women and foreign men in the making and encountering informants. As mentioned in the Introduction, the club did not turn

out to invite quite as many methodological opportunities as I had envisioned; nonetheless, it became an important site for observing interactions between Cuban women and foreign men in a space loaded with symbolic references to *cubanidad* and heavy with gazes.

Casa de la Música embodies a curious mix between old school, pre-revolutionary images and post-revolutionary, communist features, which is a signature of the Cuban entertainment industry.⁴⁹ The club employs several doormen and waiters (more than are needed to run the place), who walk around in red suits and take orders from patrons. The management tries to present the club as a classy cabaret, a popular form of entertainment before the revolution, although the patrons of the club, a mix of tourists in shorts and sandals and Cubans in revealing outfits, give the club a more local, middleclass and fun feel. The club used to be a place for Cubans to go and enjoy popular local dance groups, but once the cover charge had to be paid in dollars, the club became a tourist hot spot. Many of the Cuban regulars now go there because of their association with foreigners. Some are dance teachers that go with their foreign students; some are there with their foreign friends and lovers. Finally, some have invested their own money in the cover and a beer in the hope that, if they can pick up a foreigner in the club, either for the night or maybe as the beginning of a long term relationship, they will be reimbursed.

⁴⁹ This mix between post-communist and pre-communist features of Cuban popular culture has been a cornerstone in the marketing strategy of Cuba as an intriguing tourist destination since the industry was revived in the 1990s (Perna 2002:213; Urry 2002:143). My collection of post cards available from hotel lobbies shows that one of the most popular images is old American cars, maintained with much care and effort by their owners who often must rely on makeshift repairs in the face of a shortages of spare parts, visible virtually everywhere in Havana city as a reminder of earlier, more prosperous times. Furthermore, most hotels put on concerts or cabaret shows advertised along the lines of a sign visible in the Hotel Méliá Cohiba's lobby during the month of April 2008: "Enjoy an evening which recreates the atmosphere of Havana in the 1950s" (*Experimenta una noche que recrea la Habana de los años cincuenta*). It is, of course, ironic that tour operators and hotel managers have greater luck attracting tourists to the island by conveying an image of Cuba as it was before the revolution; nevertheless, this strategy seems to have proven utterly successful. Simultaneously, some residents of Havana are annoyed by what they perceive as a historical sarcasm confronting them in daily life. "We live in retro!" one exclaimed when discussing the issue with me over a cup of coffee. Perna contends that this marketing strategy carries its own neo-colonial dangers. Referring to the phenomenon of *Buena Vista Social Club*, a super-group of retired Cuban musicians who conquered the world-music market with an album and documentary in the mid 1990s featuring musical styles from the 1950s and 1960s Cuba, but was marketed as a "new" sound to non-Latin American audiences, Perna writes: "a sample of music of the past, supposedly authentic and superior to Westernizing of contemporary music, has been co-opted into a neo-colonial representation of Cuba as a romantic, cool holiday destination" (2002:225).

Most nights at *Casa de la Música* follow an already established script. Before the band goes on, a DJ plays *reguetón*⁵⁰ music and many female spectators will stand up and move to the music by their table, dancing alone and seemingly oblivious to the many male gazes that they attract from around the room. The women move their hips and torsos in an erotically suggestive fashion, although foreign spectators, who are not used to seeing or doing the kinds of hip movements that are common in various Cuban dance styles, apply more radical interpretations to the dancing than most Cubans.⁵¹ As one foreign patron in *Casa de la Musica* commented to me: “When they dance, it is like a window into what they’ll do in bed.” It is women who dominate the dance floor at *Casa de la Música*. Most women who have established contact with a foreigner dance directly in front of him, preferably with their back to him and sometimes so close to him that he will be able to feel her hip movements against his pelvis. Other women continue to dance alone in a visible spot, sometimes side by side with their girlfriends, inviting the gaze.

The kind of othering that is produced through the colonial gaze applied to Cuban women, as discussed above, is essential to the ambience in *Casa de la Música*. There, the Cuban female body is subject to a gendered, racialized and sexualized tourist gaze. The bodies that tourists see move in front of their eyes in *Casa de la Música* correspond to these stereotypes and fantasies that the women, in turn, deliberately and strategically verify and fuel. Interestingly, foreigners too are subjected to the gazes of Cubans in the club. While they often occupy tables in the middle of the room, where waiters attend them, Cuban men and women line the walls or stand on podiums,

⁵⁰ Sometimes spelled reggaetón. The spelling above, however, is closer to the pronunciation of the word in Cuba.

