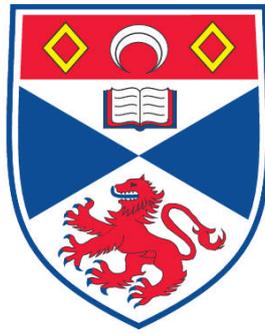


**FOLDING CUBANIDAD: A DELEUZIAN APPROACH TO
CONTEMPORARY CUBAN CINEMA**

Paola Monaldi

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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Paola Monaldi

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St. Andrews**



2012

**Dept. of Film Studies
Supervisor: Dr David Martin-Jones
June 26, 2012**

I, Paola Monaldi, hereby certify that this dissertation, which is approximately 43,000 words in length, has been composed by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. This project was conducted by me at the University of St Andrews from November 2009 to June 2012 towards fulfilment of the requirements of the University of St Andrews for the degree of MPhil under the supervision of Dr David Martin-Jones.

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Abstract

In this thesis I look at the way in which Cuban cinema of the post-Cold War period re-envisioned the image of the nation through a theoretical framework of Deleuzian extraction. In particular, I refer to Deleuze's philosophy of difference and multiplicity to explain how national difference can be produced by film narratives operating within given ideological boundaries, and national identity differentiated within a broader, socialist idea of society.

A review of recent Cuban cinema reveals the emergence of *intensive* and *crystalline regimes of narration* in both fiction and documentary cinema. Chapters one and two will therefore examine the shift of Cuban fiction cinema towards forms of *time-image* (metanarrative and magical realism); chapter three will consider the *affective turn* of the new Cuban documentary. In both cases, the inclination of Cuban cinema towards affection- and time-image will appear motivated by a national need for self-revision. In particular I will argue that, by raising intensities and virtualities, contemporary Cuban cinema acts as *modern political cinema*. While Cuba is rethinking itself and its position in the wider world, Cuban cinema is reimagining the nation in terms of *becoming-minoritarian*, that is, as a transformative and multifaceted entity in which national contradictions can be reconciled and similarities with the outside world can be more easily found.

By bringing together Deleuze and Cuban cinema, this research aims to contribute to the studies on cinema and national identity through the case study of Cuba, and to the field of Deleuzian studies by presenting a new application of Deleuze's philosophy in a socialist context.

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Introduction

How Deleuze and Cuban Cinema Came Together

In this thesis, the shift of contemporary Cuban cinema towards *affect-* and *time-image* (Deleuze) will be regarded as indicative of a national process of transformation. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba entered a deep economic and ideological crisis which forced it to reinvent itself and its own image. Through the 1990s, in the world on screen, we can trace the emergence of a hybrid form of Cubanidad which combines socialist and western traits. As the film analyses will demonstrate, Cuban cinema does not just reflect a historical phase of transition, but actively contributes to it by invoking a fluid image of the nation where change can be better negotiated.

The establishment of the Revolution in 1959 marked the beginning of Cuban cinema's Golden Age. One of the first decrees of the new government concerned the creation of the ICAIC (Instituto Cubano de arte e industria cinematográficos), a centralised body based in Havana which has ever since been responsible for the film production and distribution across the island. For decades Cuban cinema was entirely state-funded and conceived of as a fundamental tool for the construction of the new sense of nationhood. The main genres of Cuban Revolutionary cinema were documentary, social comedy and drama, historical films and biopics representing struggles and liberations. Over the years, a group of filmmakers (all state employees) established their reputation. Among the documentarists prominent names include Santiago Álvarez, Oscar L. Valdésar, Sara Gómez, Guillén Landrián and Octavio Cortázar. Among the directors of fiction, renowned authorial figures are Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Humberto Solás, whose works span the decades from the Revolution to the present.¹

At the turn of the 1990s, the collapse of Soviet socialism caused a deep gulf in the history of the Cuban Revolution. During the first thirty years of the Revolution, Cuba had relied upon preferential trade relationships with the Soviet Union, from which it imported oil,

¹ Well known films by Alea are: *History of the Revolution* (1960), *The Twelve Chairs* (1962), *Death of a Bureaucrat* (1966), *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), *A Cuban Fight Against the Demons* (1971), *The Last Supper* (1976), *The Survivors* (1978), *Up to a Certain Point* (1983), *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1993) and *Guantanamo* (1995); by Solás: *Lucía* (1968), *A Day in November* (1972), *The Ballad of Chile* (1975), *Cecilia* (1981), *A Successful Man* (1986), *The Century of Lights* (1992), *Honey for Oshún* (2001) and *Barrio Cuba* (2005).

consumer good, grains, foodstuffs, fertilisers, animal feed supplies, raw materials and industrial spare parts at subsidised prices.² Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the interruption of its vital support, Cuba found itself in paralysing isolation and entered a period of severe economic crisis, known as 'The Special Period in Times of Peace'. Food rations, supplies of gasoline and fuel were dramatically cut; public transport stopped; electricity became available only for a few hours a day or a week; medicines disappeared; diseases due to malnutrition rose; the abortion rate increased to 9 babies out of 10; chickens stopped laying eggs, since there was nothing to feed them; agricultural production suffered a shortage of fertilisers and pesticides; Cuban press reduced its circulation due to shortages of paper supplies; many factories and laboratories shut down for lack of fuel, electricity and replacement parts; unemployment rate drastically rose.³ Louis Pérez Jr. describes the situation as a nerve-wracking waiting state: all the Cubans could do was to wait hours in line at the grocery stores, hours for a bus to arrive, hours for the electricity to be reconnected.⁴ The situation was further exacerbated by the US Embargo, whose restrictions were now tightened in order to favour a democratic transition. But the Cuban Revolution survived. It managed to do so by appealing to the spirit of resistance of the population and by reinventing itself through a series of economic reforms. 1993, the worst year of the crisis, marked the beginning of a process of modernisation which still continues under the aegis of Raúl Castro: the US dollar was legalised to stimulate the entrance and circulation of hard currency, so that Cubans would be able to access primary goods only available for dollars on the tourist and black markets; self-employment was allowed for an increasing number of categories (from street sellers, to taxi drivers, private hoteliers, etc.); state-owned lands were redistributed to private cooperatives of farmers in order to stimulate agricultural production and make supplies directly available to the local communities.⁵ New relations with the western world were also sought, in particular promoting international tourism and joint ventures with foreign companies.⁶ Thanks to these internal measures, to an alliance with the newly-socialist Venezuela and to the increasing support from China, towards the end of the decade living conditions began to improve.⁷

² Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 383.

³ *Ibid*, 385-386.

⁴ *Ibid*, 387.

⁵ Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba in Revolution: A History since the Fifties* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 158.

⁶ About Cuba's opening to global economy see Aqueil Ahmad, 'Globalization and The Developing Countries, With Especial Reference to Cuba', *Globalization*, 1/1 (Fall 2001), Online at <<http://globalization.icaap.org/content/v1.1/aqueilahmad.html#28>>.

⁷ Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 198-201; Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 189-190.

While Cuba was compromising with the law of capital, a dual morality arose among the citizens, who publicly continued to profess the values of work, solidarity and egalitarianism, while privately adopting other forms of behaviour. The entry of hard currency in a period of shortages of every kind caused the proliferation of a black market and led to the rise of social inequality between those who proved able to exploit the situation and those who kept living on their Cuban peso wages. Gradually, in the national culture, socialist values such as collectivism, solidarity and social equality, combined with elements of capitalist ideology, such as individualism, search for personal profit and consumerist attitudes, leading to the formation of a schizophrenic national identity.

Cuban cinema reflects this new scenario from both the point of view of the industry and of its actual outcome. If we look at the industry, we see how Cuban cinema is now forced to seek private capital either in the form of foreign investments or international funding for co-operation, while turning to digital technology for clear cost advantages. The slowdown of the institutional production in the first half on the 1990s was eventually compensated for by the rise of independent cinema and international co-productions, in constant growth since the second half of the decade. The involvement of foreign production partners and the versatility of the digital format granted Cuban cinema an increasing visibility on the foreign markets and soon on the internet. If we look at the outcome of the period, we see how Cuban cinema begins to work as a cultural and ideological mediator both at a national and transnational level. At a national level, it contributes to the assimilation of divergent ideas and behaviours in the socialist notion of Cubanidad, smoothing out the internal contradictions. At a transnational level, it contributes to shortening the ideological distance which separates Cuba from the outside world, furthering its international integration. Overall, Cuban cinema is re-envisioning the monolithic image of socialist Cuba into a picture of difference and multiplicity, where ideological, social and cultural differences can find their place and contact points with the western world can more easily be found.

Along with the deterioration of living conditions, the crisis caused feelings of historical disillusionment, political disaffection, ideological uncertainty and extreme insecurity about the future, which national cinema would soon start to convey. The state of emergency also determined the relinquishment of the state's patronage in the social sphere. While the citizens were allowed new freedoms in order to provide for what the state could no longer guarantee them, the filmmakers benefited from a weakening of the control on artistic and cultural

activities.⁸ Despite initially resenting the national lack of finances, Cuban cinema of the Special Period was thus able to beat new paths and develop an unprecedented critical attitude.

The decade opens with three emblematic works which delineate a new cinematic mood: *Supporting Roles* (Orlando Rojas, 1988), *Life in Pink* (Ronaldo Díaz, 1989) and the contested *Alice in Wondertown* (Daniel Díaz Torres, 1990). *Life in Pink* is a fantasy film which stages the encounter between a group of young friends and their aged, disillusioned selves. *Supporting Roles* is a theatre backstage film which traces the disillusionment of three generations of actors variously coming to terms with reality. *Alice in Wondertown* is a satirical comedy set in a dysfunctional socialist town, ironically called *Maravillas*. In a more or less direct or allegorical way, these three films acknowledge the end of the socialist utopia by expressing social chaos, fall of personal illusions, and withdrawal in the private and existential drift.

Similarly, the documentary and fiction of the Special Period distance themselves from the socialist rhetoric to reveal a range of colours and shades within the reality of being Cuban. A group of films looks back at the past or unfolds from the perspective of the future, in both cases expressing the need for national revision. The past is often the year 1959, to which Cuban cinema returns now in more humble tones, giving privilege to private histories over the epic of the Revolution. This is the case for *Hello Hemingway* (Fernando Pérez, 1992) and *The Silly Age* (Pavel Giroud, 2006), two tales of formation set in 1959 but not directly engaging with the revolutionary theme. In other films, the past is either the recent past of the national depression or the colonial past. Examples of this are *Ticket to Paradise* (Gerardo Chijona, 2010), a road movie about a group of runaway teenagers heading to Havana in 1993 and finding their ultimate refuge in a nursing home for HIV patients; and *José Martí: The Canary Eye* (Pérez, 2010), where the biopic of the national hero becomes a hymn to free thought as the base for the national rebirth. On other occasions, Cuban cinema speaks from the future, such as in *Life is to Whistle* (1998) and *Madrigal* (2007), disclosing a critical distance for the evaluation of the ongoing present. Other films exorcise the negative aspects of the present through the comic mode or compensate for them through cinematic imagination: *Guantanamera* (Alea, 1995), *Vertical Love* (Arturo Sotto, 1997), *The Waiting List* (Juan Carlos Tabío, 2000); while *The Elephant and the Bicycle* (Tabío, 1994) allegorically reasserts the social mandate of cinema. A group of films reflects on patriotism and exile in a more critical way than before, when leaving the country was simply considered treason: *Honey for Oshún* (Solás, 2001), *Personal Belongings* (Alejandro Brugués, 2006), *Long Distance* (Esteban Insausti, 2010). Other films express the national longing for the Outside – the elsewhere, the otherwise, the other – in more symbolic ways: *Madagascar*

⁸ Kacpia, *Cuba in Revolution*, 167.

(Pérez, 1994), *The Mole's Den* (Alfredo Ureta, 2011). A series of films confronts controversial issues previously taboos, such as homosexuality and homophobia (*Strawberry and Chocolate*, Alea and Tabío, 1993; *Green Green*, Enrique Pineda Barnet, 2011), or the integration of sex tourism in the lives of Cuban couples (*Fable*, Lester Hamlet, 2011). Meanwhile, a few directors begin to practise a genre cinema inspired by external models: see the Tarantino-like pulp *Fruit in the Coffee* (Humberto Padrón, 2005), or the ground-breaking zombie comedy *Juan of the Dead* (Brugués, 2011), a first example of Cuban block-buster meant for the international market. Even Cuban documentary appears considerably changed in comparison to the previous decades. The new documentary tends to give up its revolutionary slant and become more decadent, introspective and self-reflexive. As examples of this new trend we can think of *La Época, El Encanto and Fin de Siglo* (Juan Carlos Cremata, 1999), *Freddy, or Noel's Dream* (Waldo Ramírez, 2003), Gustavo Pérez's trilogy of *The Extensive Reality* (2000-2003), *Havana Suite* (Fernando Pérez, 2003), *Demolish* (Alejandro Ramírez, 2004), *They Exist* (Esteban Insausti, 2005), *Empty Beds* (Sandra Gómez, 2006). All these works show how Cuban cinema is currently practising new aesthetics and politics in the attempt to understand, explain and intervene in a complex national reality, characterised by profound processes of transformation.

However, despite the blurring of the socialist rhetoric Cuban contemporary cinema remains 'Revolutionary cinema'. On closer inspection, it appears in fact that the cinematic negotiation of national identity occurs in the form of a reinclusion of social and cultural difference within a reiterated notion of Cubanidad. In this way, Cuban socialist identity is enriched with new qualities and adapted to the changing times. Sujatha Fernandes interprets the state's tolerance towards this new critical cinema as a way to maintain the socialist hegemony through a process of reincorporation of counter-hegemonic discourses. In the reality of the crisis, cinema could provide the citizens' discontent with a safe channel of expression and help reinclude divergent ideas and behaviours within the ideological umbrella of the Revolution:

The ability of cultural intermediaries to identify, appropriate and absorb critical discourses and practices in dominant frameworks is part of the ongoing construction of hegemony in a moment of crisis. The Cuban state tolerates counter-hegemonic cultural practices such as the critical arts because they can be reincorporated in official institutions, traditions, and discourses in ways that bolster the state's popularity, delineate the boundaries and limits of contestation, and promote national unity in the face of increasing ideological polarizations and growing of racial and economic disparities in Cuban society during the Special Period.⁹

⁹ Sujatha Fernandes, *Cuba Represent! Cuban Arts, State Power and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 12.

Cuba's cultural politics since the 1990s can therefore be understood in terms of *politics of reinclusion* aimed at ensuring the peaceful coexistence of contradictory elements which might otherwise threaten the status quo.

The cinematic re-envisioning of Cuba as it occurred over the last twenty years can be thought of as a *making-minoritarian*. It has been said that the notion of Cubanidad took on new qualities and the image of the nation was enriched with new features. I will refer to these qualities and features in terms of *folds* (Gilles Deleuze) and *visibilities* (Laura U. Marks). In the Deleuzian philosophical paradigm, the Fold is the sign of a process of differentiation which takes the form of a rise of multiplicity, or virtuality, within the unitary image of the subject-world (here the Cuban nation). As Laura Marks points out, the differentiation of national identity entails a variation of visibilities in the image of the nation returned by national media as well as other forms of social, political and cultural discourse. *Visibilities* should therefore be understood as discursive formations, which, indeed, in cinema take a visual form. When the established (major) image of the nation is subject to a variation of visibility, the nation appears as a fluid entity in process of becoming(-minoritarian). The category of visibility is therefore fundamental for the studies on national identities.

In the present essay, Cuban cinema will be approached through a theoretical framework drawn from Deleuze's philosophy of the image and of difference and multiplicity, and Laura Marks' theory of the visible. Deleuze's conception of *image as matter* and his *inclusive model of difference* can help us understand how cinema can be productive – and not just representative – of national transformation and how such transformation can take the form of an 'and-and' (rather than 'or-or'). Commonly, when we think of difference we think of it in terms of otherness: A versus B. On the contrary, Deleuze describes the creation of difference through the figure of origami, that is, as a transformation achieved by folding in which the subject (A) does not turn into anything else (B), but reveals new traits (virtualities, visibilities) of its inner being: A as A'.¹⁰ This conception of difference allows us to understand the evolution of Cuba's national identity in terms of *ontological continuity, differentiation of the undifferentiated* by which Cuban socialism can change yet remaining the same. Two fundamental concepts that I will employ in the analysis are those of Fold, as the visible sign of a process of differentiation, and Becoming-minoritarian, as something which can be achieved by folding.

The idea of Fold is drawn from *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988), where Deleuze interprets the baroque style through Leibniz's philosophy. In the text, Deleuze moves from describing the baroque church as a *monad* (a unit containing multiplicity, a subject containing

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: Continuum, 2006), 7.

the whole universe enfolded) to developing broader observations about existence, in which the Fold becomes the symbol of the Being's eternal vocation of self-differentiation. Difference is hence described as multiplicity; the emergence of difference as a rise of multiplicity within the One. *Multiple does not mean many*, Deleuze writes, *but folded in many ways*.¹¹ Focusing on the idea of visibility, Laura Marks re-elaborates Deleuze's philosophy of the Fold in a *political theory of the visible*. Marks argues that national identity is constructed through a selection of visibilities which reflects the interests of the hegemonic power and, at times, minoritarian resistances. Variations of visibility in national cinemas are therefore indicative of processes of transformation under way in the countries.¹²

In Cuba, the negotiation of visibility does not follow the open model of democratic societies, but occurs within the boundaries set by the power. In the last twenty years, the Cuban government has been promoting a differentiation of the national identity in order to keep it at pace with the times, while making sure that this differentiation would not threaten the socialist status quo. The image (identity) of Cuba has thus been folded and unfolded to reveal the facets which better suited the contingent needs of the power. By enfolding/unfolding visibilities, Cuban cinema is currently re-envisioning the Nation (the Major, the One) in terms of *becoming-minoritarian* (the One showed in its inner multiplicity).

The concept of becoming-minoritarian is developed by Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (written with Félix Guattari in 1980), and employed, for instance, to explain how democratic societies evolve through the formation of minorities challenging the dominant order. However, the concept of *becoming-minoritarian* must not be confused with that of *minority*. The Becoming-minoritarian is produced by a shift of focus from the *molar* to the *molecular* level of reality, which does not strictly entail any actual change in the order of things. This shift of focus permits to see/show the same reality at a different depth, in which it appears as a complex of virtualities (enfolded multiplicity). Becoming-minoritarian, therefore, does not refer to the emergence of minorities within some still existent majority, but to viewing the Major itself (socialist Cuba as one, collective identity) as a fluid multiplicity of beings and becomings(-Cuban). The concept of becoming-minoritarian can therefore help us understand how a socialist nation can differentiate its own image at a molecular level, outside of the dialectics majority/minority that we are used to in the western world.

¹¹ Deleuze, *The Fold*, 3.

¹² See Laura U. Marks, 'Experience-Information-Image', in Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones and Belen Vidal (eds.), *Cinema at the Periphery* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 232-254; and 'Getting Things Unfolded', in *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 1-35.

As it will emerge in the course of the analysis, the cinematic re-envisioning of Cuba as becoming-minoritarian serves a double purpose of mediation: at a national level it favours the reinclusion of divergent ideas and behaviours within the socialist image of the nation; at a transnational level it conveys a more democratic image of Cuba, which can supposedly favour its reacceptance by the wider world.

This thesis sits in-between the Cuban studies and the Deleuzian studies applied to national cinemas. The attention of the US and UK academia for Cuban cinema can be framed within a growing interest in Latin American cinema registered through the 1990s. In the 1990s, in fact, the transition of many Latin American countries to democratic governments and neoliberal economics led to a revival of the national cinemas and to their breaking into the global market. Mexican, Brazilian and Argentinian cinema enjoyed a boom of production and success; in addition, even films from minor Latin American countries began to appear in international film festivals and art circuits. The New Latin American cinema thus came to the attention of film scholars, who often framed it within the emergent theories of globalization and cinematic transnationalism.¹³ While many Latin American cinemas were enjoying their rebirth and reaching new publics worldwide, Cuban cinema was suffering the consequences of the crisis, which caused a slowdown in production until a total halt in 1993. Towards the end of the decade, following the opening of the country to foreign investments, a slight economic recovery is acknowledged, along with the resumption of national film production. The New Cuban cinema benefits from a mechanism of international co-productions and from the advantages offered by the new technologies, gaining increasing visibility abroad and on the digital platform. The New Cuban cinema has still to undergo institutional approval; the fact that capital comes from sources other than the state, however, grants it major freedom of expression and makes it more complaisant to foreign tastes.

After a 1985 pioneering book by Michal Chanan (*The Cuban Image*), the 2000s see the release of a series of monographic studies about Cuban cinema. Fundamental contributions are offered by the same Chanan in the revised edition of his old book, *Cuban Cinema* (2004), by Ann

¹³ See Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American Cinema, Volume 1* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1997); Ann Marie Stock (ed.), *Framing Latin American Cinema: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Chon A. Noriega (ed.), *Visible Nations: Latin American Cinema and Video* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Stephen M. Hart, *A Companion to Latin American Film* (Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2004); Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennisoun (eds.), *Latin American Cinema: Essays on Modernity, Gender and National Identity* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2005); Deborah Shaw, *Contemporary Cinema of Latin America: Ten Key Films* (New York: Continuum, 2003), and Deborah Shaw (ed.), *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Laura Podalsky, *The Politics of Affect and Emotion in Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Marie Stock in *On Location in Cuba* (2009), by Sujatha Fernandes in *Cuba Represent!* (2006), and by Ariana Hernandez-Reguant in *Cuba in the Special Period* (2009). The analyses of Chanan and Stock are complementary to each other. While Chanan focuses on institutional film production, that is, the films funded by the ICAIC, Stock brings to light the work of a group of independent filmmakers who have been active outside of institutional channels since the late 1990s. Fernandes and Hernandez-Reguant look at Cuban cinema along with other forms of artistic and cultural expressions, investigating their role in the negotiation of the ideological crisis of the 1990s. Overall, these studies give account of a composite film scene in which the image of the nation is drawn and redrawn by different subjects and under different interests.

The other critical corpus with which this research engages is constituted by the Deleuzian approaches to national cinemas. Due to its rhizomatic character, the Deleuzian philosophy easily lends itself to various applications. In recent years, a current of Deleuzian studies has emerged, in which concepts of Deleuzian extraction have been used as theoretical tools in the most disparate contexts: criticism of arts, music, literature, aesthetics, ethics and political studies, sociology, studies on the body, sexuality and gender, post-colonial studies, memory studies, new technologies and digital cultures, etc. The list is virtually limitless, as the ongoing release of Deleuzian-informed studies demonstrates. The application of Deleuze in film studies benefits from the fact that he dedicated two volumes specifically to cinema: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985). Deleuzian film scholars usually move from the categories of time- and movement-image to engage with other Deleuzian concepts drawn from his semiotic and political philosophy and from his philosophy of difference and multiplicity, so as to highlight the link between aesthetics and politics, textual forms and contextual dynamics.¹⁴

Among the Deleuzian film scholars, this research is particularly indebted to Laura Marks, David Martin-Jones and Patricia Pisters. I have already mentioned the theoretical contribution of Laura Marks, who understands the image as *identity embodiment* and the variations of visibility as symptomatic of national change. David Martin-Jones focuses on the oscillation of the narrative between time- and movement-image as the site of the negotiation of national identity. In his review of various world cinemas, Martin-Jones reserves special attention to films in which the narrative departs from the chronological timeline, showing how this often denotes a need

¹⁴ Deleuze mainly develops his semiotic philosophy in *The Logic of Sense* (1969); his political philosophy in the two volumes co-written with Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980); his theory of difference and multiplicity in *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988).

for historical revision.¹⁵ Patricia Pisters introduces the idea of *nomadic cinema* as a cinema able to trigger processes of becoming-minoritarian and therefore able to act politically across the traditional distinction between First, Second and Third Cinema, that is, commercial, authorial and classical political cinema.¹⁶ Marks, Martin-Jones and Pisters have demonstrated the profitability of a Deleuzian approach to disclose the political dimension of mainstream and minor films belonging to different geopolitical contexts and cultural traditions. Although Deleuze's thought is naturally and inevitably Eurocentric, and sometimes dated with respect to our contemporaneity, the aforementioned contributions prove how from his philosophical thought we can extract concepts and ideas and profitably use them for various analytical purposes. After all, Deleuze himself foresaw the advent of a 'pop' use of philosophy as a container from which to extract concepts and ideas for personal use.¹⁷ With this, Deleuze authorises future Deleuzian scholars to make *minor use* of his philosophy, *detritorialise* his thought and transport it to new territories.

In this thesis, Deleuze's thought has been transported to Cuba in order to understand how Cuban cinema of the post-Cold War period is re-envisioning the image of the nation. In particular, Deleuze's philosophy of difference and multiplicity is employed to explain how difference can be raised by film narratives operating within given ideological boundaries, and national identity differentiated within a broader, socialist idea of society. In the three chapters to follow we will see different ways in which the image of Cuba is folded, corrected and shown in its molecular fluidity. The first chapter addresses the emergence of *time-image* in Cuban contemporary cinema, taking as examples two films by Fernando Pérez, *Life is to Whistle* (1998) and *Madrigal* (2007), in which time-image enables redemption of history. These two films transfigure the historical caesura of 1989 in the act of abandonment, which all the protagonists have either suffered or perpetrated. In key moments of the narrative, both films employ free indirect vision to project the story into the realm of the virtual and heal the characters from

¹⁵ See David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); and *Deleuze and World Cinemas* (London; New York: Continuum, 2011).

¹⁶ Patricia Pisters, 'Arresting the Flux of Images and Sounds: Free Indirect Discourse and the Dialectics of Political Cinema', in Ian Buchanan and Adrian Parr (eds.), *Deleuze and the Contemporary World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 175-193; 'Violence and Laughter: Paradoxes of Nomadic Thought in Postcolonial Cinema', in Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (eds.), *Deleuze and the Postcolonial* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 201-219; and 'The Mosaic Film: Nomadic Style and Politics in Transnational Media Culture', in Mieke Bal and Miguel A. Hernández-Navarro (eds.), *Art and Visibility in Migration Culture: Conflict, Resistance and Agency* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2012), 175-190.

