CHAPTER 20

Material Culture Across Revolutions

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Conversations on transition in contemporary Cuba typically contemplate postulations on the end of Castro's regime; some admittedly hypothesize on the timing of Castro's death and its aftermath. Theories abound on the metamorphosis of Cuban socialism; many envision the gains of a free market economy, while others postulate on the consequences of an ultra-capitalistic nation and United States intervention. In this essay I argue that a detrimental part of Cuba's ongoing (and future) "national" renewal, long-term re-development and global re-integration agenda should be an evaluation of the evolving cultural imaginary established as "Cuban" nationality or national identity. As such, I propose that by engaging in the study of "Cuban"-oriented cultural production—especially popular cultural materials—new arguments broaching the definitions of Cuban national identity can be postulated. I argue that by tracing the particularities pertaining to nationally-oriented cultural materials and by analyzing their aesthetic qualities (both artistic and ideological) and relevant commodifications (the economies they are part of) an accurate assessment of Cuba's current and future nation-state and citizenship, both territorial and diasporic, can be formulated.

First and foremost I part with the premise of the existence of diverse definition(s) of Cuban nationalism which take into account the multiple and diverse meanings of "Cuban" identities, a topic which has been central to the discussion of Cuba in a transnational context since the 1990s. In line with historian Louis A. Pérez's arguments in his seminal text *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (1999), where he posits: "the proposition of national identity not a fixed and immutable construct but rather as cultural artifact, as contested—and contesting—representations often filled with contradictions and incoherences, almost always in flux" (Pérez, 1999: 8), I propose that considerations of "Cuban" be non-cohesive, non-collective, a shifting narrative of sorts that is more proximate to the idea of a composite of sparse “national memories.” Until now “Cuban” nationality has been profiled in the light of fluid, multi-national, and I would argue “exilic” formats. In the anthology *Cuba, the Elusive Nation: Interpretations of National Identity* (2000), edited by Damián Fernández and Madeline Cámara, theoretical undertakings point to the same idea of a fluidity and dispersity of Cuban nationalism. However, I align myself more with Antoni Kapcia’s (2000, 2005) amplification of “Cuban” as myth. He approaches “Cuban” culture metaphorically and correlates his metaphor of Cuba’s traditional national myths to those of the historic and current imaginaries of “Cuban” culture. Most of these are continuously composed of the elements pertaining to the national foundational allegories tied to the imaginaries of Cuban nationality and identity that rise out of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They relate to or combine aspects pertaining to “Cuban” racial, ethnic, ideology, and class composition; the urban versus rural binary; colonial, Republican-era, and Revolutionary-era historical allusions; and many exoticized images of stereotypes attached to Cuba. In this essay I analyze the aesthetics of visual popular cultural items as vehicles, and holders, of these national imaginaries, while at the same time building upon their material commodification. I specifically approach items of graphic art, photography, and objects of nostalgia. I hypothesize on their production and consumption, while observing how socio-political discourses found within them partake in modeling or remodeling the myths of “Cuba.”

My general research proposal beyond this essay is to embrace many areas of Cuban-themed consumption in a global perspective, specifically those transactions pertinent to cultural materials and places: literary, photographic and print production; visual and media production; and those objects or sites typically labeled “popular culture.” Along these lines I specifically consider contemporary, culturally-oriented commodities created either within territorial Cuba, or in international sites, some connected to Cuban diasporic localities. As mentioned, many of these materials are commodified to include allusions to the traditionally-established Cuban national identities, yet more current are those tied to themes surrounding the ongoing Revolutionary process that began in 1959. My discussion parts with the consideration that transformations within the territorial confines of the island evolve in connection with the transnational and global locations and actions of Cuban citizens, at times postulating on the roles these citizens hold for the future of Cuba. My focus not only relies on the exchanges that occur within the island but also those concerning transnational movements either originating or concluding in Cuba or even those not territorially bound to Cuba yet Cuban-identified. They range from early-Revolution-era and Cold-War-era socialist paraphernalia to those based on the Cuban heyday of the 1950s. Many Cuban citizens of the diaspora and hyphenated Cuban-Americans in the U.S. participate in a global market of Cuban-oriented goods that are manufactured in a multitude of sites outside Cuba. These materials are produced by both Cubans and non-Cubans alike, who intend on portraying an idealized Cuba of the past, pertaining to one or more of the socio-historic ambiances of Cuba. Since the 1990s, however, the demand for Cuban-themed products has increasingly been in connection to a wide variety of non-Cubans, manufacturers of clothing, rum, cigars, and antique replicas. The label "Cuban" has thrived on everything from ethnic food to popular cocktails; objects and subjects that might not have any territorial connection to the island or its culture, but that are built within a composite of traits or characteristics aligned with an expectation of what "Cuban" is or could be.