⁵¹ Jan Fairly notes that, “What might be construed as sexual movements prominent in Cuban dance are part of a normative learned behaviour from young” (2006:481). While informants during an informal focus group interview agreed that dancing was “the least” (*lo menos*) important aspect of the entertainment in *Casa de la Música*, whereas the possibility of meeting people was the main attraction, they were interpreting the club in the context of the kinds of relationships and sexual-economic transactions that result from encounters within it. When asked specifically what is enticing about Cuban dance, the focus group participants did not know how to answer at length but simply began dancing, showing me different moves while explaining that the rhythm of Cuban music “is contagious” (*contagia*), “gets stuck in your head” (*se te pega*), “traps you” (*te atrapa*).

observing the scenery in the club both for their own enjoyment and to spot a potential dance partner, someone to converse with or to initiate a flirtation with. The most popular song at the time I was doing my fieldwork spoke itself to this curious situation where Cuban women came to *Casa de la Música* to be looked at. The song was called “Mírala” (Look at Her)⁵² and told the story of the model-like Cuban beauty who would attract all men’s attention when she danced. During the chorus, Cuban women dancing would inevitably launch into frantic *mareneo*, an impressive swirling motion where the hips and the torso move simultaneously in opposite directions so as to create an energetically and erotically intense motion. The women’s dancing is bound to attract gazes and cat calls from foreign as well as Cuban patrons in the club.

The music and dancing in *Casa de la Música* is also a signifier of a shifting youth culture and carries meanings beyond the simple practicalities associated with what Simoni Valerio (2009) refers to as “dancing the tourist” or the act of seducing foreigners in the club, using dance as a means. Moore describes the phenomenon of *reguetón* music and dance in terms of the role of popular culture as a channel for voicing public opinion: “In the context of economic crisis, popular music has become an important vehicle for expression of concerns about the country’s future. The prominence of music as a revenue-generating art form has resulted in new opportunities for social critique” (2006:241). In a curious way, *reguetón* song lyrics are, according to Vincenzo Perna, a celebration of the ambiguous situation in which Cuban women are both desired subjects and agents with their own desires and strategies to achieve their goals: “Portrayed as objects of male lust, women were addressed by lyrics that could as well be interpreted as celebrative” (2005:206). *Timba* songs, precedents to *reguetón* that play on the same social themes of *jineterismo* and material desires among young Cubans, were popular for many

⁵² By the *reguetón* star Elvis Manuel.

of the same reasons they were condemned officially: “not so much because they offended Cuban women, but because they celebrated them as *jineteras*, implicitly pointing at the failures of the revolution” (Perna 2005:207). Reynaldo, a young man I met frequently in Havana’s night club scene, confirmed this curious situation, while distancing himself from the music style and its popularity: “People like the rhythm. If you took the rhythm out of *reguetón* nobody would listen to it. The song lyrics are based in a calculative mentality; they revolve around who has more money, who is the best. It is a kind of trash talking [*guapearía*].” For Reynaldo, *reguetón* was a direct result of and a comment upon what was perceived to be a new materialistic youth culture.

Next I will provide a detailed summary of the experiences of one particular foreigner, reporter and visitor to *Casa de la Música*, as this narrative will allow for a critical examination of some of the traditional notions of the role of authenticity and fantasy in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men as they play out in the club.

A “Typical” Night in *Casa de la Música*

Tourists and researchers alike, who come to Cuba, are often attracted to and fascinated with the spectacle that is going on in *Casa de la Música*. One of them is Sujatha Fernandes, who has worked in Cuba both as a musician and as a researcher on Cuban arts and youth. In the book *Cuba Represent! Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures* (2007), she provides a grounded interpretation, based on intimate knowledge of the Cuban government-run as well as informal music industry and its artists, and of the role of music in shaping a new culture of resistance among Cuba’s youth. In this section, I refer to a particular

anecdote that Fernandes provides half way through the book, which does not in itself inform her overall argument, but is interesting in the context of this chapter.

Fernandes describes a night in *Casa de la Música* in order to demonstrate how the strategy of *jineterismo*, in some ways, may coincide with the strategies of the state itself to make money off of tourism. Interestingly she also reveals something about her own position. She tells us: “When I attended the Dan Den performance, the audience consisted mainly of foreigners and the *jineteros* for whom they were paying. A few other foreigners were there with Cuban friends, as I was” (Fernandes 2007:126). Fernandes does not spell out how she detected who of the individuals were *jineteros* and we might well ask ourselves whether those *jineteros* and other foreigners were able to tell that Fernandes was out with her friends, not *jineteros*. Like myself and many other foreigners, Fernandes probably feels reluctant to be lumped into the same category as tourists. On the other hand, trying to categorize others and oneself as ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ misses the point that in a late socialist country like Cuba, friendships and connections are often sustained in complex relationships of reciprocity, as I discussed in Chapter IV: Notions of Love and Reciprocity in a Cuban Context (Fosado 2005:64).