¹⁷ For the concept of *pop* see Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, ©1975), 26-27; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 26-27. The idea of a *pop philosophy* also emerges throughout *What is Philosophy?* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991).

trauma or guilt. Psychological catharsis is thus provided as the precondition for a positive differentiation of personal and collective future. The second chapter deals with Cuban magical realist cinema, taking as examples *Guantanamera* (Alea, 1995) and *The Waiting List* (Tabío, 2000), which employ magical realism to develop a constructive criticism of Cuban socialism of the 1990s. Magical realism will be described as a *crystalline regime of narration* where the magical occurrence produces the bifurcation of the series of realism, opening the world on (and beyond the) screen to the possibility of transformation. In particular, it will be noticed how in both films magic acts as a corrective tool on the degeneration of the national present. The third chapter focuses on the New Cuban documentary, which often takes the form of a *documentary of intensities*. In particular, I will examine two works representative of this trend: *Havana Suite* (Pérez, 2003), an audio-visual *suite* representing a day of ordinary life in Havana, and *They Exist* (Insausti, 2005), a talking-head documentary in which a group of lunatics discuss life and politics in Cuba. By stressing the human dimension of everyday life and the delirious character of contemporary existence, these two documentaries recomprise individual and national difference in an all-encompassing picture of humanity and delirium, in which Cuba does not appear that different from the surrounding world. Time-image, magical realism and intensive documentary narrative will appear to be working in the same direction: the re-envisioning of Cuba as a transformative and multifaceted entity, whose apparent contradictions are resolved in the idea of multiplicity.

Chapter 1

The Cuban Time-Image: Free Indirect Vision in *Life is to Whistle* (1998) and *Madrival* (2007)

This first chapter focuses on the emergence of the *time-image* in Cuban cinema of the post-Cold War period, taking as examples two films by Fernando Pérez, *Life is to Whistle* (1998) and *Madrival* (2007), which employ the time-image to reflect on the national future.

The *time-image* is defined by Deleuze as a regime of narration where events do not unfold in a causal way along a chronological timeline (*movement-image*), but enter virtual realms such as memory, dream and imagination, where their existence resembles more a virtuality than an actual form of Being. According to Deleuze, the emergence of such virtuality has the power to unhinge any preconceived image of the world and open it to rethinking and becoming. As Deleuze mentions in his *Cinema* books and Deleuzian film scholars will fully demonstrate, the time-image is often employed by national cinemas in times of transition as a tool for the negotiation of national identity. The rise of the time-image in Cuban cinema of the Special Period will also appear connected to a national phase of self-examination.

At a formal level, time-image operates by *free indirect vision*. Free indirect vision is the cinematic equivalent of what in literature is known as free indirect speech, that is, a narrative mode where a third-person narration incorporates a first-person point of view without any introductory expression such as 'he said/he thought/he saw'. This means that for a moment the identity of the speaking subject becomes uncertain: there is a voice without a body. In cinema, free indirect style has been redefined by Deleuze as free indirect vision. Deleuze argues that the time-image is produced by a virtualisation of the narrative instance similar to the one which characterises free indirect speech. The Deleuzian approach enables a rethinking of the relationship between text and context in terms of a synchronic becoming of the world on screen and the subject responsible for it: as each image derives from a given subject, in the movement of the image we can follow the transformation of an underlying subjectivity. The rise of time-image in a national cinema can therefore be interpreted as an index of becoming of the national subject, that is, of national identity.

Life is to Whistle and *Madrigal* appear both symptomatic and constitutive of a national process of transformation. In key moments of their narratives, both films employ free indirect vision to achieve psychological catharsis and redemption of history. In particular, I will argue that the unlocability of the viewing subject in correspondence to free indirect vision denotes a crisis of subjectivation acknowledged at a national level, to which these narratives respond by evoking a collective subject, healing it from the trauma of the past and projecting it positively into the future.

1.1 Time-Image and Free Indirect Vision: Disclosing the Being's Potential of Becoming

Deleuze describes the *time-image* as a type of cinematic image able to disclose the Being's potential of becoming. Time-image is therefore suited to be used by national cinemas as a means of differentiation of national identities. Homi K. Bhabha argues that national identity is a discursive construct which evolves over time through a process of re-enunciation. As a form of national discourse, cinema participates in the re-enunciation of the nation by differentiating its image on screen. In particular, David-Martin Jones acknowledges the oscillation of the narrative between movement- and time-image as the fundamental moment in which the differentiation of the nation takes place. At a formal level, the rise of the time-image is marked by free indirect vision. Free indirect vision entails a movement of virtualisation in which the relationship subject-word is redefined. Since this relationship is always given within a structure of power, it follows that by means of free indirect vision film can act politically.

The movement of the cinematic image is tightly linked to the issue of subjectivation, that is, the process by which individual or collective subjects acquire their identity in time. In his *Cinema* books, Deleuze defines two types of cinematic images, movement- and time-image, in which the Being's vocation to becoming manifests itself in terms of acquisition or loss of identity. In the movement-image events unfold according to the cause-effect consequentiality along a chronological timeline; in the time-image the chain of events forks in compossible series giving rise to compossible worlds where the subject experiences multiple identities.¹⁸ Through these virtual embodiments, the subject gains memory of itself as other, and thus starts to become Other.¹⁹ In correspondence to the time-image, memory takes the form of a *memory of the future*, that is, a recollection of newness which projects newness ahead.

¹⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 123.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 77.

Deleuze distinguishes three types of memory (or syntheses of time): habitual or automatic recognition (first synthesis), attentive recognition (second synthesis) and memory of the future (third synthesis). Automatic recognition characterises habitual actions in which perception extends automatically into action. In attentive recognition, instead, the present forks into perception- and recollection-image. While in automatic recognition 'we pass from one object to *another* remaining on *one and the same plane*', attentive recognition entails the intervention of memory, through which 'we see the object remaining *the same*, but passing through *different planes* [layers of time]'.²⁰ The *memory of the future* is therefore defined as the coalescence of perception- and recollection-image, the repetition of the present as other. In the memory of the future Deleuze acknowledges the form of an eternal return out of which novelty originates:

Repetition is never a historical fact, but rather the historical condition under which something new is effectively produced... We produce something new only on condition that we repeat – once in the mode which constitutes the past, and once more in the present of metamorphosis. Moreover, what is produced, the absolutely new itself, is in turn nothing but repetition: the third repetition, this time by excess [the second synthesis is repetition by defect], is the repetition of the future as eternal return... In this manner, the ground has been superseded by a groundlessness, a universal ungrounding which turns upon itself and causes only the yet-to-come to return.²¹

The memory of the future is thus productive of the future as the 'twice signified', the union of present and past, actual and virtual images, in a new signification.²²

The differentiation of national identity occurs through a mechanism of repetition-signification similar to that characterising the memory of the future. Homi K. Bhabha argues that national identity is discursively constructed in a *double temporality* in which people appears as 'historical *objects* of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*', or '*subjects* of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as contemporaneity'.²³ In Bhabha's view, the attainment and maintenance of a given national identity is based on the repetition of the equal in time, that is, on the iteration of a core truth which gives coherence and continuity to the image of the nation.

²⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 42.

²¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 113-114.

²² *Ibid*, 117.

²³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 145-146.

In times of historical transition, though, the national present loses its inner synchronicity, its cultural contemporaneity, and calls for a readjustment: 'The present can no longer be simply envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past and the future, no longer a synchronic presence: our proximate self-presence, our public image, comes to be revealed for its discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities'.²⁴ The asynchrony of the present determines the doubling of the image of the nation in compossible others, that is, the virtualisation of national history and identity. Bhabha describes national history/identity as made of facts and discourses, whose union is constitutionally unbalanced. In order to maintain consistency, events are constantly re-enunciated, new pasts constantly drawn to justify the changing image of the present: cultural reinscription thus 'moves back to the future' by means of projective pasts which activate new histories.²⁵ Drawing on Bhabha's idea of national history as a rewritable narration, David Martin-Jones argues that film can achieve such rewriting through an internal shift of the narrative between movement- and time-image.²⁶ By means of the time-image film is able to project reality into multiple temporalities in which it can be variously retraced and reinvented. Then, by returning to the linear consequentality of the movement-image, the narrative can authenticate a new world order which satisfies specific contextual requirements.

In the unfolding of the film narrative, time-image manifests itself as *free indirect vision*, that is, the cinematic equivalent of free indirect speech. In *Cinema 2* Deleuze introduces his definition of free indirect vision by referring to the theory of the *series*. The concept of series is borrowed from maths, where a series is a sequence of terms succeeding each other according to a given rule of progression. A film can be thought of as a series: a succession of images ordered according to a rule of unfolding established by the subject in charge of the narrative discourse. This ruling instance is the film author, through whose eyes we are given to see the world. It follows that, in cinema, direct, indirect and free indirect speeches translate into subjective, objective and free indirect vision:

Each series refers to a way of seeing or speaking... Each series will be the way in which the author expresses himself indirectly in a sequence of images attributable to another, or, conversely, the way in which something or someone is expressed indirectly in the vision of the author considered

²⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 6.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 252.

²⁶ Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 32-39, 44. Martin-Jones builds his argument on what he calls 'hybrid films', that is, films which combines time- and movement-images or mix elements of the two. Taking into account films such as *Too Many Ways To Be Number One* (Wai Kai-Fai, Hong Kong, 1997) *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, Germany, 1998), *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, UK-USA, 1998), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, USA, 2000), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michael Gondry, USA, 2004), and others, Martin-Jones shows how hybrid film can develop a political discourse without needing to be explicitly political in its content.

as other. In this case there is no longer the unity of the author, the characters and the world such as was guaranteed by the internal monologue. There is formation of 'free indirect discourse', of *free indirect vision*, which goes from one to the other, so that either the author expresses himself through the intercession of an independent character other than the author... or the character acts and speaks himself as if his own gestures and his own words were already reported by a third party.²⁷

In correspondence to free indirect vision Deleuze acknowledges an 'irrational cut', an 'unlinked term' which escapes the orderly flow of the series.²⁸ Suddenly we find ourselves in the presence of an unleashed image which we cannot attribute to any actual subject. The series thus doubles into a second series which presupposes and produces a different subject. In free indirect vision the subject does not exist prior to the image, but it is created by the image according to an indirect process of subjectivation. In the image, the subject sets out a world and places itself in it. In correspondence to free indirect vision, indeterminacy arises and hence the possibility of a new anchorage which redefines the relationship between the subject and its world.

Patricia Pisters argues that by virtualising the relationship subject-world, free indirect vision transcends the order of power within which such a relationship is given. By means of free indirect vision, therefore, film can act politically across the classical distinction between First, Second and Third Cinema (supposedly the proper political one).²⁹ Pisters engages with the Deleuzian concept of *modern political cinema* and interprets the virtual subject in charge of free indirect as the personification of the *people to come*. Modern political cinema is described by Deleuze as a work-in-progress in which national identity is in the process of being created. Contrary to classical political cinema, modern political cinema does not address any pre-existing people, but is productive of people through the stories it tells.³⁰ Pisters notices that while classical political cinema usually relies on the movement-image, modern political cinema oscillates between movement- and time-image. Movement- and time-image display different types of ocularization: while movement-image tends to employ subjectives and objectives, time-image mainly employs semi-subjectives and unreal objectives. In the movement-image people

²⁷ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 117, 126.

²⁸ Ibid, 177.

²⁹ Pisters, 'Arresting the Flux of Images and Sounds: Free Indirect Discourse and the Dialectics of Political Cinema', in Buchanan and Parr (eds.), *Deleuze and the Contemporary World*, 175-193. In her article, Pisters provides examples of both commercial and authorial films which, by means of free indirect vision, are able to operate politically as much as proper political cinema (Third Cinema): *The Interpreter* (Sidney Pollack, US, 2005) as commercial-political cinema, *Viva Laldjerie* (Nadir Moknèche, France-Algeria-Belgium, 2004) as authorial-political cinema, and *Tangier, The Burnens' Dream* (Leila Kilani, France, 2002) as Third Cinema. *Life if to Whistle* and *Madrigal* could be labelled as 'authorial cinema'. However, it will be seen how, by means of free indirect vision, they both come to work politically.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 207-215.

have corporeal existence; in the time-image people are incorporeal, in-between different states of embodiment. In the movement-image we are given images from actual points of view (subjectives and objectives as direct and indirect style); in the time-image the images come from imaginary points of view of incorporeal subjects, indeterminate entities (semi-subjectives and unreal objectives as free indirect style). Pisters argues that modern political cinema is made *political* by a dialectic movement between direct, indirect and free indirect style. Through this internal dialectic of the image, film does not depict a specific order of reality (classical political cinema), but reveals the possibilities of becoming inherent to any given order (modern political cinema). As Pisters points out, by analysing the shift of the narrative between time- and movement-image, direct, indirect and free indirect style, it is possible to map 'different speaking positions/perspectives' which disclose 'many different (his)stories and coloured perspectives'.³¹ In other words, free indirect vision is political to the extent that it repositions the spectator in an unedited point of view, which does not belong to any actual subject, but to a virtual subject that relates to the world in some different, original way.

Free indirect vision can therefore be thought of in terms of a *folding activity*, that is, a differentiation activity which entails variation of visibility. Deleuze introduces the concept of Fold in his critique of the Baroque, where he argues that Baroque achieves infinity *by folding*, that is, by working on variation.³² Variation is defined as produced by a perspective inflection which generates curves, or *folds*.³³ The Fold thus becomes the figure of difference, where difference is understood as a variation of visibility produced by a point-of-view/subject in variation:

[The point of view] is not exactly a point but a place, a position, a site, a 'linear focus', a line emanating from lines... A needed relation exists between variation and points of view, [as] every point of view is a point of view on variation... The point of view is not what varies with the subject, [but rather] the condition in which an eventual subject apprehends a variation... [Perspectivism] is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject.³⁴

While the subject readjusts its vision on the world it also repositions itself in it. It follows that a variation of visibility acknowledged in the image of the world denotes the subject's new being-in-the-world, that is, a new identity acquisition.

³¹ Pisters, 'Arresting the Flux of Images and Sounds', 185, 190.

³² Deleuze, *The Fold*, 3.

³³ *Ibid*, 15.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 20-21.

It has been said how in times of historical transition film inflects the image of the nation by unfolding/enfolding visibilities while oscillating between time- and movement-image. In this way, reality is submitted to re-envisioning and rethinking – as vision is always a cognitive act. At a narrative level, this folding (differentiation) activity becomes visible in correspondence to free indirect vision. Accordingly, the emergence of free indirect vision in contemporary Cuban cinema will appear linked to a transformation of Cuban national identity.

1.2 *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal*: Metanarrative, Free Indirect Vision and the Issue of Subjectivation in Present-day Cuba

Time-image makes its appearance in Cuban cinema in the late 1990s, while the country is slowly recovering from the economic crisis and increasingly traversed by drives of modernisation. In particular, time-image informs the work of established filmmaker Fernando Pérez and emergent filmmaker Esteban Insausti. Insausti employs the time-image in *Red Light*, a 30-min film part of *Three Times Two* (Pavel Giroud, Lester Hamlet, Esteban Insausti, Cuba, 2003), and *Long Distance* (Cuba-Spain, 2010). *Red Light* portrays a couple of strangers fantasising about each other while sitting in a car stopped at a traffic light. In *Long Distance*, the exiled protagonist imagines her Cuban friends attending her 35th birthday party in New York. In both cases we are in the presence of pure optical-sound situations where imagination intervenes to accomplish what reality denies: in *Red Light* imagination allows the couple to virtually live their erotic fantasies; in *Long Distance* it allows the exiled protagonist to reunite with her Cuban friends. In both narratives free indirect vision causes indeterminacy between what the characters imagine and what is real. Free indirect vision, though, is soon brought back to a character's point of view and the time-image resolved into the linear rationality of the movement-image. This final movement of reterritorialisation reaffirms the characters' state of isolation, in which we can ultimately recognise the situation of Cuba in the post-Cold War scenario. Pérez employs the time-image in *Life is to Whistle* (Cuba-Spain, 1998) and *Madrigal* (Cuba-Spain, 2007), which do not just allegorically reflect the nation present, but become productive of the future at the mode of modern political cinema. Here the time-image informs the whole narrative and discloses the yet-to-come in the form of 'memory of the future'. The analysis will therefore concentrate on *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* as examples of Cuban time-image cinema productive of national difference.

The stories of *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* were originally meant to be part of a single film, but then developed separately. Still the two films have many things in common, which make them suitable for a comparative analysis. Both *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* centre around the theme of abandonment, trauma and isolation, allegorical of Cuba's post-Cold War situation. In both films, free indirect vision is employed within a broader metanarrative artifice, to reflect on the mechanisms and possibilities of subjectivation in present-day Cuba.

Life is to Whistle and *Madrigal* can be thought of in terms of *metanarrative* (or *metacinema*). Metanarrative is a self-conscious narrative mode in which the text is openly presented as an artifice. This self-distancing of the narrative from its illusion of reality stimulates a reflection on the strategies of discourse in general. From the point of view of the reception, metanarrative challenges our naïve identification in fictional realms and forces us to acknowledge them as the product of an artistic labour. As the diegetic universe is revealed as a construction, the issue of enunciative responsibility arises. The emergence of metacinema in a national context can be related to a national need for self-examination. The visible intervention of the author on the diegetic material suggests the artificial character of historical narratives, as well as the possibility of historical rewriting. Both *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* stage the figure of an author/narrator who has the power to affect or rewrite the course of events. As a result, the narrative takes the form of a destiny that the characters cannot escape. The presence of this immanent force commanding the unfolding of events invites a reflection on the extent to which the acquisition of identity in present-day Cuba is imposed from above or freely achieved according to individual will, and the extent to which cinema can contribute to the emancipation of the subject from this superior and controlling power.

In *Life is to Whistle* the story is told and influenced by the character of Bebé. Although Bebé belongs to the diegetic world as much as the other characters, whom she introduces as her friends, she is mainly a *deus ex machina*. Bebé gives each character a chance of happiness, which none of them is able to take. At the end, we discover that she has been telling the story from the future (a past-future) and we have just witnessed a missed possibility of happiness. In *Madrigal* one of the characters (Javier) is the author/narrator of a novel, also called *Madrigal*, whose story is visualised as a film-within-the-film. In *Madrigal*-novel, Javier rewrites his tragic love story with Luisita in the form of a sci-fi tale (present-future) where events are granted a happy ending. Through the visualisation of Javier's novel, *Madrigal* flashforwards to the future and achieves that redemption of history that *Life is to Whistle* postulated as a possibility. Bebé and Javier are agents of virtualisation: by intervening in the course of events or converting the story of the film into a novel, they produce the bifurcation of the series and open the world to becoming. The

manipulation of the diegetic material by Bebé and Javier will be seen as socially relevant insofar as it suggests new directions for the narrative/national future.

In both *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* the metanarrative trespassing of the fictional border is marked by free indirect vision, which activates a process of virtualisation. In both cases, free indirect vision enhances the characters' emancipation from a traumatic past. In *Life is to Whistle* free indirect vision allows the characters to overcome the trauma of abandonment and project themselves positively into the future. In *Madrigal* free indirect vision allows Javier to repair the mistakes of the past and give events a second chance in another fictional realm. In this way, *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* offer psychological catharsis to a traumatised country and lay down the foundations for the reconstruction of national history.

1.2.1 Free Indirect Vision in *Life is to Whistle* (1998): Healing the Cuban Conscience from Post-Traumatic Syndrome

Life is to Whistle fictionalises the historical caesura caused by the loss of the Soviet ally in the trauma of abandonment, shared by the three protagonists and the author/narrator. In the film, free indirect vision leads to the identification of characters and narrator in a unique, collective subject, protagonist of one common traumatic past in respect to which psychological catharsis is performed.

Life is to Whistle follows three characters in Havana of 2020: Mariana (Claudia Rojas), a ballet dancer with a problem of sex addiction; Elpidio (Luis Alberto García), a musician, gambler, fisherman and occasional thief; and Julia (Coralía Veloz), a middle aged woman who suffers from mysterious fainting spells. Their story is told by Bebé (Ana Pérez), who also has the power of making things happen. Besides being the narrator, therefore, Bebé can also be considered the author of the story she is telling. The film opens with a background sequence where we see Elpidio and Mariana as children living in the same orphanage. A new baby girl with a crucifix at her neck is dropped one day outside of the front door, welcomed at the institute and collectively named Bebé (Baby). As Bebé grows up she refuses to speak, expressing herself just by whistling. For this reason she is evicted from the orphanage. As she is taken away her crucifix drops and Mariana picks it up. Ironically, the one who was expelled from the orphanage for not being able (or refusing) to talk, eventually will play the part of the narrator.

The lives of all the characters are marked by the trauma of abandonment: Mariana is orphaned from her birth; Elpidio was repudiated by his mother for living by his wits; Julia abandoned her daughter (that we will find out to be Bebé). In the course of the film all three are

given a chance to exit their isolation through an encounter with a new partner, who eventually invites them to run off together. Elpidio's chance for a change arrives from the sky on a hot-air balloon piloted by a beautiful American biologist, Chrissie (Isabel Santos), who offers to take him to the United States. Elpidio is torn about whether or not to leave since he still hopes to sew up the relationship with his mother (symbolically named Cuba). By means of *santería* rituals, Elpidio tries to get in touch with his mother and begs her for a sign to let him know what to do. When the sign finally arrives, he rushes to the spot where Chrissie has given him appointment. Mariana's addiction to sex seems to compromise her ballet career. When she is offered an audition for the sought-after role of Giselle, she makes a vow of chastity in order to get the part. Her prayers are answered, but she regrets her vow as soon as she meets her partner for the ballet, the astoundingly handsome Ismael (Juan Manuel Reyes). He respects her vow, but after the prima he invites her to leave with him. Torn between Ismael and her career, Mariana finally makes her decision and rushes to the spot of the appointment. Julia decides to try psychiatric therapy in order to heal from her fainting spells, and soon she develops feelings for her psychiatrist (Rolando Brito). After a few sessions, she finds out that her disturbance is associated with hearing the word 'sex', and more deeply to the guilt of having abandoned her child. Apart from Julia, a lot of other people are falling over on the streets of Havana as other traumatic words are uttered, such as *freedom, fake moral, opportunism, hypocrisy*. The doctor exhorts Julia not to feel guilty for her past, and invites her to leave with him and start a new life together. Initially Julia is unprepared to accept his proposal, but eventually she too rushes to the spot of the appointment. All three have been given an appointment on the same day, at the same time, in the same place: December the 4th at 4:44 pm at *Plaza de la Revolución*. They arrive just in time, and yet their partners are not there. As Mariana, Elpidio and Julia find themselves standing in front of each other, a mutual recognition begins to take place. In a *reverie*, Elpidio starts whistling, while the crucifix that Mariana wears at her neck leads Julia to believe that she is her abandoned daughter.

Overall, the film takes the form of a paradoxical narrative, where the author/narrator contradicts her declared intentions and whimsically mismatches the characters' final encounter. Bebé is a hybrid figure who dwells in-between the diegetic and extra-diegetic world, being author, narrator and character at the same time. Her hybrid nature enables her to materialise herself wherever she likes (now we see her standing by the Malecón, a moment later underwater in the ocean). In the diegetic world Bebé is like a ghost that nobody can see except the spectator. From actual locations and bizarre non-places, she tells/makes the story of Elpidio, Mariana and Julia, and indirectly her own. Several times throughout the film Bebé explicitly says:

this is going to be like this because I like it, or, this is not going to happen because I do not want it to. Other times she has the premonition that things will go in a certain way, and that is of course what will be. Accordingly, the characters happen to be in the right place at right time, and unlikely events occur almost by magic. In the opening sequence, Bebé is introduced as a sort of God standing in a heaven-like venue with the earth globe on a blue background at her back and a plastic model of Havana before her. From there, addressing the camera, she begins the narration saying that she will be looking for three people she knows in order to make them as happy as she is; but she looks sad while saying it:

BEBÉ (opening): I'm lonely. But harmoniously lonely. Havana too is lonely. But not like me. I'm happy. That's why I'm going to look for three people I love, so they'll be as happy as I am. Mariana, Elpidio, and Julia, who I know exists. And if she does, she must be more or less like this.

During the course of the film the three are indeed offered a chance of happiness, which yet in the end is unexpectedly denied. In the closing sequence, Bebé is sitting on the Malecón, facing the ocean, while a group of skaters are drifting in slow-motion behind her and all Cubans are joined in a common, hallucinated whistling. At that point, she reveals that she has been telling the story from the future and from the future renews her – betrayed – promise of happiness:

BEBÉ (closing): I decided to tell my stories from the future, so that my characters could be always happy. Now I am God. I decreed total happiness for all the habaneros in the year 2020. It's very easy. The secret is whistling. Because that's what life is. Whistling, whistling, whistling...

Then, in tears, she models her whistling on the closing tune: *La vie en rose*, which is a hymn to love and happiness.³⁵ The closing shot leaves her sitting on the Malecón, staring at the ocean. The direction of the gaze expresses a longing for the outside, the elsewhere, the other, a nostalgia of the future felt by the film characters as well as by the Cuban citizens. The contradiction between Bebé's proclamation of happiness and Havana's visible state of sadness results from a misalignment of word and image in which each one comes to exist autonomously, determining a movement of thought between opposite extremes: sadness and happiness, isolation and integration. This paradoxical lack of correspondence between what Bebé promises

³⁵ 'When he takes me in his arms/He speaks to me softly/I see life in pink/He utters words of love to me/Everyday words/And he touches me/He's welcomed in my heart/A little bit of happiness/Whom I know the cause/It's him for me, me for him, in this life/He told me so, swore it for life/And as soon as I see you/Well, I feel my heart beating inside me/Nights of love, never ending/Much happiness takes over/Annoyances and troubles disappear/Happy, so happy I could die..' (*La vie en rose*).

and what she actually keeps raises a contradictory image of the present, which gives way to resemantisation along the three tenses of time.