I place this type of analysis within the scope of Cuban material cultural studies which I denominated as such in a previously printed journal article, "Materializing Havana and Revolution: Cuban Material Culture" (Rubio, 2005) which appeared in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*. I defined "Cuban material culture" as the market of products that are Cuban-identified; a sizable mass that takes into account trade material goods, cultural artifacts and locations of consumer transactions based on the assumed compositions of "Cuban" nationality. In that piece I argued that within the aesthetic discourses found in these items there is a fixation on exemplifying the diverse notions pertaining to the urban symbolic of Havana and the historical processes of the Revolutions of Cuba. These focuses on Havana and Revolution(s), I argued, have become thematic centerpieces of cultural production that is "Cuban" identified. In this piece, similar arguments are discussed yet, the focus lies in pointing to the utilization of diverse elements of assumed "Cuban" identities or myths as selling-points for these materials. Their demands are aligned in many cases with a desire to visually, in the situations broached here, play upon the stereotypes and exoticized nature of the labels of "Cuban." Most salient are "exported" or "globally constructed" goods which transcend the territorial borders of Cuba and function in the globalized circuit of Cuban cultural products.

My proposal departs with the idea that sadly, and unfortunately, consumption on the island consists of limited government rationing, a weak Cuban currency that has been dependant on the influx of foreign currencies, mainly dollars, that are later converted into pesos, and an underground black market of mercantile material needs (food, medicine, clothes, etc.) and material wants (video movies, internet access, brand name clothes, toys, etc.). Meanwhile, a strong marketplace outside the island thrives on manufacturing Cuban-identified materials in a transnational context—Cuban-style *guayab-*

eras, designed in Cuban Miami and manufactured in Taiwan, for instance; or Cuban coffee or rum produced in diverse Latin American countries and sold as "Cuban" in Miami and New Jersey (or the "International" or "Ethnic" aisle of your local supermarket). I demonstrate here that these objects, beyond being representative of the established national and mythical "Cuban" labels, are nevertheless tangible to real historic, social, ideological and political characteristics and therefore innately connected rubric of the nation and its umbrella economy. I propose that in many cases the aforementioned identity notions, as well as the ones pertaining to Havana and revolutionary fixations, are represented, appropriated and materialized with the intent of marketing upon the popularity of these notions for economic gain.

In the United States, the taste for things Cuban, specifically those tastes that encompass the notions of Havana and Revolution(s), pertain to a multitude of reasons including the most salient, ideological demarcation, observable in contrasting subjects (or objects) and notions, such as Che Guevara paraphernalia and concept memorabilia such as the ones framed by the logo "Havana, B.C.," meaning "Before Castro." Purchasing practices most clearly participate in the representation of images pertaining to two distant poles; one evokes Cold-War and post-Cold War eras which establish Havana as the last stronghold of Marxist and socialist ideals in Latin America, while the other establishes Havana as a nostalgic site, claiming the Old-world Cuba motif, particularly Cuba's heyday prior to 1959.