Fernandes goes on to describe how the Cuban people present that night in *Casa de la Música* react to one song played by the house band. The song called “Atrevido”⁵³ speaks to the phenomenon of *jineterismo*. The chorus goes: “Everything she asked for, the idiot paid for it.” A list of all the things “the idiot” (aka a foreigner) buys for his Cuban girlfriend follows: a dress, a beach vacation, a shirt for her brother, etc. According to Fernandes, the Cubans are singing and dancing along in shared recognition of their position in relation to the foreigners who have paid the cover to the club for them. The tourists do not know what is going on and even if they speak

⁵³ Translates as “Bold.” The song is originally by the band *Orishas*.

Spanish, Fernandes finds it unlikely they would be able to detect the use of slang in the song. In Fernandes' interpretation of the situation, the Cubans are sharing a joke (with her too?) at the expense of the tourists who are dancing along oblivious to the sarcasm.

I do not agree with this interpretation of what goes on in *Casa de la Música* and I am disputing it because I think Fernandes' description verifies stereotypes (of Cubans as well as foreigners) rather than leading us into a deeper understanding of how authenticity is negotiated in a tourist setting like *Casa de la Música* and in what ways the performance of sexual desires and fantasies feeds into this negotiation. I am arguing instead that the spectacle in *Casa de la Música* does not make fools of foreigners, because foreign men actually want to indulge in a fantasy rather than experience a moment of truth.

Searching for Spectacle

Dean MacCannell (1976) theorized that the motivation for many tourist experiences is a search for authenticity. Tourism provides an outlet for the desire for authenticity, but achieving this goal requires access to what MacCannell calls the "back regions" of tourist settings, where supposedly authentic cultural experiences are accessible. Of course, the back regions of tourist settings are not always easy to identify and one back region may be the front stage to yet another back region (MacCannell 1976:91 – 100). An important criticism of MacCannell's theory is that all tourists are indeed not looking for authenticity. The attraction of a place like Las Vegas, for instance, is in fact its 'falseness'. Tourists are going for the tourist experience, not to experience the 'real' (whatever it is).

Edward Bruner and Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1994) have voiced this critique very well through an interesting case study of Mayer's Ranch in Kenya, a place where tourists have

the opportunity to encounter and engage with a colonial representation of Maasai people. Mayer's Ranch is located near Nairobi and is run by a British couple. Visiting tourists are treated to a dance performance by young Maasai men (*murrans*), after which they have the opportunity to engage the dancers in conversation, take pictures and buy handicrafts from them. At the end of the visit, tourists are served tea and cookies on the lawn in front of the Mayer's residence. Mr. and Mrs. Mayer host and answer questions about the Maasai and about their own life as white people in "black Africa" (Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:145 – 146). As a tourist attraction, Mayer's Ranch is based on a mediation of an old colonial system, which is rendered meaningful in a contemporary context where the tourists experience excitement by seeing the "primitive" Maasai juxtaposed with their civilized European hosts (Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:457): "Tourism gives tribalism and colonialism a second life by bringing them back as representations of themselves and circulating them within an economy of performance" (Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:435). Of course this representation of the Maasai does not correspond to their lives as they live it when the tourists are not watching, but the analytical point that Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett make is that regardless of the authenticity of the representation, an image of the Maasai people and their way of life, shaped by the performance itself and the expectations tourists have of the encounter, is created during the dance performance and the meeting between Maasai, tourists and the Mayers. The authors name this encounter "experience theater" and conclude: "This is an imaginary space into which tourists enter and through which they negotiate a physical and conceptual path" (Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:449).

Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's contribution to the debate about authenticity is a problematization of how staged performances are rendered meaningful to tourists in their encounter with local people. The authors are less pessimistic than MacCannell, who assumes that

tourists will be disappointed upon discovering that they are witnessing staged authenticity and not the 'real thing'. Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett find that, even if tourists desire to encounter Maasai in their "natural state," they are satisfied by a successful representation of this imagery. At best, the tourists will not realize that they are witnessing a performance, and if they do, they can appreciate the theatrical aspect of the encounter as a condition for getting close to live Maasai people (Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:457, 459). The authors choose to use the term "tourist realism" to describe the ways in which the performance is rendered meaningful to tourists: "A key to the success of Mayer's Ranch is its ability to produce what we are calling tourist realism, an effect closely linked to the ultimate tourist commodity – experience" (Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1994:435). In a place like *Casa de la Musica*, it is likewise the intertwinement of authenticity and fantasy, which attracts tourists, and in some ways authenticity ceases to be the parameter on which the quality of the experience is measured. Rather, it is the quality and the power of the fantasy which take over.