Free indirect vision enters such paradoxical construction of history to produce an identity shift leading to the superimposition of the three main characters and the narrator in a unique, collective subject, in which the nation can ultimately be recognised. By manipulating the destiny of this 'national subject', the author (Pérez/Bebé) rewrites the national destiny too.

Bebé opens the narration by identifying herself with Havana: 'I'm lonely', she says, 'but harmonically lonely. Havana too is lonely', and lonely are the characters whose stories she is going to tell. The bond between the narrator, the characters and the city is remarked on several times throughout the film in terms of a shared destiny of abandonment and isolation. While narrating the story of Mariana, Elpidio and Julia, Bebé in turn identifies herself with each of them, either verbally or visually. Julia is deciding whether to see a psychiatrist, when a fade superimposes Julia's and Bebé's faces, and Bebé says: 'Now I think that I am Julia, or Julia is me. But I'm not afraid to face reality. You can do it Julia. Do it. Just do it'. As a result, Julia attends her first psychiatric session. After Mariana has been awarded the part of Giselle, she runs to the church to thank God. Bebé empathises with her happiness and declares: 'A moment of pure and genuine joy. At times I think that I'm Mariana, or Mariana is me'. The identification between Bebé and Elpidio occurs in a pure visual form and flows into a free indirect vision in which the narrator and the characters appear to be exchanging their roles while recollecting and performing a sort of shared history.

The free-indirect-vision sequence opens with a close-up of Elpidio staring at the camera. He seems disturbed by something inside his head: he presses his hands on his temples, squints, shakes his head. Bebé, underwater, has the same wrinkled expression. The two appear telepathically connected, sharing some disturbing thought. In parallel editing we see Julia at the psychiatrist's. Under hypnosis, she is recalling the moment in which she abandoned her child. Julia evokes her shameful past in a third-person narration:

JULIA: That night I saw my friend go out. When she came back her eyes were on fire. She looked at me and I got frightened. I ran, and ran, ran through the woods [this part is played by Mariana]. Then I dreamed that my friend was leaving town because all the men laughed at her burning eyes [this is played by Bebé, who we see duplicated standing at once on a station platform and at the train window as the train leaves]. In spite of her pain, she couldn't cry. And I cried. I cried and cried. I cried for what was happening to her. I cried for her burning eyes.

Julia's recollection is represented as a shared vision between her, Bebé and Elpidio. Besides this, the female protagonist of this dream-like sequence (supposedly Julia as a young woman) is in turn played by Julia, Mariana and Bebé (Figure 1.1). The mechanism of sliding of the point of view, along with the identification of the female heroines in the same persona, suggests that all the characters are involved in a unique, common history, where roles can easily be exchanged. In this way, free indirect vision creates a collective subject protagonist one collective story. In this collective subject, it is easy to recognise Cuba. By means of free indirect vision, therefore, collective therapy is performed in relation to the trauma of the abandonment, suffered by both the film characters and the Cuban citizens.³⁶

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Figure 1.1 Free indirect vision in *Life is to Whistle*: Julia's recollection of the past

At the time *Life is to Whistle* was made (1998), the nation itself was suffering from abandonment and isolation: the Soviet Union had virtually abandoned Cuba at the turn of the decade and the United States were still rejecting it via the blockade. The theme of abandonment

³⁶ Not only the three protagonists, but even their partners confess that they have never known their fathers or mothers, as it is also the case for the characters of *Madrigal*. Rootlessness is thus presented as a universal condition.

is also reiterated at metanarrative level: not only have the characters been abandoned by their parents, but even by their symbolic father, the author (Bebé). In the film the relationship between parents and children, author and characters, is based on betrayal rather than mutual support. This seems to reflect the deceitful character of interpersonal relationships in a society increasingly governed by selfish attitudes, as well as the broader deceit perpetrated by the state on its citizens. As Bebé does not keep her promise of happiness in the fictional universe, Cuba's government has disappointed the citizens' expectations of well-being and development. After the hardships of the Special Period (officially ended in 1997, but in many respects still enduring), the relationship between the citizens and the state appears dominated by ambivalent feelings: love and hatred, affection and resentment, identification and detachment. The state of orphanhood appears therefore allegorical of Cuba's isolation in the post-Cold War scenario as well as of the citizens' abandonment by the state. In this respect, the film ending expresses disillusionment and hope at the same time. While the encounter with the partners is denied, the characters are given the chance to reunite with each other and thus exit their isolation. The set of this mismatched encounter is *Plaza de la Revolución*, the square dominated by the gigantic silhouette of Che Guevara's face, where public speeches are usually held. The specific location suggests a connection between the private vicissitudes of the characters and the public history of the country, transmitting a sense of nostalgia for the loss of personal and collective illusions, as well as the hope for a better future to come.

To recap, *Life is to Whistle* assimilates the national feeling of isolation and disillusionment into the theme of abandonment, employing free indirect vision to produce psychological catharsis as the precondition for the improvement of private and public history. Indeed, free indirect vision originates from the scene depicting psychiatric therapy and helps the characters heal from a post-traumatic inhibition which is impairing their lives. The film thus encourages the Cuban citizens to gain consciousness of the national 'faults' and move to resolve them in view of a better future. Through the metanarrative expedient, *Life is to Whistle* also tackles the issue of historical responsibility in socialist Cuba. In the film, the characters are not the masters of their own destiny, ultimately decided by the author's will. Similarly, the Cubans are subject to an overpowering authority which does not leave them entirely free to decide for themselves. However, free indirect vision reunites author and characters in a one shared vision, making them at once protagonists and spectators of one common history. In this way, the sense of community and common belonging is ultimately re-established.

1.2.2 Free Indirect Vision in *Madrigal* (2007): Giving History a Second Chance

The story of *Madrigal* was originally meant to be included in *Life is to Whistle*, but then developed apart. *Madrigal* can be seen as a continuation of *Life is to Whistle*, with which it has many elements in common: the theme of abandonment, a character who is also author/narrator, a missed or mismatched appointment, the use of metanarrative and free indirect vision for the purpose of historical redemption. In *Madrigal* free indirect vision allows the communication and mutual reversal between two fictional realms: that of the film-proper and that of the novel written by Javier and visualised as a film-within-the-film. Redemption is here achieved through the power of imagination, by which Javier converts the tragic story he has just lived into a parable of altruism and hope. After *Life is to Whistle* has healed the national conscience from the trauma of the past, *Madrigal* proceeds to give history a second chance.

Madrigal takes inspiration from an old film by René Clair, *Summer Manoeuvres* (1955), of which it is a sort of rewriting. An opening credit informs the audience that *Madrigal* is dedicated to 'Réne Clair and to the ending that he was not allowed to have'. In *Summer Manoeuvres* a young officer bets that he can seduce a beautiful and mysterious woman. It all begins as a game, but gradually turns into something serious for both parties. When she finds out about the bet, she refuses to see him again. He asks for her forgiveness and says that he will look up at her window when his parade passes her house: if the window is open that will mean that she has forgiven him. But the window remains closed. René Clair had originally shot another ending, which was rejected by the producer. In this dismissed ending the woman kills herself by leaving the gas on overnight. When the officer marches under her house the window is wide open, but just to let the gas out. Similarly, *Madrigal* stages a love-and-cheat romance and gives it the ending that Clair had imagined for his film: the suicide of the woman.

Madrigal is set in a rainy, cold-hued Havana of the present. The lovers are Javier (Carlos Enrique Almirante) and Luisita (Liety Chaviano). Javier is a theatre performer who is also working on a novel. One night Luisita attends his show – the one and only in the audience – and leaves him fascinated. He tracks her down and begins to court her. Javier is handsome but poor; Luisita is not beautiful but well-off. While Javier lives on his cousin's roof, Luisita has a gorgeous *mason*. Partly interested in her and partly in her beautiful house, Javier seduces her; but he also keeps spending his nights with a beautiful actress who is in the play with him, Eva (Carla Sanchez). Luisita discovers this and, humiliated, decides to kill herself. Meanwhile Javier's theatre crew has been invited to perform in Barcelona. Before leaving, Javier goes to Luisita's and begs her for forgiveness: he says that his bus will pass under her window the following day at 4.44 pm (same time as the appointment in *Life is to Whistle*); if he sees the window open, it will mean that she

has forgiven him (as in *Summer Manoeuvres*). The window is open, but just to let the gas disperse after Luisita's suicide.

As this story ends, another one begins: the story that Javier has been writing all along, also called *Madrigal*. Introduced by Javier's voice-over, his novel is visualised in a film-within-the-film. This is an erotic, sci-fi tale set in Havana of 2020. Future-Havana is depicted as a dark, nightmarish kingdom of violence and sex, where a pervading smoke causes people to abuse each other.³⁷ The protagonist couple is now played by Javier's former lover, Eva, and by the first actor of the play, Angel (Luis Alberto García), that we had seen dying in a stage accident in the first part of the film. Desperate to flee the country, the two take part in an underground lottery and win two tickets to board a ship called Barcelona. Angel, though, decides to give his ticket to a young prostitute, Estela (Ana Celia de Armas), that he has discovered to be his daughter. In the ending, while Eva and Estela are about to board the ship, free indirect vision intervenes to reverse the final image of *Madrigal*-novel into the opening image of *Madrigal*-film.

Madrigal unfolds three fictional realms which exchange matter and meaning: the filmic one, where Javier is the protagonist of a love (or interest) story with Luisita; a theatre play repeatedly rehearsed and performed, where Javier acts in nun's clothing; and Javier's manuscript, in which he transfigures his own life. By means of free indirect vision, *Madrigal*-film trespasses into *Madrigal*-novel and this is ultimately reincluded into *Madrigal*-film. The term 'madrigal' refers to a genre of secular vocal music usually based on love-related themes, where two or more voices superimpose along a melodic line in continual transformation, determining vertical encounters of sounds (chords) which create harmony. Similarly, the film displays a proliferation of fictional realms stemming out of each other and reversing into each other again. The key figure of this metanarrative tangle is the character of Javier. We first encounter him in his nun costume while he is performing in a conceptual play centred on the idea of sin. The play develops a reflection on the concept of guilt and innocence, awareness and unawareness in doing evil, which can be applied to either condemn or justify Javier's following behaviour with Luisita. While cheating on Luisita, Javier seeks expiation in the manuscript he is writing, where the characters are able to overcome their selfish impulses and actually help each other.

In *Madrigal*, free indirect vision arises on two occasions: one hour into the film, when Javier goes to the music instrument shop to buy Luisita the harp of her dreams; and at the very end, when the last image of *Madrigal*-novel is paradoxically reincluded in *Madrigal*-film. In a first

³⁷ The idea for this drugged smoke came to Pérez from the pest control smoke which is regularly spread in Havana in order to prevent mosquito epidemics. While in reality this smoke is meant to disinfect, heal... in the film Pérez turns it into an addictive substance corruptive of the human soul. Interview to Fernando Pérez (Havana, December 2011).

moment, free indirect vision produces interference between what Javier is living and what he is imaging; then, it enables the merging of the word where Javier exists and the world he imagines.

When Javier goes to the music shop he finds out that the harp he intended to buy has already been sold to a foreigner, a European girl whose name the shop owner cannot remember. As Javier walks away, the old man appears at the window saying that he has remembered the name: 'Estela, Estela Maris'. The camera then cuts to the still-image of a girl about to board a ship while a harp is lifted on board just next to her. The sound of the ship's horn pervades the close-up of Javier, who is intently staring at something. A medium-shot reveals him sitting on the theatre stage along with the other members of the crew while the manager is arranging the departure to Barcelona. Behind them, we recognise the girl on the image that constitutes the theatre backdrop. While the sound of the horn resounds in the interior of the theatre, the camera alternatively zooms on the girl and Javier. On the extreme close-up of the girl we hear the tick-tock of a clock and the voice-over of the old man repeating 'Estela, Estela Maris'. In the following shot the tick-tock of the clock overlaps with the tick-tock of typewriter keys as Javier is working on his manuscript (Figure 1.2).

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Figure 1.2 Free indirect vision in *Madrigal* [1/2]: Javier's literary imagination

This tangled vision becomes clear as Javier's manuscript becomes the source of a 20-minute film-in-the-film introduced by his own voice-over, as if he was reading it. At that point we find out that the girl of the picture is one of the protagonists of this second story (Estela). As in *Life is to Whistle* Bebé identified herself with the three main characters, in *Madrigal* there is identification between Javier and Angel, the protagonist of his novel. Angel is like an older version of Javier: he has the same hair, wears the same clothes and has the same lover (Eva). Through this fictional alter-ego, Javier makes his expiation and achieves his redemption.

While in *Life is to Whistle* a centripetal force pulled the characters together creating one collective subject, in *Madrigal* a centrifugal force projects them into different fictional realms where they perform different roles. Through the collective subject of *Life is to Whistle* collective therapy is performed. Through the proliferation of the roles of *Madrigal* the individuals are given new identities and the possibility of changing their history. More than narrating a story or several stories, therefore, *Madrigal* primarily expresses the virtuality of history.

In the closing sequence of *Madrigal*-novel, Angel escorts Estela and her harp to the dock where the ship is about to leave. Eva is waiting for Angel on the quay, but Estela turns up in his place (as in *Life is to Whistle*, the meeting is mismatched). Angel observes their encounter hidden behind a bunch of luggage and ropes, while the harp is lifted on board. At this point, the cinematic image freezes and the three-dimensional location of the dock turns into the picture which served as the theatrical backdrop from the beginning of the film. Javier steps on stage in his nun costume and concludes the play, while Luisita, revived, applauds him from the stalls (Figure 1.3).

In *Madrigal*, free indirect vision allows the doubling and communication of the series: *Madrigal*-film and *Madrigal*-novel appear as two series mutually exchanging their terms and reversing into each other. At the end, by means of free indirect vision, the diegetic universes of the film-within-the-film and the film-proper are temporally and spatially interwoven. As the ending of *Madrigal*-novel is re-embedded in the beginning of *Madrigal*-film, everything we have witnessed is retrospectively subject to resemantisation. But, who is the viewing subject responsible for this paradoxical transformation? It is not the author (Pérez) who showed us the story of Javier and Luisita; it is not Javier either (author of *Madrigal*-novel), since he unexpectedly becomes part of the image once more. Rather, we are in the presence of a *virtual subject*, an *eye without a body* that permits the internal differentiation of one-and-multiple story. Thus, by means of free indirect vision, *Madrigal* creates a self-reflexive narrative able to rewrite itself from within and correct its own mistakes.

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Figure 1.3 Free indirect vision in *Madrigal* [2/2]: The paradoxical trespassing of *Madrigal*-book into *Madrigal*-film

As in *Life is to Whistle*, in *Madrigal*-novel the final appointment is mismatched: Estela turns up in Angel's place. Even in this case, the 'unexpected' triggers resemantisation and converts the story in a parable on the value of altruism and self-renunciation. While in the first part of the film Luisita's suicide marked her surrender to the falsity and duplicity of the world, *Madrigal*-novel reaffirms the authenticity of affects and the sense of solidarity. The couple of lovers and the father-and-daughter, though, are ultimately divided in view of a better future at least for the two women. The split body of the characters (someone leaves and someone stays) and the multiple identity of Javier (character and author, man and God, sinner and redeemer) reflects the internal split of the national conscience. The Cuban subject is currently torn between collective and individual interests, the desire to stay and to leave, the will of being responsible for its personal and national destiny (author) and the impression of being passively caught in it (character). By taking the form of a paradoxical narrative, *Madrigal* recomprises these opposite extremes in a unitary – and yet multiple – image of the world, acting as a reconciler of conscience.

While *Madrigal* rewrites itself by passing from its (meta)narrative outside, it also points to the national space outside as a virtual dimension for the differentiation of the Self: Luisita's mother lives in Las Vegas, where she made her career in the porn industry; the theatre crew

foresee success and money when invited to perform in Barcelona; the characters of *Madrigal*-novel desperately try to flee a plagued Havana. It must be said that the underground lottery depicted in *Madrigal*-novel is not a total invention. In the years of the Special Period hundreds of thousands of Cubans tried to reach the coast of Florida on improvised boats. In order to contain this problem, a visa lottery was set up by the US government in 1994. An agreed number of visas were put at the disposal of Cuba every year.³⁸ This lottery still exists, and even now fleeing the country is seen by many Cubans as the only way to improve their condition. *Madrigal's* form and content seem therefore reflective of a historical tension of the outside in which the nation manifests its desire to differentiate itself and its own history.

In its metanarrative structure, *Madrigal* is reminiscent of *2046* (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 2004), which also discloses a 'narrative space outside' in which events are rewritten by means of fictional imagination. In *2046* Kar-wai follows the same protagonist of *Days of Being Wild* (1991) and *In the Mood for Love* (2000) in his new love adventures. Like Javier, Chow (Tony Leung) takes inspiration from his sentimental vicissitudes to write a sci-fi series set in a cybernetic world called 2046, where people go to recapture their lost love memories and never come back. An exception is made for Tak (Takuya Kimura), narrator and protagonist of the series. The film narrative continuously shifts between the actual life of Chow in Hong Kong of the 1960s and the futuristic world of *2046*, where the story (as in *Madrigal*) is enacted by the same actors of the film-proper. Though their fictional alter-egos, Javier takes a journey of expiation and redemption, and Chow is finally able to get over an unrequited love and move on in his life. As Wong Kar-wai explains in an interview, '2046' is symbolic number in the history of Hong Kong. In 1997, following Britain's handover of Hong Kong to Mainland China, the Mainland government promised Hong Kong 50 years of self-regulation. 2046 is the year before this special status expires. The eternal present of 2046 is a way to exorcise the national fear of change.³⁹ While in his life Chow keeps relocating, changing jobs and partners, 2046 is a self-contained dimension where things are immutable. Chow's fluid lifestyle and the slippage of the narrative between different fictional realms reflect the fluidity charactering Hong Kong's historical present. As Sheldon Lu explains, Hong Kong has been protagonist of a 'fluid, deterritorialised transnational and mobile mechanism of national affiliation [that] bespeaks a process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation of citizenship, nationality and residence'.⁴⁰ *2046*

³⁸ Matías F. Travieso-Díaz, 'Immigration Challenges and Opportunities in a Post-Transition Cuba', *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, 16/2 (1998): 234-266.

³⁹ Wong Kar-wai in Richard Corliss, '2046: A Film Odyssey', *Time* (27/09/2004), Online at <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,702196,00.html>>.

⁴⁰ Sheldon Lu, 'Filming Diaspora and Identity: Hong Kong and 1997', in Poshek Fu and David Desser (eds.), *The Cinema of Hong Kong* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 273-288, 276.

reacts to the disorienting character of the national present by re-establishing certainty and stability in a sci-fi world of the future. The same considerations can be made in relation to *Madrigal*. Even in *Madrigal* unrequited love is allegorical of a lack of grasp on a world in phase of transition, and even in this case the transformation of the protagonist into author allows him to regain control over events. As *2046*, *Madrigal* employs the metanarrative artifice to take up the reins of national history in a historical moment of change, suggesting that change does not have to be passively 'suffered' but rather positively 'acted'.

Both *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* return the image of a country torn between past and future, tradition and modernisation, right and wrong. Both *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* engages with the idea of fault – conscious or unconscious, of their own or others – and take the form of redemptive narratives which heal the consciences from the sense of guilt coming from some 'original sin' and re-establish the continuity of history over some historical caesura. In both cases the storytelling takes the form of a research/production of innocence and authenticity, on which to found personal and national rebirth.

1.3 *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* as Modern Political Cinema: Reimagining Cubanidad from the Future

Life is to Whistle and *Madrigal* can be regarded as examples of *modern political cinema*. As defined by Deleuze, modern political cinema (also called *minor cinema*) affirms the presence of people-in-becoming and creates a new consciousness of the future.⁴¹ In modern political cinema, the private vicissitudes of the characters always have collective implications and the act of storytelling unfolds by 'collective utterances' in which national identity is created; the author always speaks for a community which comes to exist in correspondence to the filmic speech-act.⁴² Bebé and Javier perfectly embody the author of modern political cinema, who is one voice and one body with the characters and their world. Besides, both Bebé and Javier tell their stories from the future (Havana 2020), which means that what we see in the film is – literally – something *yet to come*.

Deleuze argues that modern political cinema tends to work as a *minor voice* within a dominant (major) discourse of power. For this reason he also refers to it as to *minor cinema*.⁴³ The main goal of minor cinema is the invention of the future, which is indeed what makes it

⁴¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 209.

⁴² *Ibid*, 213-215.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 209, 213.

political. Deleuze's concept of Minor has been reinterpreted in terms of *resistance* by a political or cultural minority to a constituted majority, or simply *expression* of socio-cultural difference within multicultural and diasporic societies.⁴⁴ As David Martin-Jones points out: 'The question raised by minor cinema is how filmmakers attempt to construct a memory of the future for a people yet to come... when previously established centre/periphery, major/minor positions no longer hold in quite the same manner under globalization as they did previously'.⁴⁵ Whether the Minor is interpreted in terms of opposition to or relativisation of a Major, minor cinema appears connected to that need for national readjustment pointed out by Bhabha.⁴⁶ While major cinema represents the world as an assemblage of bodies and events responding to *macropolitics of power* (molar level), minor cinema represents it as a fluid process of becoming responding to *micropolitics of desire* (molecular level). In other words, the *minor labour* of cinema produces a shift of focus which allows us to see solidified social structures as traversed by internal drives of transformation.

Simon O'Sullivan brings an important contribution to the discussion about minor art by highlighting the link between the *minor* and the *molecular*. O'Sullivan explains that minor art holds political implications – even when it is not admittedly political – insofar as it reveals the molecular nature of social organisations, that it, the potentiality of becoming inherent to any constituted order:

A minor art practice is not political in the sense that Politics is. It does not involve itself necessarily with political or what we might call *molar* organizations, rather it works to connect the different aspects of life, be they individual or social... so as to produce new lines of causality and new pathways of experimentation (precisely the production of what Guattari called 'molecular revolutions'). If a minor practice is always political it is because it is always opening itself up to an outside in this sense.⁴⁷

O'Sullivan does not interpret the Minor in opposition to something major or other, but in relation to the idea of becoming. While the Major is something already formed, solidified, the Minor is something fluid, unformed. Major and Minor express the same reality at a molar and

⁴⁴ Deleuze's concept of Minor has been reinterpreted in such directions by Laura Marks and Hamid Naficy, who respectively refers to *minor cinema* as *intercultural* (Marks) and *accented cinema* (Naficy). See Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2000), and Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁴⁵ Martin-Jones, *Deleuze and World Cinemas*, 6.

⁴⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 6.

⁴⁷ Simon O'Sullivan, 'Notes towards a Minor Art Practice', *Drain: Journal of Contemporary Art and Culture - Issue on 'Syncretism'* (October 2005), Online at <www.drainmag.com>.

molecular level. The *people who are missing* are nothing else but the people already there, caught in their absence as a subjectivity in the act of becoming: 'This then is a minor art's future call. It might well speak to an already constituted audience... but at the same time it speaks from a future place in order to draw forth from its audience a subjectivity still-to-come (a subjectivity in progress as it were)'.⁴⁸ Minor art deterritorialises the present by inventing new modes of existence and, in such way, it becomes productive of the future.

By means of this minor labour, Cuban modern political cinema continues the social tradition of Third Cinema (classical political cinema). *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* produce the people to come in the mode of the memory of the future, that is, by raising a past-image of the yet-to-come. In *Life is to Whistle* the yet-to-come is the emancipation of the subject from a traumatic past. While Cuba is trying to recover from the economic crisis and establish new links with the outer world, *Life is to Whistle* represents the exit from a psychological and physical state of isolation as something soon to happen. *Madrigal* came out in 2007, just after the power handover to Raúl Castro. Although the succession of the younger Castro brother confirms the will for political continuity, Raúl becomes the hope for national change, which he partially realises through a new series of economic reforms. A power handover is also acknowledged in *Madrigal*, where the character of Javier is entrusted the authorial mandate. As much as the succession Fidel-Raúl, the conversion of Javier into an author marks a new beginning of history within a broader idea of continuity. The yet-to-come that these two films anticipate is ultimately the redemption of Cuba's socialist history.

As Fernando Pérez explains, at the base of *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* (and his other films) is the idea of a *second chance* made possible by the individual's emancipation from unconscious forms of conditioning:

In *Life is to Whistle* the trauma of abandonment conditions the lives of the characters even in their adulthood. In order to be happy, they first have to free themselves from it. In the end they manage to do so, but they arrive too late. However, from that point on – for the future – they are free. In the first part of *Madrigal* Javier is conditioned by lust for material possession, fame, sex... which causes the death of both Luisita and his rival in love and career, Angel. In the second story of *Madrigal* there is this metaphysical smoke, which is like a drug and compels people to abuse each other. And yet, Angel is able to escape this conditioning and perform a pure act of altruism: he gives his ticket to the girl. The final message of these films is that it is possible to free ourselves from this conditioning – and that we must. Of course this does not only apply to Havana, but even to the rest of the world, because we are all subject to some form of

⁴⁸ O'Sullivan, 'Notes towards a Minor Art Practice'.

conditioning, caught in systems of expectations which make us act in a certain way... There is a line by José Martí which I always bear in mind and has inspired me in all my films; it says more or less like this: 'As a human being is born, his head is already being enveloped by the passion of the fathers, religions, the force of habits, political systems, which put blinkers to his eyes and harness him like a horse'. In order to be really free, the human being has to free himself from these inborn forms of conditioning and find his own way in life.⁴⁹

According to Pérez, the redemption of personal and national history is possible on the condition that the individual frees itself from the conditioning to which it is more or less consciously exposed. The individual is thus put forwards as a source of will and desire, able to generate that differentiation of history that the nation seems to need.