In my research I have proposed the formulation of a new concept, "*Cubana*," which encompasses the objects and sites that pertain to that established as material culture. The concept of *Cubana* is defined as a label created in sequence of the established Americana and Africana area studies that relate national identity to the consumption of popular culture. A definition of *Cubana* builds off of the research done on the concept of Americana, a loose term consisting of meanings of national rigueur derived from a grouping of texts that are symbolic of the culture of the United States. Since Americana includes media and is focused on the concepts labeled as material culture, I fashion *Cubana* as a field including print, visual, and material culture.

The lack of empirical data on the production and consumption of these cultural economies does not allow a comprehensive sociologically-based project offering specific trends and taxonomies. For that reason this essay does not intend to create this type of survey but rather an examination of a partial selection of texts within the parameters of "Cuban" cultural capital. Given the vast number of Cuban-identified texts of a variety of genres there is no doubt that Cuba has created a niche market within material cultural studies. The present work approaches just a few photographic and graphic art texts as well as some objects of nostalgia within this large-scale dialectic.

Rising out of this analysis, I propose that the most visible signs of social-political and economic turnaround for Cuba will be in the forms of the next revolution, one possibly stemming from shifts in cultural production and consumption, the effects of consumerism on politics, and a future of free-market enterprise. As such, I envision the study of Cuban material culture across revolutions as a detrimental part of this research frame. By juxtaposing the images and visual cultures that span the "golden" heyday of the Havana of the 1940s-1950s, the triumph of the Revolution and the prolific socialist expansion of the late 1960s and 1970s, and the more recent pictorials of the "Special Period,"one can deduce that the evolving situations of Cuba have been ingrained on the utilization of image. Mostly for export, but also utilized for internal social impact in terms of motivation mechanisms, these images have been globalized as trademarks of the meanings of Cuba, venturing to offer insight on how Cubans have conceptualized and re-conceptualized themselves and how others have in effect appropriated and contributed to these conceptualizations in the era of post-national citizenship.

The Nation in Graphic Arts, Photography and Memorabilia

Two sets of graphic art books explicitly counterpoint the material culture of the two main historical periods relevant to this study, the Republican era (1902-1959) and the Revolution era (1959-present). In the first set, *Cuba Style: Graphics from the Golden Age of Design* (2002) by Vicki Gold Levi includes a nostalgic visual journey through posters and touristic memorabilia of "Havana's Heyday," circa the 1940s-1950s. Most interesting are the collection of luggage labels from Cuban airlines, mementos from Havana hotels, and menus from restaurants such as the Sans Souci and La Florida. These items have a patina texture of age which in turn has been transferred onto the replication of the book. The graphic book, a coffee-table style pictorial, is in turn a present-day commodified piece that extenuates the imaginary of a lost Old World indicative of a certain specificity of distinctive tastes and privileged culture. An explanation of this can be observed in the text that accompanies the graphics of the book. The author lays out her coordinates for envisioning "Cuban" culture or what she calls "Cubanness" by demonstrating how the texture of these materials were tied to the dominant bourgeois class. She states, "The proliferation of Cuban bourgeois culture was encouraged in the pages of a handful of cosmopolitan magazines published in Havana during the first half of the twentieth century. The Havana-based *Social, Bohemia,* and *Carteles* propagated a true sense of Cubanness." (Levi, 2002: 126) Levi points to the formulation of the label of "Cuban" of the times as that pertinent to this upper-crust world and juxtaposes the dissemination of the marketed exotic romance of Cuba with the marketed and privileged world of bourgeois tastes. This internationalist and elitist representation, one of the common realities and stylistics of the time, is explained in Levi's text as intent by the government and the business sector which promoted Cuba's (and Havana's) prosperity as packaged tourism or packaged culture. Rosalie Schwartz, in her book *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (1997) also refers to this packaging by Cuban civic organizations and business venture capitalists, most inline with promoting Cuba to U.S. consumers during the 1940s and 1950s. Levi's book allows for an interpretation of how and why Havana's mystic and urban symbolic materialized a demand for Cuba and Cuban things throughout the Western Hemisphere. Levi claims that "advertising had two missions: to sell as many goods as possible to a large Cuban bourgeoisie and to sell Cuba to North American tourists and investors;" (Levi, 2002: 8) a reasonable explanation supportive of the theory that visual graphics and materials marketed upon that mystique. Havana, in the 1940s and 1950s, was a touristic center which offered the entertainment venues that the tourists and investors were looking for and a metropolis that regional elite Latin Americans and countryside Cubans (that could afford to travel there) yearned to be a part of. Havana offered the best of both worlds; a city and beach area all compacted within the Havana radius.