Following the critiques of MacCannell's theory, I question whether tourists are in fact thinking of *Casa de la Música* as a back region where they can meet real Cuban women with whom they can establish genuine relationships. Contrary to the idea that tourists are always hoping to get behind the façade, I think that the attraction of *Casa de la Música*, to foreigners, is the live performance of their fantasies of Cuban women. In *Casa de la Música*, such cliché fantasies are re-enacted by black, *mulata* and white women who embody the image of the exotic Other. Foreign men not only indulge in the supposed authentic aspect of visiting *Casa de la Música*, a dance club where they may encounter real Cuban women. They indulge just as much in the fantasies about exotic otherness, which is playing out in front of their eyes. In this way, notions of authenticity and fantasy feed into each other and the fact that it is 'all happening' authenticates and verifies the fantasies tourists may have about Cuba and Cubans. Urry's (2002)

notion of the tourist gaze applies in this particular setting, with some modifications. First of all, the notion of the gaze has to be amplified to also signify other ways of sensing the Other, through the body, and which fills the air in *Casa de la Música*. Second, we may speculate whether the gaze or sensing in itself plays a role in authenticating the subject which is being gazed upon or sensed. In order to test this hypothesis, I will briefly look at some of the strategies that women employ in their efforts to encounter foreign men and establish durable relationships with them.

Cuban Women's Window of Opportunity: Desires for Difference

The intertwining of authenticity and fantasy in *Casa de la Música* is supported by the ways in which women, while objectifying themselves to the looks of men as they dance alone, are simultaneously conveying their subjectivity and thereby exercising agency. Because of the bodily proximity in *Casa de la Música*, foreign men's fantasies about Cuban women become tangible. What makes the experience of sexual desire authentic is the liveness of the interaction. During my observations I would often see men trying to reach for women dancing in front of them (literally to grab them), a move which the women most often avoided, although sometimes they would allow the men to touch them, even in quite explicit sexual ways. To me, the men were in a sense trying to grab the fantasy they had of being with a sexy, black/white/*mulata* Cuban woman. But as Padilla remarks, the erotic power of the Other depends on a particular construction of essentialized difference, that, in turn, necessitates a certain degree of distance (Padilla 2007b:270 – 271). As shown in Bruner and Kirschenblatt-Giblett's study of Mayer's Ranch in Kenya, for Indigenous groups operating in the tourism industry, this often means distance in time and an attempt to sustain notions of "traditional" culture representing a time lapse in comparison with tourists' self-identification as "modern," thereby seeking to "realize value and uniqueness in their

products through the application of a distance between subject and object that is both spatially and temporarily defined” (Taylor 2001:10). I argue that Cuban women capitalize on various specific constructions of difference in their attempts to manage foreign men’s desires for the same.

Specific constructions of difference were further underlined and utilized by the women as a way to stand out as individuals in the face of the uneven ratio of women to men in the club. I saw and spoke to women who employed strategies of wearing their hair extra long, dressing in extra revealing clothes or sitting visibly by themselves in an attempt to draw attention. Racialized identities were also assumed for the same purposes, although not in any uniform way, as will be noted below. Such strategies often worked in the sense that men, who may not have come to *Casa de la Música* in order to purchase sexual services, were attracted to a woman who seemed different from the rest of the crowd. As described in the vignette preceding the Introduction, Valentina always made sure to dress classy when going out and said that she never approached men directly in the club. She had encountered a number of men this way and said that she thought that her hesitation in approaching them was what attracted them to her. She was, in their understanding, the only woman in the club who was not after their money. Furthermore, women who were willing to cater to foreign men’s individual desires assumed certain subject positions for themselves that made them stand out from the crowd.

Mayra told me that *Casa de la Música* was a pick up place and in many ways employed the same strategy as a men’s magazine like *Playboy*: “There is something for everybody, some want younger women, some want older women, some want one who is dressed like a whore and some one who is classy. It is all there.” Mayra’s analysis of *Casa de la Música* was confirmed one night when I saw two women performing a “lesbian” show for a man standing motionless watching in awe as the women danced with each other and kissed in front of him. Mayra told me

that individualizing one's services was a trick to maintain the interest of a foreign lover: "I am a whore in bed, and I'll do whatever it takes: ride him all night, be with another girl in front of him or take off my clothes in public. If I do his fantasy he won't go looking to have it fulfilled somewhere else." In this sense Mayra confirmed that coming across as an individual, in and outside *Casa de la Música*, was not only a strategy to catch the interest of foreign men, but also a way of sustaining a relationship with them. She seemed to be right. When I talked to a young Australian on the plane leaving Havana, he said that he was so absolutely thrilled with his Cuban girlfriend that he hoped to be able to visit again soon; she was funny, assertive and they had amazing sex every day. The women dancing in front of foreign men in *Casa de la Música* cleverly manage to fuel foreign men's fantasies and authenticate these by embodying and enacting the men's fantasies of the exotic Other in real time, while maintaining a distance and thereby sustaining the magic moment of fantasy.