Since the 1990s, Cubanidad has been stretched between different poles of attraction responding to individual, national and international interests. While the government has always defended the socialist fundament of being Cuban, the citizens have been increasingly requesting civic freedom and the international community pressing for a democratic transition. In order to maintain internal consent and rehabilitate the image of Cuba in the international scenario, the government has become more tolerant and concessive over the years. As Ann Marie Stock acknowledges, this need of mediation led to the formation of a multifaceted notion of Cubanidad comprising traits previously excluded by the socialist definition:

Cuban identity, once crafted by the revolutionary collective, became more a "co-production", growing out of the efforts of actors working both within and outside the state apparatus. No longer would Cubanness emanate primarily from island institutions; from this time onward it would emerge from the mediation between state actors and individual working on their own... This resultant *cubanía* would retain Cuba's socialist values of justice and solidarity while integrating the emerging values of individualism and tolerance of difference.⁵⁰

In this context, Cuban cinema begins to operate as a means of negotiation between individual and national interests. Since the mid-1990s, while Cuba attempts to go global, Cuban cinema

⁴⁹ Interview to Fernando Pérez (Havana, December 2011). The theme of conditioning and liberation recurs in all Pérez's films: *Clandestine* (1988) depicts the rebellion to Batista's regime; in *Hello Hemingway* (1992) the protagonist rebels to a state of poverty which frustrates her ambitions; in *Madagascar* (1994) the daughter refuses to become like her mother, stuck in a life which she does not feel as her own; in *Havana Suite* (2003) the conditioning of everyday life is transcended through the dimension of the dream; in *José Martí* (2010) freedom is pursued against Spanish domination.

⁵⁰ Stock, *On Location in Cuba*, 6.

also starts acting as a cultural mediator between the socialist and capitalist worlds, reimagining the nation *from* and *for* the Outside:

[Cuban filmmakers] would construct a new discursive place in the world. Located between past histories of the nation and emerging narratives of a global community, they would draw upon Cuba's "foundational fiction" to problematize and critique national identity. In doing so, they would craft a conception of *cubanía* characterized by transnational linkages and responsive to global processes – an identity retaining some of the socialist values promulgated throughout the revolution while resisting dogmatism and the reach of state authority. The utopian vision of the New Man would be jettisoned so as to acknowledge, as does *Life is to Whistle*, that "anybody's perfect".⁵¹

Cuban modern political cinema is therefore driven by the need to redefine the relations between the state and the citizens, the nation and the wider world. First of all, this translated in a blurring of the socialist rhetoric, felt as redundant by the Cuban citizens and alien to the international public.

Cuban recent cinema registers the corruption of the ideal of the New Man, the perfect socialist citizen driven by moral rather than material incentives and inexhaustibly committed to the good of the community.⁵² In *Life is to Whistle* we encounter two secondary characters, a taxi driver and a church caretaker, who suffer from an inner feeling of inadequacy measured against old and new models of citizenship. The taxi driver tells Elpidio that once a tourist forgot a bag with 50,000 dollars in his cab, which he returned without even accepting a reward. His mum called him an idiot. Now he wonders whether his integrity was praiseworthy or just stupid. His double feeling of pride and repentance perfectly represents the moral dilemma experienced by many Cubans about whether continuing to practise socialist integrity or embracing new models of behaviour. In *Life is to Whistle* the whole city is suffering from fainting spells as traumatic words such as false morality and opportunism are uttered. The Cuban conscience appears split between the adherence to the old socialist ideals and their – somehow inevitable – betrayal, between the prioritisation of collective or individual good. The church caretaker has a different kind of 'fault': he is ugly. He asks Elpidio if he thinks he is handsome. 'No way, man,' Elpidio

⁵¹ Stock, *On Location in Cuba*, 13.

⁵² The need for a Cuban New Man was expressed by Che Guevara in *Man and Socialism in Cuba, Letter to Carlos Quijano* (1965), reproduced in Armando Hart (ed.), *Manifesto: Three Classic Essays on How to Change the World* (Melbourne, AU: Ocean Press, 2005), 147-168. The ideal of the Cuban New Man is also extensively discussed by Yinghong Cheng, 'Let them All Become Che: Creating the New Man in Cuba', in *Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (Hawaii, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 127-189.

replies, 'You're fucking ugly'; at which the man walks away in tears. Elpidio then tries to repair: 'Nobody is perfect', he says, 'nobody is perfect mate'. At these words the man stops and the two hug. The 'perfection' against which these characters measure their deficiency derives from a system of belief (or prejudice) which seems irreversibly surpassed. *Life is to Whistle* suggests that this idea of perfection would be better to be abandoned, since it just creates hypocrisy or alienation.

Even *Madrigal* addresses the issues of morality, immorality, a-morality in present-day Cuba. The play in which Javier performs is a suggestive reflexion on the boundary between guilt and innocence, awareness and unawareness of evil. The leading actor, Angel, performs hanging mid-air in the role of an angel, reflecting on the concept of truth, sin, on the fallibility of the human kind:

ANGEL (play): Why must I always practise the truth? Why can't I practise my truth? What am I my God? What am I, beast or angel? Don't judge me from my acts, I'm not conscious of them. Only in this way I can make errors without being guilty.

The play is entitled *The Blinds* (Los ciegos) and contains an invocation to God to take pity on those who cannot see, those who cannot distinguish good from evil. The character of Javier is the emblem of both sin and repentance. Moved by material interests, Javier lies and cheats on Luisita causing her suicide. Out of jealousy, he wishes death to Angel and Angel magically dies. And yet, while doing evil, he seeks moral redemption through the good deeds of his fictional alter-ego. *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* deconstruct and reconstruct the ideal of the New Man adapting it to the present. After *Life is to Whistle* humanises the idea of perfection, *Madrigal* reaffirms the importance of moral principles in a world where they seem likely to be betrayed.

Life is to Whistle and *Madrigal* appear culturally significant even for the way in which they negotiate the relationship between Cuba and the West in a historical moment in which the country is redefining its position in the international system. Through the couple Elpidio/Chrissie, *Life is to Whistle* negotiates the foreigner/Cuban encounter transforming a sexual/economic exchange into an affective relationship, and thus setting forth an image of integration between the national and foreign body. Through Javier's manuscript, *Madrigal* re-establishes the authenticity of human relationships in a (westernised) world dominated by the lust for sex, power and money, converting the desire to flee the country into the hope for its internal reconstruction.

Since the mid-1990s, the government fostered Cuba's integration into the global economy in order to favour the entrance of much-needed hard currency. As Cuba opened up to foreign investments and international tourism, Cubanidad was inevitably affected by the penetration of the western culture and capitalist ideology. The most important resort for Cuba's precarious economy proved to be tourism. The image of the West brought by the fleets of tourists suddenly invading Havana was a picture of wealth and well-being, which led to questioning the actual benefits of the socialist system. As Maria Morukian acknowledges, the penetration of external cultural models led to the formation of a hybrid culture:

[T]he collapse of the Soviet Union has forced Cuba to open its doors to more diverse foreign investment and international tourism, thereby introducing the ideals of capitalism and consumerism into a socialist society... The primary issue that concerns Cuba today is how to prepare its social structures for the consumer market without sacrificing the basic components of Cubanidad... Although the Cuban identity is fraught with socialist ideals, the Cuban people have grown weary of living in the past. Cubans will continue to take pride in the ideals of Fidel Castro and the past accomplishments of the Revolution. However, the people are eager to create new objectives to improve their quality of life... The state also fears that introducing the island to the international market and consumerism will not only take away from its total control of Cuban society, but also that it will create a hegemonic "Americanized" popular culture dictated mainly by the desire for material possessions rather than the moral incentives so relevant to the ideals of *solidaridad*.⁵³

Ever since, Cubanidad has been undergoing a process of westernisation, recently accelerated by the improvement of internet access and by the consequent spread of digital contents of western provenance. The combination of socialist tradition and western influences has given rise to a schizophrenic national identity, where opposite sets of values coexist side by side. While Cuban socialism had to adopt capitalist mentality in order to survive, the penetration of the capital undermined the socialist core of Cubanidad, generating new social inequality and forms of exploitation. On the one hand the renovated encounter between First and Third World translated into an input of hard currency which buffered the effects of the crisis; on the other it fuelled corruption, black market and sex tourism.

⁵³ Maria Morukian, 'Cubanidad: Survival of Cuban Cultural Identity in the 21st Century', *Havanajournal.com* (16/11/2007), Online at < <http://havanajournal.com/culture/entry/cubanidad-the-essence-of-being-cuban/>>.

In the 1990s, sexual commerce re-emerged in the form of amicable exchanges between Cubans and tourists. While the Cubans were suffering all sorts of deprivation (first of which was the lack of food), goods and services inaccessible to them were widely available to tourists in the dollar market. With the dollar/peso exchange at 1 to 40 (still 1 to 24 today), the need for hard currency pushed many Cubans to offer the tourists 'their services' in exchange for a few dollars, a restaurant meal, or even only a bar of soap. Prostitution, outlawed in 1959, was thus resumed in the form of *jineterismo*. Nadine Fernandez defines *jineterismo* as a blurred form of prostitution that presents itself as a friendly exchange of favours so as to escape the category of 'illegal activity':

[The term] *jineterismo* is actually used to describe a broad range of activities related to tourist hustling (including selling black market cigars, rum, coral jewellery, etc.), providing private taxi service or access to 'authentic' *santería* rituals, or simply serving as informal tourist guides in return for a fee meal or some token gifts from the tourist... In summary, in its most inclusive sense, *jineterismo* refers to any activity outside of one's salaried employment that generates hard currency or the possibility of foreign travel. In other words, it is any attempt to integrate oneself into the global market economy at whatever level at through whatever means.⁵⁴

This form of private swindling is somehow tolerated by the authorities. Even now, due to Cuba's economic disadvantage, the Cuban/foreigner encounter often takes the form of a sexual/economic exchange.

In *Life is to Whistle*, the encounter between Elpidio and the American sea biologist (Chrissie) is a clear example of *jineterismo*. First Elpidio picks up her lost wallet and steals all her money; then he gets in touch with her to return her the empty wallet. When they meet he has just caught a fish (hooked at his line by Bebé herself). Chrissie shows her professional interest in the *fish* – she even knows its scientific name. Elpidio offers to cook it for her, and she ends up following him to his place. Chrissie is in Cuba for research purposes, but at the same time she does not disdain sexual intercourse with Elpidio. Eventually, another American tourist approaches Elpidio as he is fishing from the Malecón, but Bebé decides that there will be no affair this time: 'Another tourist looking for happiness... But I don't like it. I'd rather have her riding a taxi in Havana than being with Elpidio'. Accordingly, the tourist buys a fish from Elpidio and takes off in a taxi. Elpidio, played by mulatto actor Luis Alberto García, represents the sexual

⁵⁴ Nadine Fernandez, 'Back to the Future? Women, Race, and Tourism in Cuba', in Kamala Kempadoo (ed.), *Sun, Sex, and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in the Caribbean* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher Inc., 1999), 81-88, 85.

fascination for the exotic, which attracts so many visitors in Cuba: 'The sexualisation of 'exotic' bodies has become a standard tool of Caribbean tourist promotion, and feeds into the development of sex tourism in the region'.⁵⁵ The tourist image of Cuba deeply collides with the country's self-perception. While politicians and intellectuals promote the pride of Cuba's African roots within a discourse of decolonisation, the same cultural inheritance is exploited for rather different purposes in the sex tourism market. As Rosalie Schwartz argues, while 'romantic patriots located *Cubanidad* in the Afro-Cuban subculture... Tourist promoters exalted sensual and mystical qualities of Afro-Cuban for purposes of profit, and foreigners saw Cuba as an erotic, exotic island devoted to their pleasure and entertainment'.⁵⁶ The widespread phenomenon of *jineterismo*, though, is usually described as a mutual kindness, where the Cuban offers its help (and itself) to the tourist and the tourist returns the favour with money or gifts.⁵⁷

The image of Cuba given by *Life is to Whistle* partly conforms to and partly diverges from this image of the pleasure-island. After stealing 2,000 dollars out of Chrissie's wallet, Elpidio 'repays' her with his sexual favours. Although their affair begins as an indirect commerce of money and bodies, soon they become romantically involved. By the time she invites him to leave with her, it is clear that if he goes it would be for love and not money. Besides, by preventing Elpidio's sexual encounter with the second tourist, Bebé breaks the chain of sexual exploitation, giving the couple Chrissie/Elpidio special status. By differentiating the pattern of the Cuban/foreigner encounter, Bebé promotes the emancipation of the Cuban subject from the economic power of the First World, acting as a force of decolonisation.

The sexual access of the foreigners to Cuban bodies can be considered as a new form of colonialism. Stephan Palmié underlines the continuity between ancient colonisation and modern sex tourism, equally based on the economic subalternity of one part and the arbitrary right of appropriation by the other.⁵⁸ In the practice of *jineterismo*, the transaction is disguised as a reciprocal favour, but the economic disparity of the parties involved in the exchange determines that the poorer will be exploited. As Polly Pattullo argues, in Latin American and the Caribbean the process of decolonisation has rarely been accompanied by the construction of strong

⁵⁵ Mimi Sheller, 'Natural Hedonism: The Invention of Caribbean Islands as Tropical Playgrounds', in David Timothy Duval (ed.), *Tourism in the Caribbean: Trends, Development, Prospects* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23-38, 33.

⁵⁶ Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (Lincoln, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1999), 87.

⁵⁷ Jaqueline Sánchez Taylor, 'Tourism and "Embodied" Commodities: Sex Tourism in the Caribbean', in Stephen Clift and Simon Carter (eds.), *Tourism and Sex: Culture, Commerce and Coercion* (London; New York: Pinter, 2000), 41-53, 42.

⁵⁸ Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 278.

national economies, with the consequence that the ex-colonies are still in a position of subalternity and dependence upon the First World.⁵⁹ The Cuban reality of sex tourism reveals that the integration of the country in the global market still suffers from this unbalanced force relationship. Nevertheless, through the couple Chrissie/ Elpidio, *Life is to Whistle* re-envision the Cuban/foreigner relationship in terms of a possible, equal exchange. When Elpidio confesses Chrissie that he stole all her money, Chrissie replies that she knew that from the beginning. Instead of being angry at him, she thanks him for disclosing his world to her and invites him to leave with her so that she can in turn disclose hers to him. Cultural difference is thus presented as a source of mutual enrichment, rather than renewed exploitation. In this way, the film rectifies the relationship between Cuba and the First World, drawing – from the future – a picture of egalitarian integration.

In *Madrigal*, the image of future-Havana as the kingdom of sex is inspired by the reality of both present- and pre-Revolutionary-Havana, when the city was known as the 'American brothel'. The vision of future-Havana thus takes the form of a memory of the future, where a painful historical experience (past and present) is projected ahead as fear. In the contemporary imaginary, Havana is two opposite and subsistent cities: the socialist-Havana where Fidel proclaimed the victory of the Revolution, and the hedonistic-Havana proposed by the tourist guides. This double image of Havana reminds us of the two cities of *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, USA, 1946): Bedford Falls/Pottersville as the good/bad city. The future-Havana of *Madrigal* noticeably resembles the town of Pottersville. In both films, the image of the bad city derives from a historical fear connected to the spread of a capitalist mentality which risks to corrupt communitarian values. The protagonist of *It's a Wonderful Life*, George (James Stuart) owns a Building & Loan company in the town of Bedford Falls. Instead of pursuing his own profit, George uses his company to help his town fellows. The avid Mr Potter also runs his business in town; contrary to George, he only pursues his own interest. While George represents the good soul of capitalism (capital at the service of people), Mr Potter represents its bad soul (capital at the service of capital). After a big sum of money is stolen from George's coffers, he risks bankruptcy and contemplates suicide. At this point, an angel appears to him and shows him what the town would be like if he had never existed. George is thus catapulted into Pottersville: Bedford Falls has been renamed after Mr Potter, who now controls the entire town. Pottersville is the reign of vice: it hosts gambling, brawls, night clubs and brothels. This nightmarish vision makes George desist from suicide. Magically, he finds himself back in Bedford Falls, where the

⁵⁹ Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* (Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996), 5.

community he has always helped now helps him save his business. The film has been read as an affirmation of the communitarian spirit in a historical moment in which the advancement of capitalist economy was threatening the values on which American society had been built.⁶⁰ Martin-Jones interprets George's return to reality (Bedford Falls) as a movement of reterritorialisation by which the film exorcises the fear associated with the advance of capitalism and re-establishes a positive course of history.⁶¹ In *Madrigal*, future-Havana has the same ontological consistency of present-Havana: they are both real – or imaginary, if we like. Besides, even present-Havana appears dominated by opportunism and relaxation of manners. Contrary to *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Madrigal* does not re-establish a positive history through a movement of reterritorialisation, but rather through a further deterritorialisation. After reversing the film's series into the novel's series (first deterritorialisation), this is reversed again into the film's one (second deterritorialisation). In this way, the values of altruism and solidarity, meanwhile re-established in the city of the future, are retroactively reinstalled in the present. A positive course of history is thus re-established from the future.

1.4 Conclusion

As this analysis has demonstrated, the emergence of the time-image in contemporary Cuban cinema manifests a need for national adjustment. In *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal*, time-image has been acknowledged in the form of free indirect vision and metanarrative, though which both films become productive of the future at the mode of *modern political cinema*.

In both *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal*, the characters' lives are marked by a traumatic event: either abandonment or death. Such disruption seems allegorical of the end of the Cold War, which caused a deep rip in the continuity of Cuban Revolutionary history. Metanarrative and free indirect vision are therefore employed to sew up traumatic caesura and re-establish a positive course of events. In *Life is to Whistle*, the explicit intervention of the author/narrator (Bebé) on the diegetic material helps the characters overcome trauma, producing psychological catharsis as the precondition for individual and collective rebirth. In *Madrigal*, one of the

⁶⁰ Frank Krutnik, 'Something More than Night', in David B. Clarke (ed.), *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997), 83-109; Andrew Gordon, 'It's not such a Wonderful Life: The Neurotic George Bailey', *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 54/3 (September 1994): 219-233; Frank Stricker, 'Repressing the Working Class: Individualism and the Masses in Frank Capra's Films', *Labor History*, 31/4 (Autumn 1990): 454-467.

⁶¹ Martin-Jones, 'Film Futures/National Futures (*It's a Wonderful Life*)', in *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 84-88.

characters (Javier) turns into an author to rewrite tragic events into a story of altruism and hope. By offering psychological catharsis and correcting a bad course of history, *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* act as redemptive narratives. Both films assimilate and try to solve a national state of trauma and crisis of conscience. This is achieved thanks to the virtualising power of free indirect vision, through which characters and events are projected into the realm of possibility, from which they re-emerge healed.

In their vision from (and for) the future, *Life is to Whistle* and *Madrigal* free national identity from the constrictive forms of the past submitting it to a creative process of rewriting. From the future, a new notion of Cubanidad is thus projected backward to solve those contradictions which, in the present, are causing disorientation and a sense of guilt.

Chapter 2

The Magical Fold of Reality: Magical Realism in *Guantanamera* (1995) and *The Waiting List* (2000)

In the previous chapter we saw how the image of Cuba is folded by means of free indirect vision at the mode of the time-image. Here we will see how it is folded by means of magical realism, a mode of narration which presents the occurrence of something odd, unbelievable or extraordinary without yet compromising the realism of the text.

Magical realism has been broadly studied in Latin American and postcolonial literature, but not as much in cinema. Magical realism is mainly understood in terms of cultural resistance connected to processes of decolonisation, to the rise of national minorities or localisms within increasingly globalised cultures. The textual combination of magic and realism seems to reflect and mediate between opposite world views competing in the extratextual world: the indigenous and the western in the postcolonial world, the minor and the major in the western world, the local and the trans-local in global reality. The geopolitical peculiarity of Cuba, though, requires a theoretical readjustment. Cuba is not exactly postcolonial, it is not the West, and it enters globalization so far as its socialist status allows it to. In Cuba, magical realism is actually a tool of the socialist power. In the film analyses, we will see how Cuban magical realism mediates between conservative and progressive world views operating within the boundaries set by the power and ultimately serving its interests.

Magical realism will be approached through the Deleuzian philosophical framework and explained in terms of deterritorialisation of the real by magic and reterritorialisation of magic by realism. Eva Aldea, who looks at magical realist postcolonial literature through the Deleuzian lens, acknowledges the benefit of a Deleuzian approach insofar as it allows us to understand magical realism as a device of virtualisation. Magical realism operates in fact as a folding machine: the manifestation of magic opens the narrative world to Becoming; the reinclusion of magic in the order of realism translates into an actual differentiation of the fictional world. Consequently, the order of realism will be enriched with new, magical qualities. By broadening the order of realism, magic also broadens the order of power reflected in it. Magical realism can therefore be used as a tool of social, political and cultural reinclusion.

In Cuba, magical realism responds to politics of reinclusion promoted by the state in order to enhance progressive conservatism. Magical realism does not question Cuban socialism, but either adds new qualities to it or restores what has deteriorated over time. The analysis will focus on two Cuban magical realist films, *Guantanamera* (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, 1995) and *The Waiting List* (Juan Carlos Tabío, 2000), which employ magical realism to develop a constructive criticism of Cuban socialism of the 1990s. In *Guantanamera*, a road movie following the journey of a corpse across the island, the repeated apparition of a young girl helps the story reach a happy ending. In *The Waiting List*, a dream magically shared by a group of passengers stuck overnight in a bus station turns the annoying situation into a collective idyll. In both films, magic acts as a compensatory force which enables a positive differentiation of reality.

2.1 Magical Realism: Examples, Definitions, Implications

A magical realist text is defined as a text which, in a realistic setting, stages something supernatural, incredible or bizarre, in a totally natural way. While the magical occurrence is perceived as such by the reader/viewer, in the diegetic world it is acknowledged as an ordinary fact. The magical realist effect, therefore, is produced by the narrative's persistence in not giving up its realistic premise when faced with things which clash with it.⁶²

The term *magical realism* first appeared in the art context in 1925, when the German art critic Franz Roh used it to describe the movement of the New Objectivity, that is, the style of painters such as Otto Dix, George Grosz, Carl Grossberg and Alexander Kanoldt, whose works are *realistic* representations of the actual world made *magical* by the inclusion of odd – yet objectively portrayed – elements.⁶³ Eventually, the term magical realism was occasionally brought up to describe the uncanny realism of some art and literary works, but it was not until the Latin American literary boom that it became common usage. In 1949, Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier introduced the idea of Latin American reality as a *real maravilloso* (marvellous real) in the introduction to his novel *The Kingdom of this World*. Carpentier describes the Latin American reality as 'naturally extraordinary' as a result of the cultural history of the continent,

⁶² This obstinate adherence to realism is what distinguishes magical realism from fantasy, where the supernatural occurrence discloses 'another' reality which transcends the physical laws we are accustomed to. About the difference between *realism*, *magical realism* and *fantasy* see Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), and Rawdon Wilson, 'The Metamorphoses of Fictional Space: Magical Realism', in Zamora and Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 209-233.

⁶³ Franz Roh, 'Magic Realism: Post-Expressionism (1925)', in Zamora and Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism*, 15-31.

characterised by creolism, syncretism and cumulative chaos, which, at a stylistic level, gave rise to the *Latin American baroque*. Before being a literary attribute, therefore, the marvellous real (or baroque), is a quality of reality produced by a stratification of heterogeneous beliefs and cultural traditions accumulated over centuries of colonisation.⁶⁴ Carpentier stages this ‘magical reality’ even in his following book, *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1962), a historical novel about the impact of the French Revolution on the Caribbean.⁶⁵ A few years later, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), by Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, gained international attention and has ever since been considered the quintessence of Latin American magical realism. Thereafter, the definitions of magical realism consolidated on other Latin American writers, such as Arturo Uslar-Pietri, José Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Isabelle Allende and Laura Equivel, while the term also began to be applied to novels and films from all over the world, showing that magical realism was not just a Latin American phenomenon.⁶⁶

From Latin American literature, magical realism soon spread to cinema. There followed a series of magical realist films mainly based on literary antecedents: *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrad, Brazil, 1969), based on 1928 book by Mário de Andrad; *Eréndira* (Ruy Guerra, Mexico, 1983) and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Fernando Birri, Cuba-Italy-Spain, 1988), both adaptations from Márquez’s short stories; *Like Water for Chocolate* (Alfonso Arau, Mexico, 1992), from Laura Esquivel’s book of the same name; and the recent *Undertow* (Javier Fuentes-León, Perú, 2009). In these films, magic realism is never a mere narrative trick, but always engages with something beyond the text. In *Macunaíma* (1969), magical realism allows the transformation of the protagonist from black to white (in the book even mestizo), thus

⁶⁴ Alejo Carpentier, ‘On the Marvellous Real in America’ and ‘Baroque and the Marvellous Real’, in Zamora and Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism*, 75-88, 89-108.

⁶⁵ *Explosion in a Cathedral* was transposed to cinema in 1992. See *The Century of Lights* (Humberto Solás, Cuba-France-Spain-Russia-Ukraine, 1992).