Of particular interest to me is the tourism discourse that is observed in the Levi book's aesthetic from the onset. The poster used for the front cover, for example, is an image of a man sitting inside an aircraft looking out of a large window that overlooks Havana Bay. The view features the Morro Castle and Old Havana framed in a top/down perspective as the man holds in hand an apparent travel guidebook, which for the book cover serves as the location for the names of the editor and art director. The narrative blends a historical perspective that mentions the exuberance of the times and details the work of the Cuban grafistas who in their particular style—which "combined elements of art nouveau, art deco, European modernism, and Vegas-style kitsch" (Levi, 2002) with a Cuban sensibility—perpetuated the marketed appeal desired by entrepreneurs and city promoters. In Levi's introduction, the usage of a particular word combination struck me as interesting; she describes these materials, posters and objects as "ephemeral artifacts." In the same light she accurately points to Cuba's post-colonial relation with Spain after 1898 and the newfound intimate relations with the United States, which very much affected the vacation-oriented content, a civilized and cosmopolitan-like urban appeal, and brand advertisement that went into many of these posters and ads. The aura maintained was that of a modern, at times tropicalized exotic destination, yet as Levi points to, "no truly independent ideological or philosophical foundation emerged" (Levi, 2002: 11) within the aesthetic of these graphics. The spirit though, I would argue, a consumerist one, was to appropriate the myth that was created by the travel industry. In many graphics tropically-dressed women invite, welcome, or provoke the tourist, while in others scenic views of Havana or the beaches purvey viewers with expectations. Most interesting to me are the graphics of souvenirs, postcards, and locales such as restaurants and cabarets, Sloppy Joe's, El Floridita Bar and Restaurant and Tropicana. Other graphics memorialize Cuban products such as cigar labels, movie posters, song sheets and record albums.

On the other hand, the graphic book, *Street Graphics Cuba* (2001), by Barry Dawson presents a visual journey of objects within Cuban material culture pertaining to the Revolution-era. Based mostly on the culture of the Revolution, it presents graphic material pertinent to Che memorabilia and street propaganda that serves as public art. The graphic style presents a different utopia than the previous period text, creating another type of glossed and patinized appearance. This one is based on the aesthetic of socialism and the particularities of Cold-War fetish. Objects include national motivation billboards along Havana streets and on buildings as well as souvenirs with Marxist rhetoric. Others contain propaganda slogans that support Revolution civic movements such as that supporting the national sugar crop during the 1970's. I found the most symbolic to be a postage stamp section which featured commemorative stamps of Soviet accomplishments like the space program and a one remembering the twentieth anniversary of the Granma fleet in 1976. In another section a more recent occurrence is graphically represented. A billboard and a poster demand the return of Elian González during the binational political battle that altered many sensitivities and created significant tension between the two countries. On the billboard there is a photo of Elian leaning against a barbed wire fence, looking onto the other side. The implied message is that he is imprisoned, while the statement on the billboard says "*Devuelvan nuestro niño*" ("Return our child"). (Dawson, 2001: 33) Of most peculiarity is the purchase location where I located the book. Although I keep myself attuned to new publications nationally and internationally I seem to run into some new publications by chance in the strangest locations. This one, for example, I found sifting through the national clothing store Urban Outfitters. This may be indicative of the store's market segment which targets college students as well as 20 and 30 year olds.