Racialized difference, especially as experienced in encounters between local black women and foreign white men, has often been highlighted as one of the major pull factors in sex tourism in Third World countries (Kempadoo 2001b:32 – 33). However, my research demonstrates that racialized difference was by no means the only difference that women employed strategically to establish contact and entice desire in foreign men. As pointed out earlier, the heterogeneity of my informants' self-identifications and the variety in the narratives through which they presented themselves and their relationships with foreign men, defies any idea that their situation is uniformly conditioned by their gender, race, class or any other signifier (Mohanty 1984). The foreign men whom they met likewise cannot be assumed to be a unified and homogenous social category and did indeed represent various racialized identities as well as class and age groups. I encountered a number of black men from Bahamas who were engaged in relationships with Cuban women they described as white or *mulata* and most of the foreign men I included in my

sample of informants were my own age. The spectrum of possibilities for sexual engagement across boundaries of class and race was wide and never uniformly conceptualized nor enacted by my informants or their foreign partners. What did seem to be a major driving force behind relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, was a desire for various expressions of difference and an opportunity to encounter and live these differences intimately.

Cuban women's employment of a variety of strategies to assume individuality while capitalizing on various constructions of difference enables us to see them as agentic subjects. While it is obvious that a colonial gaze dominates the dance floor and influences the acute (sexual) desires of foreign men in *Casa de la Música*, women cleverly capitalize on the components of this gaze by assuming the role of "hot-blooded Latinas," "insatiable Africans" or a mix of both (Fosado 2004:118). We can conclude that Cuban women who invest time, effort, and money in entering the holy halls of *Casa de la Música* only to be subjected to the neo-colonial tourist gaze that perpetuates the socio-economic inequalities between them and the foreign men they wish to meet, are successfully exerting agency while objectifying themselves to the looks of others, in Gagné and McGaughey's (2002) sense. Furthermore, women are not the only subjects of the various gazes that are cast around in *Casa de la Música*; they subject foreign men to their own gaze, while singling out individuals to initiate a conversation, a dance or a flirtation with. The interactions between Cuban women and foreign men in *Casa de la Música* furthermore effectively challenge popular notions of authenticity and suspicions of Cuban women 'faking it' on the dance floor. To the foreign men, it matters little whether they believe that the women dancing in front them are displaying their "true selves" or are putting on a show, because they like what they see and the spectacle allows them to continue to imagine Cuban women as the embodiment of the exotic, racialized and sexualized Other. In *Casa de la Música*, authenticity and fantasy are not opposites, but in fact feed into one another. The foreign patrons

in the club desire to have their fantasies about Cuban women enacted, and the women are able to satisfy this desire by playing on well-known stereotypes about Cuban female identity. The foreigners in *Casa de la Música* are not fooled by the spectacle that they witness – they are thrilled by it! In the next section I discuss which analytical tools we can use to capture this negotiation of authenticity in the production of desire.

Revalidating Fantasy as “Dreamt Reality”

In concluding this chapter I want to consider how we can meaningfully employ fantasy as an analytical lens to understand the complexities inherent in interactions between Cuban women and foreign men, as they play out both in and outside of the club. We need to move beyond dichotomies such as true and false (e.g. *por amor* and *por interés*) in describing Cuban women’s attempts at managing relationships with foreign men and their interpretations of these. We also need to acknowledge that foreign men continue to desire to engage in relationships with Cuban women and derive pleasure from their interactions, despite the inherent ambiguities in the relationship. In order to capture this apparent contradiction, we may appreciate what is known in sociology as the Thomas Theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas and Thomas 1929:572). I suggest that the notion of fantasy may take us some of the way in accomplishing this task, when we appreciate fantasy as part of the reality of Cuban women and foreign men’s interactions. I have shown how the spectacle in *Casa de la Música* “seeks to make authenticity valuable by placing the [...] tourists within that world, thus making fantasy a ‘dreamt reality’” (Taylor 2001:11).

Brennan argues that sex workers and their foreign clients she worked with in the transnational space of Sosúa, a tourist town in the Dominican Republic, were both living out dreams they believed they could fulfill in this particular place (2001:267). Tourists and expatriates in Sosúa are indulging in bodily pleasures (food, sex and sun) in a tropical paradise, either temporarily or as a long term retirement plan, while Dominican women migrate to the town in the hope of marrying a foreigner and living a life of prosperity and financial security in Europe. These dreams oftentimes do not come true; however, the belief in and the (temporary) experience of that fantasy is indeed the reality in Sosúa, and sustains and reproduces sex tourism in the town. Similarly, foreign men's fantasies of Cuban women and their experience of these coming true in- and outside of *Casa de la Música*, are a key component in the sustenance of their relationships. It is their desires for a "dreamt reality" that make up the basis of touristic encounters between Cuban women and foreign men, not some kind of master plan on behalf of the women or stupidity on behalf of the men.