⁶⁶ Classic examples of magical realist literature include Robert Kroetsch’s *What the Crowd Said* (1978), Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* (1981), Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Patrick Süskind’s *Perfume* (1985), Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason* (1986), Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), Janette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), Cristina García’s *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), André Brink’s *Devil’s Valley* (1998), Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991), Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (2002), Haruki Murakami’s novels. While there is a wide corpus of critical studies on magical realist literature, the same cannot be said for cinema, where the definition of magical realism is still under adjustment. Although there is a general agreement in considering Emir Kusturica, for instance, a magical realist author, the films labelled as magical realist significantly vary from critic to critic: we may encounter *Wings of Desire* (Wim Wenders, Germany, 1987), *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, USA, 1999), *Chocolat* (Lasse Hallström, USA-UK, 2000), *Big Fish* (Tim Burton, USA, 2003), *Pan’s Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro, Spain-Mexico, 2004), *3-Iron* (Kim Ki-duk, South Korea-Japan, 2004), *The Curious case of Benjamin Button* (David Fincher, USA, 2008), etc.

reimagining the Brazilian identity beyond the race division.⁶⁷ In *Erendira* (1983), the premonition of the fire which destroys the house of the protagonist, forcing her into prostitution, triggers a reflection about the 'destiny' of underdevelopment and exploitation, the attribution of blame and the possibility of redemption.⁶⁸ In *A Very Old Man* (1988), the commercial exploitation of an angel, who in the film variation falls into Cuban soil, functions as a warning about the risks connected to the penetration of capitalist mentality.⁶⁹ In *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992), a period film set at the time of the Mexican Revolution, the aphrodisiac dishes cooked by the protagonist enhance the characters' emancipation from a conservative and oppressive tradition as the Revolution is mounting in the background and, in the historical present, Mexico is embarking on a programme of neoliberal reforms and modernisation.⁷⁰ In *Undertow* (2009) magical realism is employed to address the issue of homosexuality: in the film, the two homosexual lovers can openly be together only after one of them has died and turned into a ghost.⁷¹ From these examples, it appears clear that magic realism always holds implications in relation to the historical and geopolitical context in which it emerges or is reposed.

The definitions of magical realism oscillate between a phenomenological and ontological perspective, under which magic appears as a textual effect or as an actual quality of the (marvellous) real.⁷² This dual acceptance reveals a fundamental and unquestioned feature of

⁶⁷ About the cultural implications of *Macunaíma's* magical realism see Robert Stam, 'The "Mother" of Magical Realism: *Macunaíma*' and '*Macunaíma: The Film*', in *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 323-328, 329-337.

⁶⁸ See Moylan C. Mills, 'Magic Realism and García Márquez's *Eréndira*', *Literature Film Quarterly*, 17/2 (1989): 113-22; Thomas Kiely, 'Eréndira: A not-so-innocent Film', *Jump Cut*, 31 (March 1986): 6-7; César López, 'The Conquest Revisited: *The History of Innocent Eréndira* from a Postcolonial Perspective', *Chasqui*, 35/3 (2006): 79-90.

⁶⁹ The filmic recontextualisation of the story enables a Cuban reinterpretation. The existing analyses of *A Very Old Man*, though, mainly focus on the book and therefore do not relate magical realism to any specific discourse about Cuba. The role of magical realism in *Eréndira*-film is mentioned by Fernando Birri, 'Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes (1988)', in *Soñar con los ojos abiertos. Las treinta lecciones de Stanford* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2007), 123-132, and Alessandro Rocco, 'El cine de Gabriel García Márquez', *Hispanet Journal*, 3 (December 2010), Online at <<http://www.hispanetjournal.com/ElCined.eGGM.pdf>>, yet with no special reference to Cuba.

⁷⁰ About magical realism in *Like Water for Chocolate* see María Noriega-Sánchez, 'Magical Cooking: Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate/Like Water for Chocolate* (1989)' in *Challenging Realities: Magic Realism in Contemporary American Women's Fiction* (València, Spain: Universitat de València, 2002), 163-186. The role of magic within the cultural discourse brought about by *Like Water for Chocolate* also emerges from more general analyses such as those developed by Debora Shaw, 'Seducing the Public: Images of Mexico in *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Amores Perros*', in *Contemporary Cinema of Latin America: Ten Key Films*, 36-70, 39-51; and Harmony Wu, 'Consuming Tacos and Enchiladas: Gender and the Nation in *Como agua para chocolate*', in Chan Noriega (ed.), *Visible Nations: Latin American Cinema and Video*, 174-192.

⁷¹ Ruby Beesley, 'Magical Realism on Screen: *Undertow*', *Aesthetica*, 36 (Aug-Sep 2010): 38-41.

⁷² For the ontological/phenomenological definition of magical realism see Roberto González Hechevarría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113-123; and William Spindler, 'Magical Realism: A Typology', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 29/1 (1993): 75-85.

magical realism: the relation between its textual manifestation and contextual motivations. In postcolonial theory, magical realism is understood as a tool of decolonisation employed in the national search for identity between western and indigenous traditions. Brenda Cooper speaks of the magical realist writer as seeing through a 'third eye', constructing a 'third space' between those of the coloniser and the colonised, and thus creating an interstitial space for cultural mediation.⁷³ Stephen Slemon describes magical realism as a decolonising form of writing which legitimises a double vision of agency and history, that is, the vision of the colonised along with that of the coloniser.⁷⁴ However, magical realism is not exclusively a postcolonial mode. The recent rise of magical realism in world literature and cinema has required a broadening of the original definitions so as to comprise new contexts of manifestation and new presumed functions.

Friedric Jameson, to whom we owe the first attempt to define magical realism in cinema, moves beyond the postcolonial definition and hypothesises a more *general historical disjunction* at the base of magical realism.⁷⁵ From a Marxist perspective, he understands magical realism as the sign of a historical friction between different modes of production and ideological systems confronting each other on the same territory.⁷⁶ According to Jameson, magical realism emerges in correspondence to historical periods of transition, when national identity loses its synchronicity and calls for readjustment (Bhabha).

In recent years, magical realism has been reframed within the theory of globalization and viewed as a contingent and multiform reaction to global dominant structures.⁷⁷ Michael Moses recognises a new contextual disjunction at the base of magical realist fiction: the

⁷³ Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁷⁴ Stephen Slemon, 'Magical Realism and the Post-Colonial Discourse', in Zamora and Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism*, 407-426.

⁷⁵ Friedric Jameson, 'On Magic Realism in Film', *Critical Inquiry*, 12/ 2 (Winter 1986): 301-325, 311. The scholarly literature on magical realism in cinema is still incredibly exiguous. Maggie Ann Bowers dedicates a chapter to magical realist cinema in *Magic(al) Realism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 109-115; Barbara Klonowska investigates Polish magical realist cinema in the article 'Far Away from the Present: Magical Realism in Polish Film', *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 1/2 (July 2010): 183-196. Younger scholars have addressed the topic in their university dissertations; see David Neo, *The Cosmopolitics of Magical Realism in Cinema*, PhD Thesis (La Trobe University, 2010); Milana Vujkov, 'The Magic of Joy. Cinema of Emir Kusturica: From Realism to Magic Reality', Essay (Birkbeck University of London, 2004), Online at <<http://www.scribd.com/maybemila/d/54092922-The-Magic-of-Joy-Cinema-of-Emir-Kusturica-From-Realism-to-Magical-Reality/>>. However, a comprehensive take on magical realist cinema is still to come.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 311. Jameson develops his argument around three magical realist films set in some historical past characterised by embryonic forms of modernisation: *Fever* (Agnieszka Holland, Poland, 1981), the *The House of Water* (Jacobo Penzo, Venezuela, 1984) and *Condors Don't Bury every Day* (Francisco Norden, Colombia, 1984).

⁷⁷ Stephen Hart and Wen-Chin Ouyang, 'Globalization of Magical Realism: New Politics of Aesthetics', in Hart and Ouyang (eds.), *A Companion to Magical Realism* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2005), 1-22.

disjunction between the global and the local, acknowledged everywhere in the world and everywhere differently. In his view, the recent re-emergence of magical realism in world literature and cinema is a reaction to the conformist pressure of globalization, against which magic reaffirms the value of the local, which has now become the 'exotic'.⁷⁸ Magical realism is hence understood as a tool of mediation between the global and local dimension of cultural modernity.

Magical realism has also been connected to the feeling of postmodernity, that is, to the relativisation of truth, ideologies and beliefs experienced in the contemporary world. Shannin Schroeder looks at magical realism as way of encoding decentred or marginal positions, a way of 'infringing on the mainstream'.⁷⁹ Theo D'haen argues that the eccentric character of magical realism (ex-centric and de-centring) makes it suited to speak from/for places other than the centre, abolishing the same idea of centre.⁸⁰ As Elleke Boehmer points out, magical realism makes a point about 'the value of the Many over the One', legitimising multiculturalism.⁸¹ Zamora and Faris understand magical realism in terms of *transgressiveness* and *inclusiveness*, thanks to which the magical realist text can question established orders of thought, turn hierarchic relations into paratactic ones and rehabilitate alternative world views in a unique yet multiple image of the world.⁸² Whether magical realism is understood as a postcolonial or postmodern mode, its power appears ultimately the same: breaking the idea of a dominant world view into the idea of a perspective multiplicity.

Drawing on Deleuze's theory of the series, Eva Aldea describes magical realism in terms of bifurcation and subsistence of the series. While the magical occurrence causes the bifurcation of the series of realism, the reinclusion of magic into the order of realism gives rise to a *crystalline regime of narration*, where the orders of magic and realism exchange their qualities. Aldea describes realism, fantasy and magical realism in terms of *convergence*, *divergence* and *disjunctive synthesis* of the series constituting the fictional world:

Realism sets up the 'system of convergence' against which the magic is different or divergent...
the magical appears as different because it is a divergent element in the otherwise convergent

⁷⁸ Michael Valdez Moses, 'Magical Realism at World's End', *Literary Imagination*, 3/1 (2001): 105-133.

⁷⁹ Shannin Schroeder, 'Magically Magical: Magical Realism Infringing on the Mainstream', in *Rediscovering Magical Realism in the Americas* (Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2004), 121-152. For examples of recent magical realist novels and films see footnote 66.

⁸⁰ Theo L. D'haen, 'Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centres', in Zamora and Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism*, 191-208, 194-195.

⁸¹ Elleke Boehmer, 'Neo-Orientalism, Converging Cities, and the Postcolonial Criticism of Rushdie', in Liselotte Glage and Rüdiger Kunow (eds.), *The Decolonizing Pen: Cultural Diversity and the Transnational Imaginary in Rushdie's Fiction* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001), 15-23, 16.

⁸² Zamora and Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism*, 3-6.

series of realism... However, the narration continuing to be realistic, it also appears to authenticate the magic: magical events are describes in the same way as real events, using the same authenticating detail.⁸³

Whilst in fantasy the supernatural event distances the fictional world from the world we know (divergence), in the magical realist text the supernatural is brought back to the order of realism, which in turn takes on magical qualities (disjunctive synthesis): '[T]he magical element, because of its divergence, performs a disjunctive synthesis of the system. This disjunctive synthesis causes the convergent series to diverge and communicate with each other in new ways, which has the effect of proliferating meanings in the text.'⁸⁴

By reincluding magic in the order of realism, the magical realist text projects the series of magic backwards and forwards in time, as if the realistic surface of events had always had a magical depth, which will endure beyond the singularity of the uncanny event. In other words, magical realism operates according to the memory of the future, raising difference in the narrative present, past and future at once. The normalisation of magic also causes the magicalisation of the real, that is, the enrichment of realism with traits previously unthinkable. Aldea notices how, in order for magical realism to be perceived as such, the magical and the real have to exchange their qualities but remain recognisable in their constitutional difference. This leads to the formation of the *magical-realist crystal*, where two images of the world – the magical and the realistic – are placed in creative tension out of which Difference originates.⁸⁵

As Aldea acknowledges, the order or realism has referential character and reflects the order of the extratextual reality; it entails segmentarity, sedentarity and territorialisation. Magic is instead a-social, a-historical and a-political; it expresses fluidity, nomadism and deterritorialisation. The incursion of magic, therefore, does not only deterritorialise the textual order of realism, but even the worldly order it reflects:

There is no political message encoded by the magic in magical realism, rather it is the realism of the genre that reveals the structure of a particular social organization. The magic does not negate the realism of the magical realist text, but rather complements it by allowing us to think the

⁸³ Eva Aldea, *Magical Realism and Deleuze: The Indiscernibility of Difference in Postcolonial Literature* (London: Continuum, 2010), 34.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 49.

⁸⁵ The Deleuzian approach allows Aldea to rectify what she considers the fundamental mistake of the postcolonial readings of magical realism. In her view, the potential of magical realism does not lie in 'bringing together the disparate' (western and autochthonous cultures), but rather in enacting a 'divergence of the same' (Aldea 2011: 147). Magical realism would not therefore produce any reconciliation between the coloniser's and colonised cultures, but make both visions valid on their own, at the same time and on the same territory.

virtual. This thought of the virtual is the creation of the new, embodied in magical realism in its magical elements.⁸⁶

While magic is a pure sign of virtualisation, the way in which it is reincluded in the sensory-motor schema of the realistic narrative always has implications from the point of view the real. As Aldea notices, magic always has an impact on the realistic chain of events and tends to act as a 'catalyst for change'.⁸⁷ While the magicalisation of the realistic world opens it to Becoming, the normalisation of magic translates into an actual production of the New in the form of a new worldly assemblage, in which the extratextual reality is re-envisioned.

The Deleuzian approach allows an understanding of magical realism beyond the ontological/phenomenological antinomy, regardless of the context of emergence, and above any oppositional pattern. First of all, Deleuze's ontology of the *image-being* permits us to bypass the apparent contradiction between the phenomenological and ontological definition of magical realism. For Deleuze, reality is made up of images (percepts): fictional and actual realms, therefore, have the same ontological consistency. It follows that whether magical realism is a quality of the text or of the extratextual reality is ultimately irrelevant; what counts is how the *magical-realist image* functions and what purposes it serves. Secondly, a Deleuzian approach allows us to understand magical realism as a *virtualising regime of narration* able to open the world to Becoming. Regardless of the specific context of emergence, magical realism will always appear motivated by a need for differentiation. Thirdly, Deleuze's conception of Difference as a rise of multiplicity within the One can help us understand how magical realism can make heterogeneous world views coexist into a one-and-multiple image of the world. Magical realism can therefore be redefined as a folding machine: as the fictional world reveals its magical fold and this is re-enfolded in the order of realism, different world views are enfolded into each other and unfolded at once within and across the textual borders. By enfolding/unfolding visibilities, magical realism differentiates the image of the world, and hence the world as such.

It has been said that magical realism is rooted to the presence of different ideological formations and cultural traditions in the extratextual reality, replicated in the text in the form of two distinct and superimposed logics of occurrence. The emergence of magical realism in contemporary Cuban cinema appears connected to the rise of a hybrid culture, which combines socialist and western traits, resulting in the formation of a twofold identity. In the analyses to follow, we will see how Cuban magical realist cinema reacts to this national schizophrenia by reconstructing Cubanidad in terms of an improved form of socialism (improved, indeed, by magic).

⁸⁶ Aldea, *Magical Realism and Deleuze*, 147-148.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 126.

2.2 Magical Realism in Contemporary Cuban Cinema: *Guantanamera* (1995) and *The Waiting List* (2000)

At the turn of the 1990s, while the socialist world was on the verge of a historical *change*, Cuban cinema began to display fantastic and magical realist atmospheres, subtly employed for social and historical critique. I have already mentioned the film adaptation of *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, restaged on Cuban soil with the direction of Argentinian Fernando Birri (1988). In the film, the fall of an angel from the sky leads to the penetration of the spirit of capitalism in the Cuban community, producing chaos, counterfeiting and competition as everyone tries to commercially exploit the sacred creature. *A Very Old Man* virtually anticipates what the economic crisis soon will turn into reality: the rise of a dual morality and the deterioration of the communitarian feeling. The element of the supernatural is also acknowledged in films such as *Life in Pink* (Rolando Díaz, 1989), *Alice in Wondertown* (Daniel Díaz Torres, 1991) and *The Elephant and the Bicycle* (Tabío, 1994), where it is mainly resolved into fantasy. *Life in Pink* stages the encounter between a group of friends in their early twenties and their aged, disillusioned selves. Although the events unfold in a realistic setting, the film cannot be considered magical realist because the apparition of the future-selves is presented as something incredible, to which the characters react in bewilderment. However, it seems interesting that instead of skipping ahead to the future by means of flashforwards, the film stages the future on the same plane as the present, giving rise to a crystal of time where a present-past and a future-present coexist in the present of the narrative. Meaning thus originates from the tension between these two coexisting temporalities. As Paulo Antonio Paraguaná points out, the film invites a reflection about the extent to which Cuban citizens can make their own individual and national destiny.⁸⁸ In *Alice in Wondertown*, a young woman called Alice (Alicia) moves to Wondertown to start a new job. Wondertown is a caricature of the socialist state. The town's population is made up of bureaucrats fired for any kind of misconduct, and the most absurd things seem ordinary in town: atmospheric abnormalities are witnessed without surprise, a strong wind sweeps away tons of papers on the streets, wild animals roam about free (since the cages never arrived at the zoo), in public premises the chairs are nailed to the ground and the cutlery is attached to the tables with chains too short to reach one's mouth. Incapable of dealing with this state of affairs, Alice flees the city. In the truck on which she is travelling home, Alice has an argument with a man and in a fit of rage throws him out of the vehicle as if he was as light as a feather. *Alice in Wonderland* is a social satire which exaggerates the dysfunctions of socialist Cuba and the frustration deriving from it, yet without suggesting any corrective

⁸⁸ Paulo Antonio Paraguaná, 'Cuban Cinema's Political Challenges', in Michael T. Martin (ed.), *New Latin American cinema, Volume 1*, 167-190, 174.

measure. The film would be magical realist if everything was not ultimately presented as a fantasy of the protagonist. Magical realist atmospheres, if not magical realism proper, are also found in *The Elephant and the Bicycle*. The story is set on the imaginary island of Santa Fe' (Cuba?) in 1925, when cinema arrives for the first time unleashing stunning effects. The reel is a silent copy of Robin Hood, which soon displays magical qualities. At successive screenings, the film rewrites itself adjusting to what is meanwhile going on in the village and starring the same villagers as the protagonists of the stories on screen. Each time, the film stages a different rebellion: the Indians' revolt against the Spaniards, the Mexican Revolution, the Brazilian Revolution... moving forward in time, until finally inspiring the islanders' rebellion against the local tyrant. A unique story thus comes to unfold between the screen and the outside world. In the end, the islanders are able to use a cannon from the film by simply turning the screen and redirecting the barrel at the tyrant's castle. The fable-like tone and the lack of realistic setting, though, do not allow us to consider the film as magical realist proper. *The Elephant and the Bicycle* is rather a metanarrative reflection on the boundary between reality and fantasy. Produced for the anniversary of the first film screening in Cuba, the film celebrates an idea of cinema as a tool at the service of the population, alongside the tradition of Third Cinema. Although these films cannot be labelled as magical realist, their diversion from realism seems to be motivated by what also motivates Cuban magical realist cinema: a need for historical reflection and national revision.

Hereafter, I will focus on *Guantanamera* (1995) and *The Waiting List* (2000), two magical realist films where magic is employed to reconstruct the socialist feeling both in terms of retrieved authenticity and modernisation. While Cuba is going through or laboriously exiting the decade of the Special Period, *Guantanamera* and *The Waiting List* resort to magic in order to promote a new attitude on the part of Cubans towards each other, their country and the outside world.

2.2.1 *Guantanamera* (1995): Magical Realism, Marvellous Real and National Rebirth

In *Guantanamera* (Alea, Cuba-Spain-Germany, 1995) magic is acknowledged in three variants: the apparition of a ghost-like figure representing Death, the destiny which makes a man and woman repeatedly run into each other, and the Yoruba origin myth (in Carpentier's definition of marvellous real). By affecting the events or charging them with meaning, magic allows the reconsideration and rectification of Cuban socialism.

Guantanamera came out in the midst of the Special Period, while people were coping with the lack of food, gasoline, public transport, prolonged blackouts, and extreme uncertainty about their personal and national future. Like Alea's 1966 film *Death of a Bureaucrat*, *Guantanamera* is a black comedy of social satire inspired by the Cuban funeral bureaucracy. In *Death of a Bureaucrat* the comic situation originates from an identity certificate which was buried with the deceased by mistake, making his widow unable to claim state support. Hence, the narrative follows the attempts of the dead man's nephew to exhume the document in spite of all the bureaucratic impediments. *Guantanamera* unfolds as a road movie following the picaresque journey of a corpse from Guantánamo to Havana. Proceeding in the opposite direction to the Revolutionary army in 1959, the cortège becomes the pretext to comically address the paradoxes of contemporary Cuba. Alea refers to the film as a *documentary*: 'the movie is at its base, a documentary. The absurd contained in the film is an absurd that does not violate reality, but is part of it'.⁸⁹ Although the situation presented in *Guantanamera* might seem incredible to a non-Cuban spectator, we are in the presence of a realistic (however absurd) setting, against which the magical occurrences can be recognised as such and give way to magical realism once reintegrated in the matter-of-fact narration.

Guantanamera follows the storyline of the homonymous song by Joseito Fernández, which becomes the musical theme of the film. Yoyita (Conchita Brando), an old singer from Guantánamo, goes back to her birth town to receive a career award. There, she meets her niece Gina (Mirta Ibarra), an economics lecturer who is out of work because of her ideological divergence, and her husband Adolfo (Carlos Cruz), an insensitive and opportunistic funeral administrator. In Guantánamo, Yoyita also runs into her first love, Cándido (Raúl Eguren). After the couple have just been reunited, Yoyita has a stroke and dies. According to the funeral law the corpse cannot be buried in Guantánamo, but has to be brought back to Havana, where the deceased was currently living. Instead of driving the corpse straight there, though, Adolfo organises a relay to dispatch it from town to town, so that the gasoline quote can be equally divided among the provincial administrations.⁹⁰ The journey thus begins, with the corpse escorted by Adolfo, Gina and Cándido. Soon the relay-plan turns out to be as meticulous as it is ineffective: the journey is delayed by innumerable hitches and at one stop the corpse is

⁸⁹ Alea in José Antonio Évora, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea* (Madrid: Cátedra, Filmoteca Española, 1996), 61.

⁹⁰ The idea of the relay is taken from an actual plan for the transportation of the corpses over long distances. Alea read about it in a newspaper: 'The idea was ridiculous because in the end, with this relay you don't save any gasoline, and instead the whole operation gets complicated and creates more problems'. T.G. Alea, in Paul A. Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), 124.

mistaken for another. On the road, the hearse repeatedly crosses paths with a truck also headed to Havana. One of the truck drivers, Mariano (Jorge Perugorría), is an ex student of Gina's who still has a crush on her. The journey is also interspersed with the apparitions of a young girl (Essenech Rodriguez), a child-Death figure who has the power to dispense death and influence the course of events.

Magic is acknowledged in three forms throughout the film: in the apparitions of the child-Death; in the destiny (or coincidences) of Gina and Mariano's repeated encounters; and – as a hint of *real maravilloso* – in the Yoruba origin myth told by an extradiegetic voice-over towards the end. Magic puts in communication different tenses and temporal dimensions. The child-Death is an a-temporal entity which enters chronological time and produces difference. Mariano's infatuation with Gina comes from the past of his university days; a past which now resurfaces and projects itself into the future. The Yoruba myth brings up the legendary past of the origins to express a need for change in the narrative present as well as in the historical present of the country.

[The apparitions of the child-Death] *Guantanamera* is interspersed with the apparitions of a young girl who represents Death as well as Rebirth. On the one hand, the child-Death allows the rebirth of the couple Cándido-Yoyita as the couple Mariano-Gina; on the other, she comes to symbolise the death and rebirth of Cuban socialism.

The child-Death first appears in a yellowed picture at the beginning of the film. While Yoyita and Cándido are leafing through old pictures, Yoyita notices the picture of a young girl. She does not know who the girl is, and yet she has the impression of having seen her not long before. Cándido does not recognise her either. As the two proceed to recall old times, their memories are slightly different:

CÁNDIDO: Do you know I still have your blue ribbon?

YOYITA: My blue ribbon?...

CÁNDIDO: You've forgotten! Don't you remember, when you left, you promised me you'd return and you gave me your blue hair ribbon as a token? [He searches for it]

YOYITA: Now I remember. You came to see me off.

CÁNDIDO: It was raining buckets...

YOYITA: No Cándido, it wasn't raining. I remember it was a gorgeous day.

CÁNDIDO: It was raining.

YOYITA: I've never since seen a sun as beautiful as that morning.

CÁNDIDO: It was so cloudy I couldn't tell when night fell.

YOYITA: Nightfall? It was midday, Cándido!

CÁNDIDO: It was night, I tell you, night!

YOYITA: *How could it be night when the train left at 1 pm?*

CÁNDIDO: *Here it is!* [The blue ribbon]

In this opening sequence, the mnemonic gap causes a disjunction between the present and the recollected past of the love idyll. While recollection usually recreates continuity between present and past, here it betrays rupture and loss. Yoyita's sudden death further emphasises the idea that the past cannot be recovered: in the present like in the past the idyll is abruptly interrupted by her departure. The negative repetition which affects Cándido and Yoyita's romance (denied in the past as in the present), turns into a positive repetition for the future couple Gina-Mariano (romance permitted). While the story of Cándido and Yoyita suffers from mnemonic rupture, the story of Mariano and Gina benefits from mnemonic continuity: when they meet, after years of being out of touch, the two immediately recognise each other and a flashback brings back the past exactly as it was (no flashback was given for Cándido and Yoyita). After Gina and Mariano have repeatedly bumped into each other along the road, in Havana the child-Death appears to Gina's husband virtually signing his death sentence. Gina is thus released from her marital commitment and free to start a relationship with Mariano. Mariano is younger than her and by choosing him Gina virtually rejuvenates: she regains the dimension of the dream and the projectuality of the future.

As the journey begins the girl in the photograph also begins to materialise along the road. As the cortege sets off in the middle of a blackout, the car lights reveal her standing against a wall where we read 'Socialism or death'. She next appears in Bayamo, the first Cuban town which rebelled against Spanish domination. As the party arrives in Bayamo, a guide is telling a group of tourists the history of the city. In colonial times Bayamo was the main smuggling centre of Cuba as well as the main centre of illegal activities, in which state administrators and clergy were also involved. To put an end to all this, Bayamo rose in arms and gained its independence. Here, the girl appears to Cándido in the cold light of the funeral department. As a result of these apparitions, the ideas of Socialism and Revolution are pervaded by a halo of death. However, in the symbolic structure of the film, death equals rebirth.