In her essay "Picturing Havana: History, Vision, and the Scramble for Cuba," Ana María Dopico argues that the "photographic image has triumphed in exporting Cuba during the Special Period" (Dopico, 1997: 452). She goes on to prove how the images of Havana circulate as "currency and tableaux" an interesting combination since the meaning of tableaux specifically denotes "a depiction of a scene on a stage by silent and motionless costumed participants.” The combination of the meanings of the two words used by Dopico exemplify the cultural commodity of the photography genre pertinent to Cuba of late (e.g. the Special Period) but also demonstrates that there is a conscious consideration of how the scene or site is “staged,” an ingredient of the photo symbolic and the performance of Cuban identity. The idea of staging narrowly becomes the means of combining the aesthetic of the text, the ideological context, if any (although it may be inherent and not purposeful), and the economies it strives to encounter, meaning the consumer market it capitalizes on. Similar to the analysis of popular culture, the photographic and graphic art genre combines the use of metaphor, allegory, stereotype, and the nuances associated with ideology. Inclusive are highbrow and lowbrow tastes as well as elite and popular registers which withhold substantial correlations to symbolic meanings of *lo cubano*, *cubanidad*, and *cubanía*. In the same light, the book *¡Revolución!: Cuban Poster Art*, edited by Lincoln Cushing (2003), relates the historical transformation of the mid-1960s through the 1980s, figuring the prolific appearance of poster art pertaining to the social experimentation of the period. As a medium to generate the messages of the Revolution, they were distributed both in and out of Cuba. The content varied from film marketing to promotional advertisements announcing resources for citizens. These encouraged participation in civil brigades and advocated voluntary work for the sugar harvest, health brigades and armed forces. The theme of iconography was common, including subjects such as Che Guevara and Sandino, as well as abstractions pertaining to military resistance against imperialism. In contrast to the previously studied graphics, whose purpose was to expand the economies of tourism, these were produced in order to build solidarity within the newfound socialist state. Albeit, many of the film posters of the ICAIC, [Cuban Institute of Cinematic Art and Industry], as Cushing confirms, have been replicated in order to “meet the demand for sales,” in many instances via the internet. Most interesting to me is the point Cushing raises in summarizing the importance of this poster art for Cuban history vis-à-vis other graphic arts of Cuba. He states, “Posters are a vital, expressive visual art form that has historically been a medium of choice for presenting oppositional voices.” (Cushing, 2001:19) Although it seems this was not the case for these posters during this specific timeframe of Cuban history, there is straight forward allusion to the effort of national pride that these provided for the country. Since then, one could argue, they have been memorialized and commodified as remembrances of those “lost” times, ideological incursions onto the journey that the country embarked upon during that first revolutionary epoch. In contrast, as I will now expand upon, the Revolution’s “Special Period” has been an extremely photographic site; visual images of Cuba have been prefaced in numerous pictorial books and documentaries.

In the same format, the June 1999 edition of the *National Geographic Magazine* featured Cuba with a photo essay by David Alan Harvey accompanying a text by John J. Putnam. The title of the article, “Evolution in the Revolution: Cuba,” is indicative of the changes within the then 40-year-old regime. It can be implemented first, as symbolic of the evolution of services within the socialist state (given the aftermath of the post-Cold War era); and second, as an example of the changes of the realities of the socialism of the Revolution which originally had a tight grip of its anti-capitalist rhetoric, meaning an evolution toward an economic recovery in the shape of the touristic.

The most conclusive ingredient the article pointed to, possibly much more importantly than its written content, was the incredible popularity and attraction the images of Cuba had obtained within the North American public. Scholars such as Dopico credit this new image fetish to the tourist campaign that began with 1995 foreign investment promotion of the island. The cover of the magazine featured a young boy hanging out from the side of a car, his skin tone darker than white, with a piercing look directly at the camera. Yet what the images portrayed was the young face of the Revolution, a young boy’s smiling profile and body with a red towel on his shoulder, a frame unarguably affected by a socialist tone. The photo may also be taken as a play on the pioneer handkerchief that students wear when they take the oath of becoming a “Pioneer for the Revolution.” Although possibly a far-fetched consideration, the substitute towel may be symbolic of the irony of the island’s turn to tourism for survival. The towel may be representative of tourism (capitalism) which has substituted the pioneer handkerchief (ideology) of the Revolution as its newly adopted morale.