Rather than judgmentally evaluating Cuban women's behaviours in this situation as manipulative and calculative, we may consider that they engage in what Allen refers to as "play-labour" (Allen 2007:188 – 189). He borrows the term from Robin D. G. Kelley to define the kind of activities and relationships that his informants, male sex labourers in Havana, engage in: "play undeniably requires labor, but it is usually thought to be creative and fulfilling to those involved; it is autonomous from the world of work [suggesting that] the pursuit of leisure, pleasure, and creative expression is *labor*" (Kelley in Allen 2007:189). Valentina described her routinely visits to night clubs this way:

When I go out, I don't go out with the intention of meeting somebody or thinking that if I go home with somebody I will do this and that. I just go out, normal. If there is an opportunity I take it, but if there is none that is just the way it is. I go to the bar, I have a drink, I relax and laugh. I see it as a game more than a job.

There are aspects of enjoyment in Cuban women's relationships with foreign men, as they may take pleasure in the men's gestures of chivalry, gifts and company, even if a relationship does not turn out to be 'happily ever after'.

John Taylor (2001) distinguishes between authenticity and sincerity in an attempt to reconsider the value of both notions in tourism studies. He writes: "the notion of sincerity is significantly different from that of authenticity in that it occurs in a zone of contact among participating groups or individuals, rather than appearing as an internal quality of a thing, self or Other" (Taylor 2001:23). Sincerity proposes a shift in focus from the object or subject in itself to the interaction between subjects. Erickson explains this relationship abstractly in the following manner: "sincerity refers to whether a person represents herself truly to others; it does not refer to being true to oneself as an end but as a means. The concept of sincerity thus says little about authenticity – that is, one's relationships with oneself" (1995:124). The notion of sincerity offers a basis for a shift in moral perspective (for instance the equation of fantasy with falsity) and focuses on the communicative events involved in tourism. The manipulative games that Valentina used to manage foreign men's expectations merely exemplified the kind of impression management that Erving Goffman (1959) has shown to be fundamental to most daily interactions. We are not to evaluate her actions or interpretations thereof negatively, as a sort of shallowness. There is an element of sincerity in them and in her claims to "never lie." This has wider implications for the way we evaluate intimate relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, and sex workers and their clients globally. Gayle Rubin forces us to question the notion that certain kinds of sexual relationships are better than others: "'good' sex acts are imbued with emotional complexity and reciprocity, sex acts 'on the bad side' of the line are considered utterly repulsive and devoid of all emotional nuance" (Rubin in Hubbard 1999:44). I believe we must re-validate the notion of fantasy in tourism, rather than disregarding it as falsity. Only this way can

we look at how women in Cuba and elsewhere engage sincerely with the men for whom they are performing a fantasy.

Chapter VI: Conclusions

This thesis contributes to the anthropological understanding of the lifeworlds of Cuban women who have relationships with foreign men that are sexualized and commercialized to various degrees. I have shown how the women skillfully manage these relationships, in the context of the social, economic and political climate they live in and in the face of their partners' ambiguous feelings towards the exchanges of love and money. I have focused on Cuban women's own interpretations of their situations and relationships, while taking into account the emic categories and discourses that circumscribe their narratives. Cuban women encounter a number of challenges in the process. Foreign men suspect they lack sincere feelings of love towards them; their networks of friends and family judgmentally categorize their relationships as being either *por amor* or *por interés*; and official voices in Cuba outlaw their individual desires and behaviours as "anti-revolutionary." Cuban women meet these challenges by playing with the cultural classifiers used to describe their position in society and interpret revolutionary narratives of equality and independence on their own terms. By capitalizing on foreign men's desires for difference and subjecting themselves to a neo-colonial, racialized and gendered, foreign male gaze, Cuban women are able to tap into Cuba's booming tourism industry, simultaneously reproducing and taking advantage of global and local systems of inequality. I argue throughout the thesis that the perception of people as categories, both in the empirical context and in anthropological analysis, is inhibitive for understanding the lifeworlds and relationships of my informants as they themselves interpret them. While an exploration of the category *jinetera* shows its empirical power as a stigma, as well as its importance in discourses pertaining to rapid changes in Cuba's socio-economic landscape, in anthropological analysis we must be careful not

to assume empirical categories as valid analytical constructions. These categories do not explain or reflect the complexities of our informant's lives and relationships.