The child-Death is depicted as a ghostly yet corporeal presence: at one point she hands Cándido a flower; eventually she acknowledges his death with a sonorous 'shit'. She is magical and real at the same time. The child-Death dispenses death, but in the mechanism of repetition set up by the narrative, death is presented as something providential: Yoyita's death sets the story in motion permitting the re-encounter between Mariano and Gina; Cándido's death marks the end of the 'old couple' in a sort of *Romeo and Juliet* epilogue, projecting the attention to the

'new couple'; Adolfo's death enables the final, legitimate union between Gina and Mariano. In this way, the repetition of death enables a differentiation of the future in terms of symbolic compensation of the past. The idea of death-as-rebirth is also employed to express a much-needed renewal of Cuban socialism. Therefore, the film does not express the end of the Revolution but rather its rebirth. The stress on the historical rebellion of Bayamo, which rose against corruption, underdevelopment and exploitation, expresses the present need to set a new beginning for a positive differentiation of the national history.

[The destiny of re-encounter] Besides the apparitions of the child-Death, another bizarre element of *Guantanamera* is the way in which Gina and Mariano keep bumping into each other along the road. This destiny of re-encounter will result in the emancipation of Gina from her husband, and – allegorically – in the emancipation of the nation from the bad aspects of socialism.

At the beginning of the film, Gina is presented as submissive both to the authority of her husband and of the state. From a conversation we discover that she had to leave her lecturing job due to ideological disagreements. When she is asked to lead a Youth-orientated radio programme, she is reluctant to accept as she fears the same conformist pressures. For the moment, she prefers to stay at home and just please her husband. When Yoyita offers her a cigarette, she replies that Adolfo does not like her smoking; when she offers to buy her a dress, again Gina declines the offer since Adolfo certainly would not approve. During the journey, she keeps defending her husband even when he comes up with the most inappropriate comments and stupid ideas (such as the relay itself). The repeated encounters with Mariano, then, gradually help her regain control over her life. In the end, she finally finds the 'courage' to buy the dress she likes, leave her husband and accept the radio job. Gina also has a positive effect on Mariano. He is initially portrayed as a Casanova, having casual intercourse with a series of girlfriends he finds along the road. After meeting Gina, though, he gives up his immature behaviour and accepts his responsibilities.

The incredible way in which Gina and Mariano keeps running into each other can be considered another magical element. These repeated encounters guarantee Gina the fulfilling love that aunt Yoyita lacked in her life. By juxtaposing the destinies of the two female heroines, the magical realist narrative sets up a creative tension between the past of Yoyita and the future of Gina, engendering Gina's future as redemption of Yoyita's past. By favouring the emancipation of Gina from Adolfo, who represents the obstructiveness and inefficiency of the state bureaucracy, magical realism suggests the need to remove the bad elements of the system. In *Guantanamera*, therefore, magical realism works at the mode of modern political cinema

establishing an allegorical correspondence between individual and national destiny. Emancipation from any external authority and acceptance of personal responsibility are thus presented as the preconditions for the achievement of a better future both at a private and public level.

[The Yoruba origin myth] I have said how *Guantanamera* establishes creative tension between Yoyita's past and Gina's future, between the idea of death and rebirth in relation to both personal and collective history. Overall, *Guantanamera* employs the memory of the future for the purpose of historical revision. Another way in which the film expresses the need for change is through the futurisation of the Yoruba origin myth, that is, through the reaffirmation of the truth of the myth in the historical present of the nation.

The living legend of Olofin and Iku is an example of marvellous real resulting from the African influence on Cuba's cultural tradition. Towards the end of the film, while the main characters are proceeding to Havana by separate ways, a torrential rain starts. An extradiegetic voice-over is then introduced to narrate the myth of Olofin and Iku:

VO: In the beginning, Olofin made man and woman and gave them life. Olofin made life, but he forgot to make death. The years passed and the men and women got older and older, but they did not die. The earth filled up with people who were thousands of years old, and who still ruled according to their ancient laws. The young people clamoured such that one day their cries reached the ears of Olofin. Olofin saw that the world was not as good as he had planned. He felt that he also was too old and tired to begin again what had turned out so badly. So Olofin called Iku to take care of the matter. And Iku saw that it was time to put an end to the era in which people did not die. So Iku caused it to rain upon earth for 30 days and 30 nights without end, and all was covered with water. Only the children and the young were able to climb the giant trees and the highest mountains. The whole Earth became a huge river with no banks. The young people then saw that the Earth was cleaner and more beautiful, and ran to give thanks to Iku for putting an end to immortality.

As the legend is told, parallel editing reunites the main characters split on the road: Mariano in his truck, Gina in the car after the hearse, Cándido in a bus. While the single individuals are virtually joined in a collective subject exposed to the omnipresent rain, the timeless and universal truth of the myth allows historical present and mythical past to enter a circuit of mutual resemantisation. The child-Death also enters the sequence by crossing the road after the convoy has just passed; she is sheltering an old lady under her black umbrella as they walk towards a graveyard entrance. The child-Death thus becomes the linking figure between the

timelessness of the myth, the present of the narrative and the future of the nation, inviting us not to fear the idea of death as death always means rebirth.⁹¹

The analysis of the crystal constituted by historical and mythical time can reveal modes and directions of this desirable renewal. We have seen above how this renewal is realised by the narrative in relation to the couple Gina-Mariano as a rejuvenated couple Yoyita-Cándido for whom the story can repeat itself differently. Hence, through a system of correspondences between private and public, the idea of renewal is given collective resonance. The narrative thus suggests the improvement of Cuban socialism in terms of restored authenticity and correction of its constitutional faults. The idea of a movement towards authenticity is expressed through Gina's passage from Adolfo to Mariano and politically remarked on through the example of Bayamo city. At the same time, the coffin relay and the way it is inefficiently carried out calls for a revision of the state administration. The idea of 'restored authenticity' is also expressed through the mythological insert. The evocation of the marvellous real allows the re-emergence of the African tradition at the roots of Cuban culture and the restoration of cultural authenticity in terms of cultural reinclusion. As Solimar Otero points out, the use of Yoruba mythology to develop a discourse about the present renders the idea of Cubanidad as something synchronically constructed according to politics of reinclusion.⁹² Authenticity is sought in the pre-Revolutionary past and projected ahead to authenticate the Revolutionary future.

In *Guantanamera*, magical realism and marvellous real combine to suggest directions of national development. This makes of *Guantanamera* another example of Cuban modern political cinema. In the film, in fact, we encounter the three features which characterise modern political cinema: the private vicissitudes of the characters are allegorical of the life of the country; the Major is submitted to rethinking and hence re-envisioned as becoming-minoritarian; the film is productive of the yet-to-come at the mode of the memory of the future.

⁹¹ Solimar Otero interprets the young girl as the personification of the deity Ikú, the symbol of change. See Solimar Otero, 'Ikú and Cuban Nationhood: Yoruba Mythology in the Film *Guantanamera*', *Africa Today*, 46/2 (Spring 1999): 117-131, 124.

⁹² Otero, 'Ikú and Cuban Nationhood: Yoruba Mythology in the Film *Guantanamera*', 127. Cuban Revolutionary cinema has variously engaged with Cuban belief in magic in films such as *The Other Francisco* (Sergio Giral, 1974), *The Last Supper* (Alea, 1976), *Patakin* (Manuel Octavio Gómez, 1982), *Maria Antonia* (Sergio Giral, 1990), *Honey for Oshún* (Umberto Solás, 2001). Otero explains how 'African religions, as presented in Cuban film, construct a cultural milieu of the quotidian. The treatment of rites, sacrifices, consultations, etc... are natural (as opposed to 'exotic') and invoke a sense of the 'everyday' (Otero 1999: 121). This brings us back to Carpentier's definition of *real maravilloso* as a (believed) quality of Latin American and Caribbean reality.

2.2.2 *The Waiting List* (2000): Reconstructing the Socialist Utopia

In *The Waiting List* (Tabío, Cuba-Spain-France-Mexico-Germany, 2000) the magic element consists of a dream shared by a group of passengers stuck overnight in a provincial bus station. In the dream, the station becomes the site of a happy, self-supporting commune that nobody wants to leave anymore. By reversing the exasperating situation of the waiting into a collective idyll, the film reflects on the gap between the socialist dream and the socialist reality, suggesting possible ways to bridge it.

Like *Alice in Wondertown*, *The Waiting List* presents a dystopian situation, in this case caused by the inefficiency of Cuban public transport. While in *Alice* the dystopia is left unsolved, *The Waiting List* corrects it by means of magic. At the time *Alice* came out, its fantastic character did not exempt it from repressive censorship: considered offensive towards the establishment, the film was immediately removed from theatres, giving rise to a huge debate about artistic freedom.⁹³ Ten years later, after the undeniable reality of the crisis, the dystopia presented by *The Waiting List* is accepted as a matter of fact, on which magical realism performs corrective intervention. Through magic, the film recreates the utopia of a collaborative community of equals in a historical moment in which the reality of the crisis is pushing the Cubans to forget altruism and focus on their individual priorities.

The Waiting List is set in a provincial bus station and tells the story of a group of passengers queuing for a bus that never comes. At the beginning they are presented as rivals in competition to secure themselves a passage. As the waiting extends indeterminately, their selfish attitude gradually turns into a spirit of collaboration. First, they try to repair an old bus that stands outside in disuse. Then, since the bus cannot be fixed, they settle in the station as if they had to remain there forever. They refurbish, repaint and decorate it with what they find at hand. What was a decrepit site of passage becomes now an idyllic commune that no one wants to leave anymore. Suddenly, though, everything turns out to be a dream: a collective dream that the passengers have shared while spending the night together in the waiting room. As Tabío states in an interview, the bus station – in metaphor – ‘is nothing but the poorly supplied Cuban society, where the simple finding of a bulb or a screw is somehow heroic’.⁹⁴ As in

⁹³ See Chanan, *Cuban Cinema*, 457-461; Laura Redruello, ‘Algunas reflexiones entorno a la película *Alicia en el pueblo de las maravillas*’, in Louis A. Pérez Jr. (ed.), *Cuban Studies*, Vol. 38, (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 2008), 82-100; Juan Antonio García Borrero, ‘El caso *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas*: el cine cubano y la cultura de la polémica’, in Nancy Berthier (ed.), *Cine y revolución cubana: luces y sombras* (Valencia: Archivos de la filmoteca, No. 59, junio 2008), 184-198.

⁹⁴ Tabío in Alfredo A. Fernández, ‘El cine cubano sale de viaje’, in Mauricio A. Font (ed.), *A Changing Cuba in a Changing World* (New York: Bildner Publications, 2009), 539-548, 545.

Guantanamera, even here an absurd situation is presented as totally ordinary according to Cuban standards. Given the realistic premise, the oddity of the collective dream makes it possible to acknowledge the film as magical realist.

The Waiting List opens in the early morning as Jacqueline (Tahimi Alvariño) arrives at the station and asks who is last in the queue. Actually, there are two queues, as the only bus which stops there goes to Havana and Santiago on alternate days. Jacqueline is travelling to Havana, where she is supposed to meet her Spanish boyfriend and leave for Spain with him. In the queue for Santiago there is Emilio (Vladimir Cruz), a young and attractive engineer who is going back home to work in the family fields, as he could not find any engineering jobs in Havana. The waiting room is crowded with people pushing and clamouring whenever they hear the rare sound of an engine approaching. They all try to skip the queue by clutching at the most extravagant excuses. They even refuse to give precedence to a blind man who is ticking his stick around stumbling everywhere. But no bus arrives, and the waiting prolongs. Initially we have frequent references to the passing of time (details of the clock hanging in the waiting room, people asking each other what is the time). Gradually, the temporal coordinates fade.

As it gets dark, the men try to fix an old bus which is sitting outside in disuse. Meanwhile the women rearrange the interior of the station to spend the night there. As the waiting prolongs further, some people give up: a woman takes the super expensive cab waiting like a vulture outside; a zealous bureaucrat denounces the violation of public property (referring to the bus they are trying to fix) and leaves on foot. The fault with the bus is identified in a broken underwire. As the part can no longer be imported from the Soviet Union, they decide to search the countryside the following morning for something which can do the job. During the night Emilio and Jacqueline have a first conversation which ends up in a fight. Both blame the other for giving up: her, for leaving to Spain with a person she is surely not in love with; him, for resigning himself to work in the fields. As Jacqueline, upset, gathers her stuff to leave, Emilio wishes it could rain. Magically it bursts out raining, and she stays. In the morning the quarrel is forgotten and the two are flirting again while searching the ground for the spare part.

The collective search nourishes the spirit of collaboration and community. At lunch time, a dining table is created from the timetable board and a happy meal consumed all together (only a greedy man refuses to share his food and keeps eating it in secret). After lunch they all dance and party under a sudden tropical downpour. Jacqueline and Emilio take refuge in a disused coach and share a romantic moment. A dissolve signals a temporal ellipsis. When the two get out of the coach it is no longer raining and all the characters appear wearing different clothes. In a friendly atmosphere, the embellishment of the station continues: the walls are repainted,

plants and flowers are placed everywhere, a library is set up with old books found in a storage room, and an art exhibition arranged with the art works completed by the station administrator. Meanwhile, new couples form (the station administrator and a widow, two homosexuals) and old ones rediscover forgotten passions.

The idyll risks being broken by the arrival of Jacqueline's fiancée. However, he unexpectedly agrees to let her stay there a little longer. When a bus finally arrives and the speaker announces a seat to Havana, nobody wants to leave. The blind man, whose disability would give him precedence, takes off his dark glasses and apologizes for cheating. The bus leaves with the vacant seat and the idyll continues. The two homosexuals are now reading from a book called *The Waiting List*. The passage describes the death of a man who incredibly resembles one of the guests of the station, Avelino. As if by magic, Avelino falls suddenly ill and dies, leaving the community the money he had saved to flee the country. After the funeral, the happy commune continues to dwell in the station, living off what the earth offers them. An indefinite period of time passes – probably months, as Jacqueline is now markedly pregnant.

At this point the atmosphere changes abruptly. Emilio wakes up in the shabby station of the beginning. It has all been a dream. When Jacqueline also wakes up and instinctively brings her hands to her belly, we know she had the same dream as Emilio. Not just the station, but also the characters' clothes are the same they were wearing at the beginning. And yet, everybody talks and acts as if they had lived through the events that occurred 'overnight' – for instance, showing surprise at the fact that Avelino is still alive. Apparently, they have all shared the same dream; only the selfish man who refused to share his food with the others has been excluded from it. The waking reaffirms the principle of reality. Jacqueline's fiancée arrives on his Jeep and takes her away, giving a lift to some other people also headed to Havana (except the greedy man). Emilio continues to Santiago on a van, along with the blind man and the widow. As everyone proceeds to their destination, the couples which had formed overnight split up: the station administrator and the widow, the gay couple, Emilio and Jacqueline too. However, when the van on the way to Santiago stops for refreshment at a station, Emilio is surprised by Jacqueline's voice asking who is last in the queue. As the story returns to its starting point (another station with another awaiting crowd), the spectator is left with a doubt: is the same situation going to repeat itself?

The aim of the film is explicitly stated by Tabío in an interview: 'looking at reality as a form of collective consciousness... looking at Cuban reality at one time but trying to touch a universal nerve, the necessity of risks to improve your life, the need to run toward the

imagination and try to improve things'.⁹⁵ Tabío refers to his film as to a parable about 'the necessity of adopting unthinkable solutions, the need to break norms to reach that solution, the importance of human solidarity and collective answers... [The characters] are all rivals, faced with a problem, with everybody trying to get ahead, but with the need to replenish a collective solution – it is a new world that they have created through their combined efforts'.⁹⁶ This *unthinkable solution* is given by means of magic. *The Waiting List* appears symptomatic of the contextual disjunction which Jameson acknowledges at the base of magical realist narratives. Here the gap opens between the socialist idea of the state as guarantor of public welfare and a difficult situation in which the citizens are left to their own devices. The film reveals a profound mistrust in the bureaucratic apparatus: no one intervenes to rescue the situation, there is no superior authority to appeal to. The existence of rules is only an impediment: by law the passengers would not even be allowed to repair the state-owned bus. Against the narrowness of the regulations and the reliance on external help, the film promotes the individual spirit of initiative, suggesting that the solution to the national problems cannot be expected to come from the outside but must be collectively found from within.

The virtual-image of the happy commune is not introduced by any particular junction signalling the beginning of a dream sequence. However, unbeknown to us, the series has bifurcated. Suddenly, the guests are wearing different clothes, the rain has stopped. The temporal ellipsis marked by the dissolve may explain both the weather and clothing change in the realistic mode: after all, it is not unusual to have a spare change of clothes while travelling. The embellishment of the station with materials found on the spot and readapted to new purposes also seems plausible. The practice of recycling, recovery and readaptation is undeniably a Cuban art. Even today, the unavailability of many goods and component parts pushes Cubans to find inventive solutions to repair old equipment and invent new uses for objects originally meant for others. The realistic mode, therefore, is never betrayed. The end of the dream-sequence is then marked by a fade-in on Emilio's close-up, as he wakes up in the actual station. The first hint of magic is given when Jacqueline also wakes up and brings her hands to her belly, revealing that the two shared the same dream. The magical happening is then confirmed by the conversations of the other passengers, who refer to the events of the dream. The realistic narrative thus reveals itself as magical realist. It must be noted that the magical element is not the dream in itself, but the fact that it has been collectively shared. While the idyllic community of the dream is precisely 'just a dream', the common experience of the

⁹⁵ Scott Forsyth, 'Juan Carlos Tabío, Cuban Cinema and *The Waiting List*', *CineAction*, 55 (January 2001): 71-72, 71.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 72.

dream recreates the communitarian feeling in the actual venue of the station (reterritorialisation). As the microcosm of the station is clearly synecdochical for Cuba, the communitarian feeling is at once re-established at a national level. Again, the effects of magical realism trespass the fictional borders revealing their value of use in the social sphere.

Like in *Guantanamera*, the authenticity of the love relationship is allegorical of the authenticity of the socialist feeling. As a result of the dream, Jacqueline diverts her travel and life plans to follow Emilio. Anna Hillman interprets Jacqueline's change of destination from Havana (and hence Spain) to Santiago as a reaffirmation of the nationalistic feeling and the socialist tradition. In Hillman's view, the single bus travelling to Santiago and Havana on alternative days symbolises the oscillation of the Cuban conscience between the opposite directions of socialism (Santiago as the East) and capitalism (Havana/Spain as the West): '[Cuba appears] caught up in a limbo, suspended in what Lydia Chávez calls *Never-Never land* – in flux of neither pure socialism nor capitalism'.⁹⁷ The opposition between capitalist and socialist attitudes is also given by the two pictures of waiting (actual and virtual), with the passengers at one moment trying to get ahead of each other (individualism), and at the next harmoniously collaborating (solidarity). While the crystal of time produced by the magical realist mode becomes the symbol of a dual morality where western and socialist values coexist, the undoing of the crystal marks the reaffirmation of the latter. In this way, *The Waiting List* promotes a rehabilitation of Cuban socialism. After criticising the negative aspects of Cuban socialism, such as excessive state control and inability to satisfy the citizens' needs, the film reevaluates the positive ones, such as the feeling of solidarity and commitment to the public good. According to Rob Stone, the social value of *The Waiting List* consists in turning politics of control into politics of experience: '[*The Waiting List*] deflate[s] the dogmatism of the official language and ideology of Castro's Cuba and institute a popular, collective, learning process in its place'.⁹⁸ In other words, by means of magical realism, *The Waiting List* converts the segmentarity of power in a social flux of desire, re-envisioning the Major as becoming-minoritarian.

In *The Waiting List*, as in *Guantanamera*, magical realism operates through the memory of the future raising a collective memory where the dream dreamt in unison is projected ahead as a hope for the national future. Even in this case, magical realism produces difference both as

⁹⁷ Anna Hillman, 'The Cuban Never-Never Land in Juan Carlos Tabío's film *Lista de espera/Waiting List* (2000): Post-communism as Shared Experience', *Revista Vivat Academia*, XI/106 (junio 2009), Online at <<http://www.ucm.es/info/vivataca/numeros/n106/internat.htm#titulo>>; Lydia Chávez, 'Adrift: An Introduction to Contemporary Cuba', in Lydia Chávez (ed.), *Capitalism, God, and a Good Cigar: Cuba Enters the Twenty First Century* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University, 2005), 1-17.

⁹⁸ Rob Stone, 'Killing Time in Cuba: Juan Carlos Tabío's *Lista de espera*', in Deborah Shaw (ed.), *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 135-152, 144.

the manifestation of a potential for differentiation (virtualising moment) and as a concrete influence on the narrative events (reactualisation). Through the dream, the characters experience the benefit of altruism and collaboration in a seemingly hopeless situation. The memory of the dream continues into waking time, resulting in the characters' change of attitude towards their neighbours, and suggesting that the socialist utopia can still be reconstructed out of the shards of dystopia. The magical realist narrative thus unfolds the double meaning enfolded in the original title: *Lista de espera*, where *espera* (in Spanish) means both 'waiting' and 'hope'. A few characters were excluded from the dream: those who left the station, and those who stayed but did not contribute to the collective. Selfishness, defeatist and passive attitudes, as well as excessive rigidity in the interpretation the rules, are punished through the exclusion from the dream and generally condemned as bad social behaviour. While the theme of exile repeatedly recurs in the conversations of the passengers, it becomes clearer and clearer that the station is Cuba. The isolation and immobility experienced by the passengers stuck in the provincial bus station is the same experienced by Cuban citizens, unable to leave the country or improve their situation in any way. However, just as passive waiting is not a solution to the situation, fleeing the country is just an easy escape which leaves the problem unsolved. Magic is therefore conjured up by the narrative to produce change; a change based on the spirit of initiative and on the intelligent use of local resources and personal skills. In this way, the criticism of the socialist state turns into the re-appreciation and critical retrieval of the socialist utopia.

Both for its narrative situation and critical intentions, *The Waiting List* is reminiscent of two previous films: *The Exterminating Angel* (Luis Buñuel, Mexico, 1962) and *The Survivors* (Alea, Cuba, 1979), which also present a situation of absurd confinement and employ it to develop social criticism. The reference to *The Exterminating Angel* is made explicit by a conversation occurring in the waiting room: a woman remembers that once she saw a film on TV where a group of people were unable to exit a dining room, and wonders if that is not happening to them too. The reference to *The Survivors* is subtler but still relevant, as in different historical moments the two Cuban films express the same need for social transformation.

The Waiting List and *The Exterminating Angel* adopt the same narrative strategy but show opposite intentions. The two films differ in their narrative mode: surrealism versus magical realism; in the social class they represent: Mexican upper bourgeoisie versus Cuban classless society where everybody is poor; and in their ultimate intention: a destructive criticism of the bourgeoisie versus a constructive criticism of Cuban society. To achieve this, both films resort to

the time-image: a surrealist, unresolved time-image in *The Exterminating Angel*; a magical realist time-image leading to a new world order in *The Waiting List*.

The Exterminating Angel is a surrealist drama about a group of guests at an elegant dinner party. When the time comes for them to go home, they find themselves psychologically unable to leave the room. As time passes they begin to lose their mind, to hallucinate, to become quarrelsome, violent and hysterical. Someone dies, someone commits suicide, someone suggests a human sacrifice to break the curse. At one point, they happen to occupy exactly the same positions as when the plight began. By re-enacting the original situation they regain their will and are finally free to leave. To give thanks for their salvation, they go to Mass. When the service is over, clergy and churchgoers get similarly trapped inside the church. While *The Exterminating Angel* accentuates the surrealist character of the situation through an unrealistic mise-en-scène and cinematography, the dream of *The Waiting List* occupies a discrete section of a realistic narrative which reveals itself as magical realist by revealing the dream as collectively shared. Both films present a situation of extreme territorialisation (reclusion) in which the characters are psychologically confined by some sort of curse or physically stuck for objective causes. Buñuel exaggerates the duration of the 'after dinner' in order to make the bestiality of this refined and carefree class emerge; in this way, he realises deterritorialisation in the form of brutalisation. Tabío exaggerates an actual situation experienced by all Cubans to various degrees: the interminable wait for a bus that nobody knows when, or if, it will ever come. While in Buñuel deterritorialisation turns a happy circumstance into a nightmare, in Tabío it turns an annoying situation into an idyll. Cuban film critic Joel del Rio acknowledges the constructive effort of *The Waiting List* in comparison to Buñuel's film: 'Confinement and claustrophobia similar to those which in *The Exterminating Angel* produced disintegration, division and blasphemy, here produce positive metamorphosis, reconciliation and spirit of inventiveness'.⁹⁹ *The Waiting List* employs the model of Buñuel's criticism of the bourgeoisie to reflect on the viability of the socialist utopia.

The Exterminating Angel and *The Waiting List* pursue their opposite intentions by relying on the virtualising power of the time-image. *The Exterminating Angel* makes use of reiteration as a surrealist device: short sequences are repeated with minimal variations producing an oneiric distancing from the linearity of time experienced in the waking state. According to Deleuze, by means of this repetition-with-variation the narrative can 'set time free, reversing its subordination to movement'.¹⁰⁰ Deleuze notices how, in the course of his filmmaking career,

⁹⁹ Joel del Rio, 'Tabío: Infortunio y profundas levedades en Juan Carlos Tabío', in Mario Naito López (ed.), *Coordenadas del cine cubano 2* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2005), 278-285, 283.

¹⁰⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 99.