The photograph which opens the interior layout of the photo spread within the magazine has a similar content. On the *Malecón* (or seaside promenade) a girl of similar dark skin tone looks into the camera while wearing clothes that serve as a play on the Cuban flag. She wears a short blue miniskirt and a white t-shirt that has an abstract post-modern red heart in the middle of it. This heart can be considered as a parallel to the perennial Revolutionary image of Che that has been globally commercialized; the heart significant of love takes the place of the ideological rhetoric symbol of Guevara’s face. This parallelism may translate as a move from “we sell ideology” to “we sell love” as the new slogan for tourism. This portrayal would be taken as play on the *jineterismo* or hustling economy that became prevalent since the island’s economy began focusing on tourism. Many of these hustlers offer a multitude of services from tour guide to prostitute while others hope romance or marriage will help them leave the island. By contrast the *National Geographic Magazine* used a simple and straightforward explanation for the picture of the girl. It claimed a typical romanticized interpretation which stated: “The austere times affecting her island haven’t made a Havana teenager lose heart.”

The pictures of the photo essay feature the distinct images of Cuba and partake in what Dopico labeled “a visual and virtual historical theme park.” (Dopico, 1997: 452). They create a variable combination portraying a colonial Caribbean island, an innocent countryside and a third-world city. Yet beyond this romanticized connotation, the pictures are loaded with meanings and contradictions of a place held in time. A Havana street scene features a man wearing a New Orleans jazz t-shirt and a woman porting a Marina style purse from the U.S., as well as two younger women wearing fashionable clothing that is very American. These examples demonstrate the influence of the United States in spite of the existing embargo. The mutual attraction of the two cultures is primarily visualized through commercial means. The photo essay in the June issue was a preview to the *National Geographic* book that would be published a few months later with the simple title Cuba, also featuring the photography of David Alan Harvey but excluding a textual narrative leaving the photo interpretation up to the viewer. Yet the publication of the book performs or stages the exterior gaze of foreigners to a place previously left out of the visual limelight for almost 30 years. In fact this can be supported by the one book that did a similar task a decade before; *Six Days in Havana* (1986), by James Michener, which provided a the discursive representation that was expected at that time. Its platform was a project that documented for the “American public” what was not visibly or tactically permissible given the embargo.

Therefore, photography formulates the latest global presentation of the historical scramble of understanding and documenting Cuban affairs. What Dopico leaves out is an expanded consideration of the markets of these products. Even though she points to the markets of Miami and New Jersey, she only alludes to the specific North American commodification of the pictorial texts she minutely examines. She does point to the interesting conundrum of the market appetite of the U.S. desiring Cuban images. William M. LeoGrande in his chapter, “The United States and Cuba: Strange Engagement,” which appeared in the book *Cuba, the United States, and the Post-Cold War World* (2005), points to the fact that commerce seems to be winning over anti-communism, as farmers from the Midwest continue to push for open economic relations as Cuban exiles, who are still interested in a “strong” embargo, seem to be pushed aside by trade interests. Dopico finely textures the exportation of the images of the Special Period as a triumph of

Cuban foreign economy and excels in pointing to the potential re-colonization that the photographs seem to announce. The number of Cuba-oriented photography publications based on Havana, Cuba, and the Revolution has grown significantly. A quick internet search provides more than 37 titles published between 1999 and 2006, indicating a huge consumer market.