In Chapter I, I discussed the methodological considerations that my research is founded upon. I described my position in the field and outlined the techniques I made use of during and after fieldwork to gather and analyze data. I highlighted improvisation and amazement as important anthropological tools for arriving at new knowledge (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007; Hastrup 1992; Willis 2000). I also discussed the dangers of using emic categories of people as self-evident analytical units in anthropological analysis, thereby beginning the discussion of one of this thesis' main arguments. Emic categories that carry moral connotations and are highly politicized, lose analytical value. This is not to suggest that we ignore them, but that we do not confuse their descriptive power with their analytical value.

In Chapter II, I reviewed literature that demonstrates how sexuality has been the modality through which racialized relationships between locals and foreigners in the Caribbean have been understood and expressed since colonization. Newer literature, however, employs a variety of social categories that define and describe such relationships based on the actors' self-understandings, incorporating ambiguous emotions and multifaceted interactions. I concur with this trend in newer research that criticizes the use of already established and biased categories in anthropological analysis for limiting our possibilities for imagining the extent and implications of relationships between locals and foreigners. It is necessary to problematize emic categories if we are to view local women and men as agents of change rather than victims of historical, neo-colonial and global economic structures of oppression. In order to do this, I showed how Cuban women play with the denominations of *jinetera* and *luchadora* to present themselves in a desirable way and escape the stigmatization that follows from the official Cuban discourse on *jineterismo*, which outlaws the women's behaviour as opportunistic and individualistic.

Chapter III provided empirical substance to the analytical themes that this thesis discusses, through the narrative of Valentina. A detailed recount of her story helps us some of the way to deconstruct the categories that are used by others to pass judgment on women such as Valentina, because her life choices and interpretations of her relationships can only be understood by recognizing the complexities and ambiguities of her narrative.

In Chapter IV, I examined Cuban conceptualizations of love and reciprocity and their impact on relationships between Cuban women and foreign men. First, I explained the implications of cultural classifications of relationships *por amor* or *por interés* for Cuban women, who are questioned on their motivations to engage in relationships with foreign men. I warned against taking such empirical categories at face value, and suggested examining their role in contemporary discourses about love and crisis. Second, I discussed the tensions that arise in relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, due to differing expectations of exchanges of love and money. I made the case that the suspicion Cuban women meet from their foreign partners regarding their emotional sincerity is based on their pragmatic conceptualizations of love, which do not correspond to a romantic ideal of love free of economic expectations. Whereas the problem for foreign men seems to be to determine whether their Cuban girlfriends “really love them,” the challenge for Cuban women is to manage the men’s expectations of their relationship. When successful, foreigners willingly compromise their ideals in order to experience a “dreamt reality” of falling in love in Cuba.

In Chapter V, I examined in more detail the scripts Cuban women enact to attract attention from foreign men and entice their desires. I showed that, in doing so, women asserted agency. The scripted nature of women’s behaviour is based upon pre-configurations of foreign men’s fantasies of the exotic and erotic Other. Cuban women capitalize on such racialized, sexualized and gendered stereotypes to cater to foreign men’s desires, simultaneously

reproducing systems of inequality and taking advantage of their position within these structures. I have chosen to highlight Cuban women's active and intentional engagement with categories that place them in seemingly subordinate positions in an optimistic effort to understand Cuban women as agents of change immersed in a global system of inequality, that they simultaneously challenge and reproduce. It is my hope that such a dialectical analysis partly answers J. K. Gibson-Graham's timely questions: "What if we were to accept the goal of theory is not to extend knowledge by confirming what we already know, that the world is a place of domination and oppression? What if we asked theory instead to help us see openings, to provide a space of freedom and possibility?" (Gibson-Graham 2008:619).

When we look at relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, their inherent ambiguities come to the forefront. Their lived experiences challenge us to reevaluate our assumptions about the meanings of "sex tourism" in the Caribbean and our pre-established categories that explain such relationships. While the work presented here amply questions and criticizes the use of certain categories to describe Cuban women's position in society and in relationships with foreign men, the time is ripe for other researchers to subject the category *sex tourist* to the same kind of interrogation. Kempadoo reminds us that: "sex tourism is an interaction between two groups of equally positioned marginal peoples – tourists and prostitutes – based upon similarities between the two groups" (2004:119). Preconceived notion of sex tourist's power and privilege *vis-à-vis* the local people they engage romantically with should be problematized by examining the ambiguous emotions and intentions that drive their desires (cf. Frohlick 2007). My research is itself constrained by the fact that I too use certain classifications to describe my informants and their partners, such as "Cuban women" and "foreign men." I am aware of the irony in my criticizing the use of some categories, while I replace them with yet other homogenizing categories.