Buñuel gradually moves from the movement- to the time-image, fully accomplishing it in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), where 'he gives way to a plurality of simultaneous worlds; to simultaneity of presents in different worlds'.¹⁰¹ In the film, three bourgeois couples meet for dinner in different venues and bizarre situations, some of which are real while others are just being dreamt. As in *The Waiting List*, the beginning of the dream-sequences is not marked by any oneiric junction, leading to the formation of a crystal of time where actual and virtual images enter a circuit of indeterminacy. On the other hand, Tabío achieves the crystal by means of magical realism: in *The Waiting List* the proliferation of worlds consists in the multiplication of the same dream as dreamt by different subjects. While in Buñuel's films the fictional universe appears as an uncanny multiplicity of compossible worlds, in *The Waiting List* a multiplicity of individuals appears as a unique, collective, dreaming subject. Buñuel moves from unity to division to disintegrate the fake image of the bourgeoisie (negative deterritorialisation); Tabío moves from division to unity to reconstruct the socialist ideal of a collaborative community of equals (positive reterritorialisation). In all three films Difference arises from Repetition. In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* the fictional world is repeated as a multiplicity of compossible worlds, never brought back to unity. In *The Exterminating Angel* the characters have to return to the positions they occupied when the curse began in order to break it – it could be said that they have to return to point-fold so that the series can bifurcate again and unfold according to its natural rule of progression. This movement of reterritorialisation, though, is soon interrupted by the repetition of the same curse in another venue. In *The Waiting List* repetition occurs across different subjects inhabiting the same layer of reality. This horizontal repetition creates a collective memory used for the reconstruction of the collective future.

The Waiting List also engages with another film of Buñuelian ancestry: *The Survivors* (1979) by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. *The Survivors* stages another situation of self-confinement extremely protracted in time and leading to an extreme outcome. Although *The Waiting List* and *The Survivors* address different groups of Cuban citizens (Creole aristocracy, Cuban peers) at different historical moments (the early years of the Revolution, the 1990s) and draw different social trajectories (social regression, social development), both films express the need to adopt a fluid mentality to cope with historical changes.

The Survivors is set at the time of the Revolution and tells the story of an aristocratic family which decides to barricade themselves in their estate until the turmoil is quelled. Unfortunately the Revolution triumphs, and there they remain in self-imposed exile. As a

¹⁰¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 100.

number of years pass and their food supplies run out, they gradually regress from capitalism, to feudalism, to slavery, to savagery, to cannibalism. Paul Schroeder argues that while satirising the immobility of the aristocratic class, the film also comments on the character of Cuban socialism:

[T]he Orozco family's isolation and patriarchy spoke of the Cuban state's own growing isolation from the rest of the world, its own paternalism when addressing and administering the country's increasing problems, and the empty ceremonies with which it hoped to keep young minds from rebelling. *The Survivors* is a pessimistic film that postulates the transformability of man, but in reverse [...] a way of showing what could happen during an ever-worsening economic crisis if a community does not have the awareness, solidarity, and courage to break old destructive habits that impede the development of the individual and the community.¹⁰²

The Survivors, therefore, can be interpreted as a warning about the risk of adopting a rigid attitude in a moment in which fluidity is instead required. Both *The Survivors* and *The Waiting List* juxtapose images of stasis (aristocratic conservatism, passive waiting) and movement (socialist transition, transformation from waiting into action). Through this juxtaposition, *The Survivors* invites the country not to fear historical change; *The Waiting List* expresses the need to put history in motion again in order to exit the stagnant immobility of the present. While *The Exterminating Angel* and *The Survivors* project ahead a negative memory of the future (a disturbing image of what might happen if), *The Waiting List's* magical realist narrative corrects what of Cubanidad has to be corrected and reconstructs a positive memory for a positive future to come.

2.3 Conclusion

By adopting a Deleuzian approach, magical realism has been explained in terms of a shift between time- and movement-image, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. While the magical occurrence causes the bifurcation of the series of realism and hence the world's opening to Becoming, the normalisation of magic, that is, its reinclusion in the motor-sensory schema of the realistic mode, produces a movement of reterritorialisation through which reality is either modified or submitted to resemantisation.

The impact of magic on the realistic world is always motivated by contextual factors. Specifically, in Cuban magical realist cinema of the 1990s, magic is employed to correct a

¹⁰² Schroeder, *Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*, 94.

situation of social dystopia, national isolation and historical immobility. In *Guantanamera*, the incursion of magic transforms the journey of the corpse into an allegory of national rebirth; in *The Waiting List* it transforms the dead time of waiting into a useful time for the reconstruction of the socialist utopia. Both films denounce the inefficiency of state administration and the corruption of socialist values, and employ magic to improve the socialist model and restore a positive course of history. In the case of Cuba, therefore, magical realism's *subversive*, *decentring* and *virtualising* vocation does not threaten the socialist order but rather enhances its critical revision.

As much as the *free-indirect-vision cinema* examined in the first chapter and the *intensive documentary narratives* that will be considered in the next, Cuban magical realist cinema operates in the mode of modern political cinema, envisioning the Cuba-to-come in terms of an improved form of socialism.

Chapter 3

Documentary of Intensities: *Havana Suite* (2003), *They Exist* (2005) and the Becoming-minoritarian

Cuban documentary of the post-Cold war period displays the same aesthetics/politics of becoming-minoritarian which characterise national fiction cinema. In this chapter, I will examine the *intensive* turn of Cuban documentary, that is, its shift from *political* to *modern political cinema*, taking as examples *Havana Suite* (Fernando Pérez, 2003) and *They Exist* (Esteban Insausti, 2005).

In the Latin America of the 1960s-1970s, political cinema was theorised and practised under the name of 'Third Cinema', redefined in Cuba as 'Imperfect Cinema' by Julio García Espinosa. Within the movement of Third or Imperfect Cinema, documentary was considered a privileged form of filmmaking due to its natural adherence to reality and its capacity to address social and political issues. While in many Latin American countries documentary was used as a tool of opposition against existing or rising dictatorships, in Revolutionary Cuba documentary benefited from state support and was employed to uphold the official ideology.

In the 1990s, the Cuban economic crisis caused the decline of documentary production, which rose again towards the end of the decade thanks to a group of independent filmmakers working with digital technology. The new Cuban documentary still operates within the ideological umbrella of the Revolution, but privileges private experiences, thoughts and states of mind. Cuban film critic Dean Luis Reyes notices how Cuban documentary of the 21st century often takes the form of a rhizomatic, reflexive construction, where truth is constantly exposed to doubt and reinterpretation. Engaging with Deleuzian film concepts drawn from *Cinema 1*, Reyes also notices how the new Cuban documentary often employs *floating perception-images* to express a disorienting experience of reality. Drawing on Reyes' remarks, I will argue that Cuban documentary cinema is increasingly taking the form of an *affective (or intensive) narrative*, suited to document a national process of becoming.

A rise of affection-image in contemporary Latin American cinema has also been acknowledged by Laura Podalsky, who underlines the cognitive and political potential of affects in relation to dynamics of transformation currently traversing the Southern Cone. Affection-image is viewed by Podalsky as a site of embodied intensities, through which historical change is

conveyed in the form of sensory and emotional experience. Similarly, the rise of affection-image in recent Cuban documentary will appear connected to a phase of national transition.

By relying on affects/intensities, *Havana Suite* and *They Exist* rewrite the notion of Cubanidad in terms of becoming-minoritarian. *Havana Suite* draws an intensive picture of Havana in which the city appears as a multiplicity of fluid identities. *They Exist* entrusts the truth about the nation to a group of lunatics, revealing the delirious nature of being Cuban. By affirming the right to individual difference (and madness), both documentaries return the image of a composite society evolving in different and compossible directions.

3.1 New Aesthetics/Politics for Cuban Documentary: Affects and Neo-reflexivity

Since the establishment of the Revolution, Cuban documentary cinema has been committed to the affirmation of socialist ideology. In more recent years, though, it also came to acknowledge the crisis of such ideology. When Cuban documentary re-emerges from the Special Period, it ceases to be the official spokesman of power and begins to speak for a Cuban people in process of becoming.

Since the 1960s, Latin American documentary has been characterised by its social and political commitment. Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino gave written form to this social idea of cinema in what would become famous as the Third Cinema Manifesto (1969). In it, Solanas and Getino criticise both American commercial cinema (First Cinema) and European art cinema (Second Cinema); the former for being at the service of capital, the latter for being private vehicle of expression for the personality of the author. As an alternative to those, they promote a third kind of cinema (Third Cinema) at the service of the community. Third Cinema is meant to stimulate the audience's reflection on collective issues and contribute to social praxes of transformation. In the Manifesto, Solanas and Getino speak of a *decolonised camera* and a *liberated screen* as part of a culture of the revolution, and praise documentary as the most powerful form of Third Cinema.¹⁰³ In Cuba, Third Cinema comes to signify Revolutionary cinema. In 1966, Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa publishes the Manifesto of Imperfect Cinema. Espinosa denounces the narcissistic character of *perfect cinema* (both First and Second cinema), which addresses the masses as a passive, contemplative audience. Against that, he proposes an *imperfect cinema* (equivalent of Third Cinema), which can stimulate reflection and encourage people to take active role in national development.

¹⁰³ Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Toward a Third Cinema', *Cineaste*, 4/3 (Winter 1970-71): 4-29.

Imperfect Cinema would not offer prefabricated answers, but raise questions and promote debate. The 'imperfectness', therefore, does not refer to the poor quality of the films, but to the unfinished character of the process of development which Imperfect Cinema enhances. According to Espinosa, not just documentary, but any type of cinema can work as Imperfect Cinema.¹⁰⁴

The notion of Third Cinema has been evolving and redefined over the years. Chanan notices how the distinction between First, Second and Third Cinema has been variously reformulated in terms of budget, genre, style, target audience... and it seems now clear that Third Cinema does not necessarily mean a low budget, roughly shot, militant documentary which summons the masses for revolutionary purposes.¹⁰⁵ Chanan argues that the constitutive feature of Third Cinema is its being rooted in the reality of a developing country in which it operates as an agent of development. According to Chanan, what defines Third Cinema is the 'active role of the milieu', that is, the fact that space is never a neutral background, but is always impregnated with dramatic consequences.¹⁰⁶ Chanan argues that in Latin American cinema (which for him is all Third Cinema) the belonging to the homeland is always a crucial factor for the development of the characters and the unfolding of the stories. Due to this contextual determination, the private vicissitudes of the characters always reverberate of collective history and their actions always hold collective implications. This is all the more true in the case of Cuba, whose geopolitical peculiarity conditions the characters' possibilities of action in a decisive manner.

In Revolutionary Cuba, the determination of the milieu translated into the rise of a Revolutionary cinema, whose flag was carried high by the documentary. Cuban documentary cinema blossomed as a way to inform people about state politics and plans of development, denounce the exploitation of the past and praise the achievements of the Revolution, promote social reflection on collective issues, celebrate national culture, personalities of the present and the past, commemorate episodes of Cuban history, encourage communitarian commitment and create sense of national belonging. The Revolutionary slant of Cuban documentary would inevitably attenuate before the crisis of the 1990s, which slowed down institutional production and caused the disappearance of the historic *Noticiero ICAIC* (1960-1990), a weekly newsreel

¹⁰⁴ Julio García Espinosa, 'For an Imperfect Cinema', *Jump Cut*, 20 (1979): 24-26.

¹⁰⁵ Chanan, 'Changing Geography of Third Cinema', *Screen - Special Latin American Issue*, 38/4 (Winter 1997): 372-388. Third Cinema has been variously acknowledged, interpreted and redefined by Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* (London: Pluto Press, 2001); Frieda Ekotto and Adeline Koh (eds.), *Rethinking Third Cinema: The Role of Anti-Colonial Media and Aesthetics in Postmodernity* (Berlin: Lid, 2009); Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake (eds.), *Rethinking Third Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Chanan, 'Latin American Cinema in the 1990s: Representational Space in Recent Latin American Cinema', *EIAL*, 9/1 (June 1998), Online at <http://www.tau.ac.il/eial/IX_1/chanan.htm>.

which had been the learning ground for two generations of filmmakers. When Cuban documentary re-emerges from the crisis, its mood is sensibly changed: it still celebrates the Revolution, but also witnesses a deep sense of disillusionment; it continues to reflect on the meaning and implications of being Cuban, but it does so in a more personal and introspective way, dismissing the epic tones of the past. As Jorge Luis Sánchez incisively puts it, the new Cuban documentary abandons the idea of the *deber ser* (what must be), to reflect on what actually is and might be:

While the 1960s were characterised by the eagerness to organise expressive resources in order to create a *realistic* illusion able to capture the phenomenology of the real, since the 1990s – following the crisis and exhaustion of norms, parameters for evaluation, rules, canons and methods – the primary aim of documentary seems to be the *re invention* of reality from the freedom of subjectivity... A common tone is [thus created] through an interrogative gaze, through the yes but no, through an acute subjectivity, whose vision [the new documentary] embroiders in order to turn *unreality* into its reality.¹⁰⁷

Thus, we encounter a series of works which probe the unbridgeable distance between dream and reality, conveying a deep sense of nostalgia: *La Época, El Encanto and Fin de Siglo* (Juan Carlos Cremata, 1999), a baroque montage-piece about three famous shops of 1950's Havana, whose history becomes allegorical of the history of Cuba; *Demolish* (Alejandro Ramírez, 2004), about the demolition of a glorious sugar refinery; *Empty Beds* (Sandra Gómez, 2006), about a group of residents who are forced to abandon their homes in danger of collapse as an hurricane is approaching; *Looking for Havana* (Alina Rodríguez, 2006), about internal migrants who tried to settle in Havana but ended up living in illegal encampments; *Catilina's Dream* (José Manuel Riera, 2000), about a man dreaming to have running water in his house; *Freddy, or Noel's Dream* (Waldo Ramírez, 2003), about a kid dreaming that the dam is opened and a flood of water and fishes fill the dried-up bed of the river and the fishermen's nets... this accompanied by The Queens' *Bohemian Rhapsody*; Gustavo Pérez's trilogy of *The Extensive Reality*, made up of *Caidije* (2000), about a Haitian community based in the Cuban village of Caidije, whose celebrated folklore is not enough to compensate for the feeling of non-belonging to the place; *The Weaver* (2002), about a shepherd-woman who weaves beautiful tapestries while taking care of her goats; and *Sola* (2003), about an abandoned school in the town of Sola which is revived by the joyful noise of the past. Other works give voice to the desires of ordinary people: Aram Vidal's *DeGeneration* (2006) and *Ex Generation* (2008), about the dreams of the new generation

¹⁰⁷ Jorge Luis Sánchez González, *Romper la tensión del arco: movimiento cubano de cine documental* (La Habana: Ediciones ICAIC, 2010), 328.

and their desire to go abroad; *The Future is Now* (Sandra Gómez, 2009), about people's demand for greater personal freedom and better life conditions. Even emigration, traditionally condemned as treason, is now reconsidered in a more critical way: *Open Havana* (Arturo Sotto and Jorge Perugorria, 2003), *Lost* (Daniellis Hernández, 2008), *The Illusion* (Susana Barriga, 2009), *HABANAver. T.a 31kb/seg* (Javier Labrador and Juan Carlos Sánchez, 2009), *Voices of a Journey* (Alejandra Aguirre, 2010). Another group of documentaries deal with social diversity and deviance: *Esmeralda* (Adolfo LLauradó, 2000), about an old lady still practising prostitution; *Look at Me, My Love* (Marilyn Solaya, 2002), about sexual exhibitionism; *Calle G* (Aram Vidal and Erick Coll, 2003), about Emo, Goth, Punk and Vampirism cultures taking hold among the youths of Havana; *In the Wrong Body* (Marilyn Solaya, 2010), about the first Cuban transsexual who changed gender.¹⁰⁸

Cuban film critic Dean Luis Reyes speaks of the new Cuban documentary in terms of 'rhizomatic neo-reflexivity... fractal geometry of the gaze, aimed at creating uncertainty rather than belief'.¹⁰⁹ Referring to Deleuze's taxonomy of the image, Reyes notices how the new Cuban documentary often takes the form of a *fluid image* in order to return a *fluid experience of the real*:

At present, the debate about Cuban documentary is concerned with the negotiation of a new point of view able to show the spiritual traits of reality yet without renouncing the concreteness of the facts (to provide metaphysical background to events and experiences 'naturalistically' expressed). Through this new point of view, Cuban documentary distances itself from both the 'objective' and 'subjective' registers, pursuing autonomy of representation and obtaining organic balance between the two. This operation gives rise to that cinematic regime of perception described by Deleuze as *liquid image*... [In liquid documentary] meaning results from a fluid flow of feelings, generative of visible forms and material structures, as well as invisible and intangible resonances. A fundamental expressive strategy of this liquid image will be the subtraction of 'congenital' elements of the documentary mode – such as the spoken word [or even the body].¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ About Cuban documentary post-Special Period see Joel del Río, 'Correspondencias del olvido y la memoria. Documentales cubanos del siglo XXI', *Cine Cubano*, 20 (enero-marzo 2011), Online at <<http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/revistacinecubano/digital20/index.htm>>; Mario Naito López, 'El documental cubano desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días', *Cine Cubano*, 1 (Segundo semestre de 2005), Online at <<http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/revistacinecubano/digital01/cap10.htm>>; Jorge Luis Sánchez, 'Séptimo tramo: 1998-¿...?', in *Romper la tensión del arco*, 321-354; digital archive of the *Muestra Joven* (2000-), a film festival open to young Cuban fiction and documentary filmmakers, <<http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/muestrajoven>>.

¹⁰⁹ Dean Luis Reyes, 'El documental reflexivo cubano: testimonio paralelo de una Revolución' in Nancy Berthier (ed.), *Cine y revolución cubana: luces y sombras*, 93-111, 109-110.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 105.

As examples of this *liquid documentary* Reyes cites *Havana Suite* and two works by Gustavo Pérez: *Sola* (2003) and *Waking Quan Tri* (2005). In *Havana Suite* the absence of the spoken word enables the transcendence from the dimension of the everyday to the dimension of the symbolic (I will return to this in the course of the analysis). *Sola* is based instead on the absence of the body: the abandoned school is only inhabited by the voices of the past (pure optical-sound situation). *Waking Quan Tri* portrays a city in Vietnam which was destroyed by the US and eventually rebuilt, yet without being able to restore the original feeling of the place.¹¹¹ As Reyes explains, Cuban neo-reflexive documentary does not address solid forms of reality, but follows the flow of emotional states.

The rise of liquid image in recent Cuban documentary denotes the shift from a molar to a molecular perception of reality, which no longer has 'the solid as object, condition, milieu', but is able to grasp the 'flowing-matter'.¹¹² Becoming-liquid (or molecular) can therefore be considered a form of becoming-minoritarian. In *Cinema 1* Deleuze defines three stages or variations of movement-images: perception-image, affection-image and action-image, which respectively connect movement to the presence of the body (perception-image), to a qualitative change through which the body prepares itself for action (affection-image), and to a goal to achieve (action-image). Perception-image tends to employ long shots, affection-image close-ups, action-image medium shots. The basic motor-sensory syntagm is constituted by a succession of perception-, affection- and action-image. While in the liquid perception-image the becoming of the subject-world is still extensive (quantitate), in presence of affection-image this becomes intensive (qualitative). By taking the form of *affective narrative*, therefore, film can return an *intensive image of the world*.

In Deleuze, the concept of *intensity* is strictly linked to the idea of *nomadism*. The term 'nomad' is not used by Deleuze in the common sense of physical movement from one space to another, but in the sense of a semantic migration occurring within the semiotic order defining a given territory. *Nomadic* is what eludes such order. Intensity is similarly described as 'what is underneath the codes, what escapes them, and what the codes want to translate, convert, cash in'.¹¹³ Hence, *nomadism* is defined as a 'migration of intensities' occurring within the boundaries of the territory, that is, the structure of power.¹¹⁴ Nomadic (or intensive) cinema is inherently political because it expresses the Major as a pure frame of becoming. 'The majority is Nobody', Deleuze writes, 'whereas the minority is the becoming of everybody, one's potential becoming

¹¹¹ Reyes, 'El documental reflexivo cubano', 106-109.

¹¹² Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 82.

¹¹³ Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 257.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 257.

to the extent that one deviates from the model'.¹¹⁵ He distinguishes between 'a majoritarian as a constant and homogeneous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming', pointing out that 'there is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian'.¹¹⁶ The concept of *minoritarian* is therefore something different from that of *minority*. The minoritarian expresses the qualitative (intensive, molecular) becoming inherent to any molar structures, that is, its inner nomadism.¹¹⁷

Affection-image lets also transpire the virtuality of Being. The qualitative change of the subject-world reverberates in fact of the qualitative essence of Being, that is, its virtuality. Brian Massumi speaks of affection (or intensity) in terms of a *two-sidedness*: of a simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual '*as seen from the side of the actual thing, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions*'.¹¹⁸ Affection always entails communication among senses, transcription of specific sensorial stimuli into other sensorial modes (vision into touch, for instance): 'Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them'.¹¹⁹ By triggering sensory synaesthesia, affection-image gives way to cognitive processes, by which the body reacts to the surrounding environment both physically and mentally. As Massumi puts it, 'the body *infolds contexts*': it absorbs external stimuli and convert them into affects (embodied intensities), that is, potentials for action (movement-image) or thought (time-image).¹²⁰ Eric Shouse points out that *affects* should not be mistaken for *feelings* or *emotions*:

Feelings re *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *pre-personal*... An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity... Affect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience.¹²¹

In Massumi's theory of affects, the body is viewed as a significant apparatus able to produce affective identification and through that convey meaning. *Semiotics of affects* always entails *politics of affects*: affects are inherent to the body; as the body is caught in the order of power,

¹¹⁵ Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 117.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 117.

¹¹⁷ In Deleuze, the concepts of *affect*, *intensity*, *nomadism* and *becoming-minoritarian* are intrinsically related.

¹¹⁸ Brian Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', *Cultural Critique*, 31 (Autumn 1995): 83-109, 96.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 96.

¹²⁰ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 30.

¹²¹ Eric Shouse, 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect', *M/C Journal*, 8/ 6 (December 2005), Online at <<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>>.

affects always bear political implications. By means of affective identification, political content can be therefore conveyed. Affective identification is described by Shouse as follows:

When your body infolds a context and another body (real or virtual) is expressing intensity in that context, one intensity is infolded into another. By resonating with the intensity of the contexts it infolds, the body attempts to ensure that it is prepared to respond appropriately to a given circumstance.¹²²

Unlike feelings and emotions, affects are unformed and unconscious; affects are pure potentials of becoming, and as such they can be exchanged by the bodies. Although anchored to the body, affect is *autonomous* insofar as it 'escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is'.¹²³ Through the body, affect partakes of the virtual nature of Being. It follows that by producing affective identification film can bring about politics of becoming.

Laura Podalsky acknowledges the increasing role of the sensorial/affective/emotional in contemporary Latin American cinema, where affection-image is employed to mediate an accelerated process of change. Podalsky argues that, since the 1990s, Latin American cinema has been characterised by *structures of feelings* expressing dynamics of transformation rather than stable orders of affairs.¹²⁴ The notion of 'structures of feelings' is borrowed from Raymond Williams, who defines them as semantic structures expressing the variable mood of a particular time and place: the structures of feelings can either reflect solidified social structures, or social experiences which are 'still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognised as social, but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating'.¹²⁵ In the 1990s, many Latin American countries (such as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico) moved to democratic governments and neoliberal economies, soon entering and resenting the effects of globalization. In cinema, this process of modernisation led to the emergence of aesthetics of affects, by which historical change was negotiated through the mediation of the body. Affective narratives are also acknowledged by Podalsky in Cuba of the post-Cold War period, similarly characterised by a friction between local tradition and global modernity. Overall, Podalsky's analysis demonstrates that the rise of affection-image in contemporary Latin American cinemas reflects the nomadic character of contemporary Latin American societies.

¹²² Shouse, 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect'.

¹²³ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', 96.

¹²⁴ Laura Podalsky, *The Politics of Affect and Emotion in Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹²⁵ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.

3.2 *Havana Suite* and *They Exist*: Documenting Being Cuban as Becoming-minoritarian

Havana Suite and *They Exist* can be thought of as *nomadic cinema*. By raising intensities, they both re-envision Cubanidad in terms of becoming-minoritarian. *Havana Suite* inscribes unspoken knowledge and desire in the bodies of the *habaneros*, in the venues they inhabit and in the objects which surround them in their daily life. A recurrent use of details, close-ups and *pure optical-sound situations* discloses the intensive qualities of life in Havana, shifting the focus of attention from the molar to the molecular dimension of Being Cuban. *They Exist* achieves the same effect by triggering sensorial and cognitive disorientation. Here, the documentary discourse unfolds through the entwisted monologues of the lunatics, resulting in a *discourse of delirium*. The spectator thus experiences a double disorientation: the disorientation experienced by the lunatics themselves, and the disorientation resulting from the documentary discourse as a whole. In this way, *They Exist* can draw a fluid, crazy picture of the nation, revealing the lunacy (intensity) inherent to order of power.

By evading the dialogue or giving voice to unreliable witnesses, *Havana Suite* and *They Exist* elude the political, yet bear political implications. In *Havana Suite*, the monumental history represented by Cuban classic documentary turns into the minimal history of the *habaneros* attending to their daily chores. Although the stress is on the private dimension, national politics indirectly appear in the effects they have upon daily life in Havana. The ideological discourse is thus inscribed in the citizens' bodies and articulated through their gestures, actions and movements. *They Exist* juxtaposes the old and new documentary modes by alternating the lunatics' interviews with fragments of ICAIC newsreels from the early years of the Revolution, which celebrate scientific, technological and social progress under way and to come. A critical tension thus arises between the teleological trajectory of the socialist project and the present situation of lunacy. In both documentaries the focus has shifted from national epics to private histories, from the macropolitics of power to the micropolitics of desire. This passage from macro- to micro- allows the re-envisioning of the Major as becoming-minoritarian.