Perhaps one of the greatest observations Dopico brings to the table of photography as material culture is that of observing the agency of the portrayed and that of the viewer. She considers the enlightenment of the consumer as a historic one and alludes to the multiple fetishes that contrive Cuba. These vary from the touristic route of ruins in Havana, the Caribbean paradise frozen in time, and a third-world Latin American country still entrenched in the Cold-War aftermath. She also inquires about the silenced voices of those within the pieces, images of those that look out of the frame beyond their quotidian everyday life. She labels this “a real nation functioning as a historical theme park,” (Dopico, 1997: 452) and contrasts the visual world of photography with its counterpart, the print lettered city, and correlates both genres to the reality of the city’s daily life, arguing that Habaneros become illegible. (Dopico, 1997: 462) Dopico goes on to study numerous texts throughout her essay; amongst them: *Cuba y Cuba* (1998) by René Burri; *Ay Cuba!: A Socio-Erotic Journey* (2001) by Andrei Codrescu; and *Cuba: Going Back* (1999) by Tony Mendoza. All of these employ a style similar to the documentary approach used by James Michener 10 years before.

One text that Dopico does not reflect on given its recent publication is the photo book *Cuba on the Verge: An Island in Transition*. Published in 2003 by Time Warner and edited by Terry McCoy, it is a fine example of the most recent production, combining photo essay with brief commentaries on the state of Cuba by both Cubans and non-Cubans living inside and outside the island. It carries an introduction by writer William Kennedy and an epilogue by dramatist Arthur Miller. It also features cameo appearances by writers and photographers such as Russell Banks, Susan Orlean, and Cubans Abilio Estévez, Mayra Montero, Cristina García, Nancy Morejón and many others. The text combines poetic literary pieces with photography; many of them corresponding in themes but others diverging. Yet the photographs here correlate the abstract images to Cuba within realities of everyday life. They approximate the established allegorical mélange that is typically part of the photo and coffee-table book on Cuba yet strive to add a balanced perspective on the Cuban trajectory by offering a variety of points of view.

The introduction by William Kennedy, “Going to Cuba?”, is illustrated by a black and white photograph of a bellman waiting for the recently arrived; a simple welcoming smile and an arm drawn behind his side portray an air of polite service. In his essay, Kennedy explains the attraction of Americans going to Cuba; he ponders the attraction of one of the major social experiments of the twentieth century or even the idea of wanting to see what has been taboo for over 40 years (Kennedy, 2003:8). The first section, titled "Time" is narrated by Cuba's Antonio José Ponte, who makes a claim to why he stays in Cuba. His idea of time is connected to the layered texture of the vivid and vibrant disaster of living under the Revolution in Cuba, a place and time he could probably not live without. The images that accompany the text are by Manuel Piña and feature close-up weathered frames of walls and iron-work decoration.

These texts then establish a commodified texture to the popular cultural practice of photography and graphic arts. They create diverse discursive representations based on ideological, political, personal, and collective experiences pertaining to Cuba. These representations are sites filled with authorial intent, ideological weight and economic gain, which therefore creates mechanisms by which Cuban culture becomes a marketed factor. Not only are the producers of these objects subject to analysis but also the consumers become important factors in establishing the shape of this marketplace.

Consuming Nostalgia: Producing and Consuming Lost Havana(s)