In this thesis I have focused on the interpersonal relationships between Cuban women and foreign men, taking into account the socio-cultural and political context of such encounters. An even wider look at the forces of globalization that impact these encounters (other than the fact that the encounters are, in themselves, an expression of globalization), could have provided further depth to the analysis. The connections between local and global economies have had several centuries to mature in the Caribbean (Kempadoo 1999a:19). Some authors contend that too much research has been done on the personal experiences of individuals involved in sex tourism, because “in some places global forces increasingly over-determine the localized experience of sex work” (Wonders and Michalowski 2001:546). In the future, I could envision undertaking new studies of relationships between Cubans and foreigners that play out in different localities outside of Cuba, as a result of migration. As Cuba politically and economically opens up to the world, and Cuban citizens experience increased opportunities for pursuing individual life projects that may run counter to revolutionary ideals, the global migration stories of Cuban men and women seem to acquire renewed importance. Cuban identities, cultural classification and ways of interpreting relationships continue to change and acquire new meaning when the context for such processes shift to other parts of the world, or rather, in between them.

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Appendix: Sample Interview Questions

This appendix contains the sample questions that were submitted together with the Application for Ethical Approval to the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board. The questions were developed prior to fieldwork, but continuously evolved, as I discuss in Chapter II: Methodology and Fieldwork. I mostly conducted informal interviews with my informants and had to listen to the topics they brought up before knowing which questions were relevant to the conversation. See the following pages for an impression of the kinds of questions that arose in my conversations with my informants: 1, 23, 25, 28, 31 – 32, 36 – 37, 40, 42, 62, 67 – 69, 71 – 72, 74, 76, 95, 97, 99 – 100, 102, 112 – 113, 116, 119, 125 – 126, 129.

Sample questions for key informants

Background

- Did you grow up in Havana or in another city/province in Cuba? When did you move to Havana? How is life different in Havana compared to other cities?
- Do you live by yourself or together with your family or a partner?
- What is your occupation? Can you sustain a livelihood with your monthly salary or do you have other income?

Setting

- How often do you go to *Casa de la Música*? Do you go to other venues?
- Why do you go to *Casa de la Música*?
- Can you tell me what a usual night in *Casa de la Música* would be like for you? Please tell me what happens from the moment you enter the door until you leave the venue.
- What is the crowd like in *Casa de la Música*, who goes there?
- Have you met any foreigners in *Casa de la Música*? How did you meet them? (Alone or with friends?)
- Is the entry fee to get into *Casa de la Música* a significant amount of money for you? Do you usually pay for your own entrance, drinks and snacks when you go out?

Dancing

- Who do you dance with when you go to *Casa de la Música*? (Men/women/alone, dances with friends, dances with anyone who asks, dances only with some who asks, asks others to dance etc.)
- Have you danced with foreign men in *Casa de la Música*? What was your experience?
- Do you talk to the men you dance with? When do you talk to them? What do you talk about? What do you tell them about yourself?
- What do you do if you dance with a guy who doesn't know the turns or the movements of the dance?
- Is it different dancing with foreign men and Cuban men? If yes, what is the difference?

- Did you dance as a child? If yes, then in which contexts? If yes, in which way was dancing important to you when you were a child and a young adult?

Sexual-economic relationships between Cuban women and foreign men

- Have you kept in touch with any of the men you have met in *Casa de la Música* or did you only talk to them that one night?
- How did your relationship develop?
- What is your role in the relationship?
- How do you wish for the relationship to develop?
- What is the difference between being with a Cuban man and being with a foreign man?
- Have you introduced your foreign partner(s) to your friends and family? How was their first encounter?

Cuban women's everyday life

- What does it mean to “luchar” (struggle) in Cuba?
- Are you satisfied with your life and your living standards or would you like it to change? Which changes would you like to make in your life?
- What are your dreams for the future? Where do you see yourself in five years, ten years?
- What is your reaction to the booming tourism industry in Cuba?
- What does it mean to your relationships to foreign men that you live in Havana?

Sample questions for professionals, academics, entrepreneurs, government employees and homemakers etc.

Economic and structural relationships

- In which ways did the economic crisis known as “El Periodo Especial en Tiempos de Paz” change Cuban everyday life?
- Do you think the economic crisis impacts women differently than men? If yes, how?
- Can you tell me about projects and policies you know of, which have been implemented in order to stabilize the country economically through an invigoration of the tourism industry?
- Why do you think tourists choose Cuba as their holiday destination?
- What do you think will be the direction of Cuba's economic development in the near future?

Cuban popular culture

- In your experience, what is the significance of dance and music in Cuban daily life?
- Can you reflect upon some of the different music and dance styles that have influenced Cuban popular culture at different historical times?
- How important do you think Cuban music and dance is in the marketing of Cuba to tourists? Can you give me an example of its importance?
- What do you think are some of reasons that Cuban music and dance has recently gained widespread popularity outside of Cuba?