The market for Cuban memorabilia and nostalgia products has become a popular economy in recent years. A yearly heritage festival called "CubaNostalgia" held in Miami now for seven consecutive years, offers booths featuring Bacardi samples, memento stores and antiquarian kiosks, amongst Cuban art work, food and marketing booths that market national brands to Cuban Americans such as Chevrolet and Goya Products. Journalist and author Ana Menéndez wrote an opinion piece titled "Nostalgia is now for sale, and it's costly," in *The Miami Herald* (May 24, 2006) in which she postulated about some of the issues discussed here. She writes that "CubaNostalgia" was a place "where history is a marketing concept and memory is always priced for a quick sale." (Menéndez, 2006) Along the same lines, José Quiroga has textured these ideas in his book *Cuban Palimpsests* (2005), in which he states: "Time itself, and history, have been codified by the memory of exile, frozen by the memory of empire, and placed on a permanent soft focus with nostalgias of meaning lost." (Quiroga, 2005: viii) The existence and abundance of a multitude of Cuban memorabilia stores in Miami, Florida, and in particular in the Little Havana neighborhood, have materialized these ideas. Stores like *Sentir Cubano* (http://www.sentircubano.com) or Little Havana-to-Go (http://www.littlehavanatogo.com) specifically target consumers of Cuban material culture or "cubana" and offer a variety of products from memorabilia to domino games to food products, including Conchita, Bustelo, Badía, and Goya brands. There are also female dolls available in three styles, all stylized after the traditionally-marketed women stereotypes: a *cubana santera*, a *cubana rumbera*, and a *cubana cabaretera* (cabaret dancer). A selection of T-shirts replicates vintage styles that bring to memory sporting clubs from the 1940s and 1950s such as The Havana Yacht Club and the Marianao baseball team. In these instances products are produced memorializing diverse markers of national identity. In the case of the dolls, characterizations of women which were prevalent in the graphic and poster art of the Republican-era (1902-1959) return as symbolic of "cubanía" while the t-shirts market upon significant athletic groups that can re-gather in exile and partake in remembering times past or lost times sharing their sport in their homeland.

One non-memorabilia product not for sale in Miami but symbolic of Cuban-themed consumption is the coffee, Havana Cappuccino. It has been launched in the U.S. market recently and found in convenient stores in the Northeast and South. Havana Cappuccino bottles materialize images and allegories connected to the racial identity of women by personifying the Havana coffee drink as a woman on the bottle design. Havana Cappuccino is produced by the North American Beverage Company based in Ocean City, New Jersey (www.havanacappuccino.com) which sells the brand in a diverse set of drink flavors, five all together. All of the coffees can be prepared to be hot or iced and are 99-percent fat free as per the label. The variety of flavors includes the Original, Classic Dark Roast, Mocha, Vanilla, and Caffeine Free; each bottle's design varies accordingly. Havana, or the woman that lends face to the label on the bottles, is profiled with a frontal caricature where the drink name appears. Surrounding her facial profile are the decorative strips that flow onto the rest of the bottle assuming the shape of strands of her hair, amongst which are scattered coffee beans. The woman's features are the same on all the bottle flavors, yet the shades of her skin tone vary accordingly to the flavor of the drink. The original has a moderately shaded woman indicative of the mestiza color of Cubans; the classic dark roast Havana is a shade darker; yet the darkest color is given to the mocha Havana which is made with Dutch Cocoa. The Vanilla Havana is a white woman and the caffeine-free Havana is an even paler European white woman. These products, albeit not memorializing a specific time frame, ideology, or political process, are building upon an established tropicalization based on "Cuban" identity which grew out of the Republican-era. Women have, historically, appeared in a symbolic manner on Cuban products; specifically the Cuban cigar marquillas, still a popular collector's item.

In conclusion, the photographic and graphic text, as well as objects of nostalgia, amongst other objects and subjects of Cuban material culture, are becoming visible signs of the global popularity of things Cuban. Could this be an indicator of transition in territorial Cuba or throughout the transnational Cuban nation-state? Although predictions about transition concerning Cuba abound, some things can be claimed but nothing is certain. Although not publicly admitted, the current Revolutionary platform is basing its survival on its marketable political and ideological underpinnings. Given this, the real Cuba is now, possibly more than ever, a true player in its own culturally-oriented marketability.

One can argue though that by participating in the global game of capitalizing on their "national" marketability Cubans in Cuba and world-wide have capitalized on the historical situation that resulted from the revolutionary processes of the twentieth century. In Cuba, strict adherence to the ideological platform of socialism has evolved in order to survive monetarily, while Cubans abroad have memorialized their nation and nationality through the re-creation of sights and objects that exemplify the fixtures established as Cuban. Non-Cubans have also partaken in the global production and consumption of Cuban material cultures, often creating and re-appropriating that established as "Cuban" for their own purposes. These evolving "Cuba crazes" will persist. The shapes they will take and the contributions or detractions they will offer the future of Cuba and Cuban nationality will only be seen in time.

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