Havana Suite and *They Exist* will be respectively examined according to the concepts of *affects* and *delirium* as two ways to raise an intensive image of the nation. By means of affects and delirium, *Havana Suite* and *They Exist* deconstruct the static and monolithic notion of Cubanidad, and reconstruct it by highlighting its internal differences and flows of becoming. *Havana Suite* deconstructs the image of the community in a mosaic of individual life-fragments, to eventually reunite them in a broader picture of human life, in which the difference between the socialist and capitalist worlds fades. *They Exist* opens the national sphere of discourse to

voices expressing lunacy and delirium, promoting the acceptance of irrational and contradictory elements within the official order of power. In both films, the city of Havana is synecdochical for Cuba and the world. The lunatics' mental condition thus becomes metonymical for contemporary life both in Cuba and worldwide. The analysis will show how, by drawing an intensive picture of Cuban everyday life and presenting lunacy as a constitutional feature of Cuban contemporary life, Pérez and Insausti reimagine being Cuban as partaking of a broader condition of Being.

3.2.1 *Havana Suite* (2003): The Community as a Mosaic of Individualities/ Dreaming Multitude

In 2001 Fernando Pérez was commissioned to make a 55-minute documentary about Havana for a Spanish TV series called *Ciudades Invisibles* (Invisible Cities). The project eventually grew into a feature length documentary meant for the big screen. *Havana Suite* (Cuba-Spain, 2003, 80 min) is a city symphony of Havana where real citizens re-enact their lives before the camera. The film contains no dialogue and unfolds as a rhythmic composition of images, musical score and sound effects of the everyday. Pérez intercuts between the daily activities of thirteen *habaneros*, who are introduced by name, age, profession, and reintroduced at the end with their respective dreams. Among these there is a child with Downs Syndrome, an old woman who sells peanuts in the street, a cobbler, a railway worker, a doctor who dresses up as a clown to animate children's parties, a man who takes a flight to Miami, a woman who works in a perfume factory, a ballet dancer who also works as a mason, a male nurse who turns into a Drag Queen at night, and others. *Havana Suite* unfolds as an affective narrative, where visual and sound details enter semantic structures which allow the transcendence of the everyday in the dimension of the symbolic. The city space is gradually revealed as a micro-geography of intensities, where the community loses its geopolitical specificity and turns into a pure, human community. While politics recedes into the background, primacy is given to the individual, at once unique and reverberating of the universal Being.

Havana Suite draws on the city film genre, bending established formula to its specific intentions. As the classical city symphonies, *Havana Suite* depicts a day of city life accentuating its rhythmic aspects. The city, though, is not portrayed as a unitary whole or collective movement, but as a multiplicity of individualities and individual trajectories re-envisioned in existential key. The city film emerged in Europe in the 1920s, in a moment when the city was becoming synonymous with velocity, modernity and progress. Classical examples of the genre

are *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (Walter Ruttmann, Germany, 1927) and *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, Soviet Union, 1929). The city film genre was eventually practiced by a number of filmmakers from all over the world, and reinterpreted in various ways oscillating between documentary and fiction. In the 1990s, the city film enjoyed a worldwide revival and began to reappear on the big screen.¹²⁶ Among recent city films we can remember: *My Winnipeg* (Guy Maddin, Canada, 2005), a surrealist take on Maddin's sleeping home town; *Megacities* (Michael Glawogger, Austria, 2001), which portrays the hard living of lower classes, homeless people, prostitutes and petty criminals in Bombay, Mexico City, Moscow and New York; *Tokyo Sonata* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Japan, 2008), a fictional film which hints at the city symphony genre by its title and depicts the disintegration of a Tokyo family as a case study for problems associated with metropolitan life; *São Paulo, Symphony and Cacophony* (Jean-Claude Bernardet, Brazil, 1995), which traces the irrational and uncontrolled expansion of the Brazilian second-largest city. In these films, the city is no longer celebrated as synonymous with rampant modernity, but it rather comes to stand for the failure of capitalism. Keith Beattie defines the city film as a versatile *transnational form*, which can be variously inflected and applied to different realities and intentions.¹²⁷ Regardless of which city is portrayed, in the city film the urban space is always the ground of specific geopolitical embodiments, which the city narrative reveals and negotiates.

Within this new weave of city films, *Havana Suite* returns the image of a communist city in the post-communist world. In a historical moment in which social inequality was problematically re-emerging, Pérez depicts Havana as a city without classes, where work represents a unifying and equalising principle. The camera follows professionals belonging to different categories of work, lighter and heavier, more and less qualified, but not resulting in class division: the bicycle is the means of transportation for all of them, and they all live in modest conditions. While international reviewers have often interpreted the film as a denunciation of Cuba's state of poverty, the Cubans have welcomed it as a hymn to the national

¹²⁶ For the history of the city film see David B. Clarke (ed.), *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997); Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002); Barbara Menel, *Cities and Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2008); Richard Koeck and Les Roberts (eds.), *The City and the Moving Image: Urban Projections* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹²⁷ Keith Beattie, 'From City Symphony to Global City Film: Documentary Display of the Corporeal', *Screening the Past*, 20 (December 2006), Online at <<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/20/city-symphony-global-city-film.html>>.

spirit of persistence, the capability of contenting oneself with little, and the importance of affects and solidarity.¹²⁸

In paying homage to the Cubans' daily resilience, *Havana Suite* is reminiscent of *Hanoi, Tuesday 13th* (1967), a city film which Cuban documentarist Santiago Álvarez dedicated to the Vietnamese city of Hanoi, tirelessly resisting the US bombing. In the film, Alvarez reworks the traditional diurnal schema of the city symphony to portray a city under siege. First we are given the placid picture of the Vietnamese people attending to their rural labour, the fishing, the daily purchases. The rhythm abruptly changes when their activities are interrupted by the US air raid, to which they bravely and effectively counterattack. As the first part of *Hanoi, Havana Suite* unfolds in a sort of suspended temporality. Nothing happens during the twenty four hours apart from the repetition of the daily routine. Although there is no visible enemy here, the city appears similarly suspended in a state of siege, mutely waiting for something to come. Cuban movie goers interviewed outside of the cinema spoke of a siege laid upon the city by the US through the blockade.¹²⁹ By portraying a situation of stasis and waiting, the film indirectly expresses the need for movement and change. In the closing credits the *habaneros* are reintroduced with their respective dreams: the child dreams to go to heaven and reunite with his deceased mum, someone else to reunite his family split between Cuba and Florida; others dream of travelling, or achieving artistic recognition as an actor, a musician or a ballet dancer; someone just wishes to be in good health, while someone else is simply too old to have any dream. By juxtaposing the concreteness of everyday life to the ethereal sphere of dream, Pérez discloses a critical distance between what it is and what it might be, expressing the hope for a national change which can make at least some of those dreams accomplishable.

The renunciation of the spoken word and the final engagement with the dimension of dream responds to a will of abstraction which enables an existential reading of everyday life. The idea of making a 'speechless' documentary came to Pérez after watching and remaining impressed by the visual power of *The Qatsi Trilogy*, by US documentarist Godfrey Reggio. *Qatsi* meaning 'life' in the Hopi native-American language, the trilogy depicts different aspects of the relationship between humans, nature and technology through a pure flow of image and music.¹³⁰ *Havana Suite* displays similar aesthetic regime and existentialist tones. Pérez explains

¹²⁸ This interpretative divergence is pointed out by Elliott Young, 'Between the Market and a Hard Place: Fernando Pérez's *Suite Habana* in a Post-utopian Cuba', in Pérez Jr. (ed.), *Cuban Studies*, Vol. 38, 26-49.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 38.

¹³⁰ The *Qatsi Trilogy* is made up of *Koyaanisqatsi: Life out of Balance* (1983), *Powaqqatsi: Life in transformation* (1988) and *Naqoyqatsi: Life at War* (2002). Pérez mentions his indebtedness to *The Qatsi Trilogy* on various occasions while interviewed about *Havana Suite*. See Fernando Pérez in Enrique Ubieta Gómez (eds.), *El valor de las pequeñas cosas: Primeras aproximaciones críticas de la prensa cubana a Suite Habana* (La Habana: Ediciones ICAIC, 2003).

the absence of dialogue as a reaction to the stereotyped image of Cuba given by many other Cuban films, all insisting on the loud vitality of the Cubans, on the Revolutionary symbolism and on exotic elements. Pérez identifies the core of Cubanidad in something else and 'less Cuban', that is, its human base. Discussing the film, he explains that *Havana Suite* should be read as an open reflection about life and humanity, which does not just apply to Cuba but also to any other part of the world.¹³¹ The humanistic turn of the new Cuban documentary has been associated with the end of the socialist utopia, which has determined the dismissal of political propaganda and the privileging of personal life experiences. Elliot Young argues that *Havana Suite* is an example of the *post-utopian aesthetic of everyday life* that emerged in Cuba during the Special Period:

Since the 1990s Cuban filmmakers have responded to the gap between the ideals of the Cuban revolution and the reality of everyday life by turning away from grand historical representations of the collective utopian Revolution and focusing instead on more personal, individual portraits of people struggling to survive... Calling the film a 'suite', referring to the loosely connected movements in a piece of music or dance, suggests that Havana (and perhaps all cities), can best be understood through partial fragments of daily life, rather than a manifesto-like epic narrative.¹³²

According to Young, *Havana Suite* is neither anti- nor pro-Revolution. It's post-utopian view rather expresses a feeling of in-betweenness – suspension, as said above – marking the transition between a utopia that has been proven false by events and something new to come.

In this situation of historical in-betweenness, the importance of affects arises. *Havana Suite* foregrounds the body as an *affective apparatus* able to convey sensations and meanings, and enhances *affective identification* as the base for the communication film-spectator. By thoroughly interweaving optical and acoustic details, the narrative constructs an intensive image of life in Havana, through which the spectator experiences the becoming-minoritarian of the nation-city in form of *embodied* becoming-minoritarian.

Havana Suite is populated with synesthetic details where the audio-visual unit also conveys a sense of touch, smell and taste. The synesthetic quality of the image appears clear from the opening shots. The beginning of the day is portrayed through a series of synesthetic close-ups, such as those of a coffee pot boiling on the stove, of the coffee being poured, of a

¹³¹ Fernando Pérez, in Arturo García Hernández, 'El filme de Fernando Pérez abrió la versión 51 del Festival Internacional de Donostia', *La Jornada* (19/09/2003), Online at <<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/09/19/02an1cul.php?origen=cultura.php&fly=1>>.

¹³² Young, 'Between the Market and a Hard Place: Fernando Pérez's *Suite Habana* in a Post-utopian Cuba', 27, 45.

spoon clinking in the glass, of chewing mouths and swallowing throats as the characters are having breakfast. Through these close-ups we can sense the heat of the coffee pot, the smell and taste of coffee and of the other food and drinks which are being consumed. This will be a recurring pattern throughout the film, where the image is systematically charged with synesthetic qualities in order to appeal the whole sensorium of the spectator and enhance sensorial identification as a vehicle of meaning. Through synesthetic details of work, meals, personal care... we experience a day of life in Havana as it is experienced by its citizens. By means of editing, single details are often joined in semantic structures so as to convey not just physical sensations but even abstract ideas. For instance, at one point, a drum rhythm is superimposed on the whistle of a pressure-pot, and a beautiful woman's walking is modulated over that. The heat of the boiling water thus becomes metonymical for a state of excitement. In the course of the film, visual and sound editing establishes correspondences between different objects, characters and situations, converting the sensorial experience into a cognitive process.

Havana Suite makes frequent use of sound bridges and visual rhymes in order to create semantic associations and elevate the dimension of the everyday to the sphere of the symbolic. Visual details are often productive of sounds which participate in the musical composition of the film. We are either given rhythmic elements, such as pistons, pneumatic drills, hammers, heels of people walking... or amplified sounds of minimal noises, such as those produced by a belt being belted, a plastic glove being unfolded, an onion being cut, a soup being stirred, a suit being brushed, a button being sewed... The examples are innumerable. Sound is usually amplified in correspondence to the visual detail of its source, but it can also continue in the following scenes leaving its source behind. Sound bridges are used to create semantic continuity between different scenes, and, at a higher level, elevate the discourse to the order of the symbolic. In particular, Pérez employs sound to create continuity between the world of objects, humans and nature. At one point, the wind produced by a speeding fan turns into the breath of the cobbler blowing on the glue just applied on a pair of shoes, which turns into the wind shaking the tree branches outside. Through the continuity of this blow, the embodiment of the spectator is guided from the object, to the subject, to the natural world which recomprises them both. The wind represents the eternal breath from which the artificial breath of the fan and the human breath of the cobbler derive, and in which they ultimately reunite. The transient and contingent fragments of the everyday thus resonate of universal life.

The transcendence of the *particular* into the *universal*, *Havana* into the *world* and the *habaneros* into the *human kind* is also furthered by the symbolic treatment of the visual. We can see this clearly in correspondence to the late morning, when the camera moves from the fast-

paced rhythm of work, the noise of the traffic, the coming-and-going of people on the street, to the suspended quietness of the elderly sitting at home in front of the TV while someone else is arranging lunch. The sequence opens with a medium shot of the statue of John Lennon, sitting in the city park. We are therefore given the detail of Lennon's eye surrounded by the famous round frames, from which the camera cuts to the profile of an old man, also wearing glasses, rocking himself in front of a TV screen filled with the buzzing image of an exulting crowd waving Cuban flags. This is intercut with the detail of a woman's fingers choosing kidney beans. Then the camera cuts to another house to show a similar situation: an old woman, also wearing thick glasses, is sitting in front of another TV screen filled with the same crowd while a younger woman is choosing rice grains in the kitchen (Figure 1.4).

Owing to copyright restrictions, the electronic version of this thesis does not currently contain this image. The copyright clearance is pending.

Figure 1.4 *Havana Suite*: Affection-image and the affirmation of the principle of individuation.

By confining the politicised crowd to another medium and giving it only old people as spectators, Pérez realises a nostalgic operation, a distancing of the conscience from the nationalistic collectivism expressed by the crowd. This image of the crowd as an indistinct multitude where individuality is lost, recalls a scene from *Madagascar* (1994), a previous film by Pérez centred on the generational conflict between a mother and a daughter in the midst of the Special Period. At one point, the mother picks up an old photograph of a political rally in which she took part years before, but even with a magnifying lens she cannot find herself in the crowd. In both films, the image of the crowd takes the form of a *haptic image* (Marks), that is, an image characterised by disturbance of vision which makes it lose its representational power and turn

into a material presence which appeals to the spectator's sensorium. In Marks' definition, haptic image is a type of affection-image which bends towards the time-image: the sensuous engagement it produces breaks the sensory-motor chain and opens an interval of indeterminacy, which is the door to the virtual.¹³³ In discussing intercultural cinema, Laura Marks argues that the presence of haptic image denotes a state of ideological uncertainty and identity fluctuation. This also applies to our case here. As in *Madagascar* the mother cannot recognise herself in the crowd and in the ideology it stands for, the elderlies of *Havana Suite* are too old for properly seeing and identifying themselves in the tiny, confused figures of the rally participants. While collectivism is presented as an alienating structure where individual differences get lost, neat and gigantic close-ups foreground the selection of the grains, metaphorically affirming the *principle of individuation* over any conforming structure.

The figure of John Lennon enters this nostalgic construction as the symbol of an interrupted and yet ongoing dream: although the dream of the Revolution is dead (particular dream), people still continues and will always continue to dream (universal dream). In the year 2000, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of John Lennon's death, a brass statue of Lennon was placed in a city park of Havana, eventually renamed after him. At the statue's feet, an inscription quotes a line from *Imagine*: 'I may be a dreamer, but I'm not the only one'. The Beatles used to be banned in Cuba as they were considered a symbol of capitalism, consumerism, sex drugs and rock and roll, and therefore a threat.¹³⁴ Now, they are readmitted in the national culture as the symbol of something beyond ideological differences: the dream.

In the sequence described above, the detail of John Lennon's eternal eye rhymes with the details of the eyes of the elderlies, also wearing glasses. A three-layered image of time thus emerges, where time is at once daily time, historical time and eternity. The image of the community is accordingly constructed on these three subsistent temporalities: in the present of the documentary narrative, the community is the city crowd as a mosaic of individual existences unfolding at one rhythm on the cyclical pattern of the day; in historical time, the community is the politicised crowd that we see on TV as something somehow lost in the past; finally, in the

¹³³ Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 163.

¹³⁴ About the history of the Beatles in Cuba see Damien Cave, 'Where Cubans Can Meet the Beatles at Last', *New York Times* (August 7, 2011), Online at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/08/world/americas/08havana.html>>; Nelson P. Valdés, 'Cuba, the Beatles and Historical Context', *Counterpunch* (29-31/03/2008), Online at <<http://www.counterpunch.org/2008/03/29/cuba-the-beatles-and-historical-context/>>; Ernesto Juan Castellanos, *John Lennon en La Habana with a Little Help from my Friends* (La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 2005).

eternal dimension of time symbolised by the statue of Lennon the community loses its geopolitical features and turns into the human, dreaming multitude (that Lennon stands for).

In *Havana Suite*, Pérez repeatedly returns to the statue of Lennon, who becomes the quiet observer of the life unfolding around him, the embodiment of the documentary gaze. But why Lennon? Why not the statue of José Martí, for instance? The inclusion of Lennon seems motivated by the existential inclination of the documentary, which reimagines the political community as a human community. While political detachment is acknowledged, the sense of community is recreated based on deeper similarities between human beings: like the shared dimension of everyday life and the shared dimension of dream. After deconstructing the socialist community into a mosaic of individualities, Pérez reunites them into a broader, human communion, where the ideological differences between the socialist and capitalist worlds fade. In this way, John Lennon and the *habaneros* virtually become fellow citizens.

Through the linking motif of dream, Pérez also associates the figures of Lennon and Che, whose portrait we see hanging in the houses. After all, Lennon and Che were both dreamers, just like the *habaneros* we are introduced to. The stress on the universality of dream allows the elevation of ordinary people to the heroic status of national heroes and popular idols, and the inscription of monumental history in the epic of everyday life. In this way, the film deconstructs the Revolutionary history and the Revolutionary dream into a multiplicity of private histories and private dreams, at once performing mediation between the socialist and capitalist worlds. All this is achieved thanks to the sensorial/cognitive power of affection-images assembled in semantic structures which guide the spectator from the physical world to the reign of the symbolic.

As the narrative progresses through the afternoon and then the evening time, the principle of individuation is reasserted through close-ups of people adjusting themselves at the mirror: we see the doctor putting on his clown's make-up, the nurse a drag queen's make-up, the ballet dancer a stage make-up; other characters are shaving and combing while preparing themselves for their night out. The recurrence of the same visual pattern makes the becoming-clown, becoming-woman, becoming-theatrical, becoming-attractive somehow equivalent, all responding to the same modality of desire. The characters' transformations can be thought of as affective transformations, which reveal the presence of intensities inscribed in the bodies. In correspondence to the mirror close-ups, affection-image allows the spectator to experience embodied intensities and become these people in process of becoming. As Enrique Ubieta Gómez notices, in *Havana Suite* the body is the vessel of a fluid identity:

As it gets dark, the word Revolution lights up on a city building. Then the individual revolutions of the protagonists start to take place. The change is both external and internal: they put on make-up, shave, adorn themselves... light up. They are all transformists. But they do not transform to hide or disguise themselves. On the contrary, they search (and find) themselves in their own bodies.¹³⁵

These transformations are triggered by the desire inhabiting the bodies; desire which acts as a fluidising force on individual and hence collective identity. As Reyes points out, *Havana Suite* documents a state of transition, history as the memory of the ongoing present:

In *Havana Suite*, Pérez stages that *experience of history* which Walter Benjamin describes as a *consciousness of the present which blows up the continuity of history*. The film speaks from a position which enables it to reveal the questionability of history as produced by a single interlocutor: the dominant power.¹³⁶

In *Havana Suite*, as in the new Cuban documentary in general, Reyes acknowledges a perspective shift which allows it to show (and us to see) the molar at a molecular level, the Major as becoming-minoritarian.

In correspondence to the evening time, we are given a variation on the theme of the crowd, which no longer appears as an indistinct (haptic) multitude, but as a set of distinct elements, recognisable individualities. At night the crowd is constituted by the people involved in entertainment activities: the public of the ballet theatre and the baseball stadium, the believers gathered for a concert in the church, the guests of a dancing hall. Contrary to the crowd that we saw on the TV screen, these are present and real crowds, which preserve the individuality of their members. These two images of the crowd embody the two principles at the base of human society: the *principle of duty*, coming from an external system of expectations, and the *principle of pleasure*, coming from the interiority of the individual. The lively presentness of the crowds of entertainment affirms the importance of pleasure, as an embodiment of individual desire, over any conforming and de-individualising superstructure.

By taking the form of a musical suite, *Havana Suite* appears as a macro-embodiment of the becoming-minoritarian it represents. Pérez confesses that he started with the idea of portraying the movement of the city as a whole 'without characters, without individualising... as in *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City*', but soon he realised that the city was the citizens, 'their

¹³⁵ Enrique Ubieta Gómez, '*Suite Habana: subir más alto*', in *El valor de las pequeñas cosas*, 47-48.

¹³⁶ Reyes, *Contra el documento*, 66; Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2011).

personal histories, their faces', and decided they follow their individual movements.¹³⁷ Accordingly, he gave up the idea of a city *symphony* and decided to structure his film as a *suite*. The word *suite* (from French) literally means 'sequence'. In music, a *suite* is an instrumental composition consisting of a series of different pieces.¹³⁸ Reyes argues that by taking the form of a *suite* the film reimagines the same Cuban society as a *suite*:

[Contrary to the homogeneous structure of the symphony], the *suite* is powered by heterogeneous autonomy, that is, by the union of distinct parts which give form to a common feeling yet without renouncing their singularity. The purpose of such deflagration is to make visible a range of citizenships which hollows out the monolithic discourse about a supposed national identity, and rewrites it starting from different *forms of citizenship* arising from social transformations under way in the country.¹³⁹

As Reyes points out, the monolithic image of Cubanidad has been recently eroded by a penetration 'of the margins, of an inclusive and heterogeneous alterity'.¹⁴⁰ Accordingly, the city – and through the city the nation – is not represented as a coherent unity (symphony), but as a heterogeneous multiplicity of fluid identities (suite).

In conclusion, *Havana Suite* exploits the affective potential of the filmic medium to enhance sensorial identification, which enables the spectator to experience being Cuban at an intensive level. Desire is inscribed in the bodies as a seed of becoming, which, through the documentary speech-act, is at once planted in society. *Havana Suite* unfolds as an affective narrative interweaving synesthetic close-ups in sematic structures so as to transcend the dimension of the everyday to the dimension of the symbolic. As life in Havana (actualisation of a particular form of being) resounds of universal life (virtuality of Being), *being habanero* becomes metonymical not just for *being Cuban* but even for the universal *Being*. In this way, a picture of difference and multiplicity expands to recomprise the city, the nation and the world. Individual and national differences are thus recomprised and reconciled in an all-encompassing smooth space.

¹³⁷ Fernando Pérez in Daniel Díaz Torres, 'El cine es la diversidad: entrevista a Fernando Pérez', *Cine Cubano*, 20 (enero-mayo 2011), Online at <<http://www.cubacine.cult.cu/revistacinecubano/digital20/index.htm>>.

¹³⁸ Even for *Madrigal* (2007) Pérez takes inspiration from the music field, constructing the film according to the structure of the 'madrigal', that is, as a proliferation and intertwinement of different narrative voices.

¹³⁹ Reyes, *Contra el documento*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 68.

3.2.2 *They Exist* (2005): The Discourse about the Nation as a Discourse of Delirium

While *Havana Suite* deconstructs the image of the socialist community to reconstruct it as a human community, *They Exist* deconstructs the discourse about the nation and reconstructs it in the form of delirium. *They Exist* (Cuba, 2005) is a 22-min documentary made by Esteban Insausti with private funding and the symbolic support of the ICAIC.¹⁴¹ The people who *exist* are a few well known lunatics who regularly wander the streets of Havana. In the documentary, Insausti interviews them about life and politics in Cuba, intercutting their speeches with fragments of old newsreels celebrating the achievements of the Revolution. A critical tension is thus created between the teleological character of the socialist project and the present reality of insanity and delirium. Through the documentary speech-act, the crazy theories of these peculiar subjects enter the category of visibility and become a constitutive part of the national identity. In this way, the spectator can experience the delirious nature of being Cuban.

They Exist alternates the documentary *expository mode*, based on the narration in voice-over, and the *interactive mode*, based on the interview structure, to resolve them both in *delirium*. On the one hand, the voice-over of the newsreel speakers (expository mode) proclaims the wonderful future to come; on the other, the disjointed monologues of the lunatics (interactive mode) give us quite a different picture of the national present. As *Havana Suite*, even *They Exist* distances itself from the Revolutionary rhetoric to privilege personal thoughts and experiences. In *Havana Suite* the political crowd is confined to the little screen of the TV and subject to haptic visuality. In *They Exist*, the spokesmen of power speak from afar: from the past of the nation and of Cuban documentary filmmaking. On the contrary, the lunatics' monologues return a sense of immediacy and authenticity. While the truth of the newsreels is thoroughly constructed and conveyed, the lunatics, due to their mental condition, speak whatever crosses their minds in a confused and broken form. The composed narration of the ICAIC newsreels and the disjointed monologues of the crazy talking heads represent two ways of constructing the truth. As Bill Nichols argues, the expository mode emphasises the impression of objectivity 'by eliminating reference to the process by which knowledge is produced, organized and regulated'; in expository documentary the truth is pre-constructed and given in the form of 'transpersonal

¹⁴¹ *They Exist* was made with the financial support of the Spanish Embassy in Cuba, the Spanish Agency for the International Co-operation, Ingenio (Juan Carlos Cremata's production company) and the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba.

certainty'.¹⁴² On the other hand, interactive documentary represents a work in progress, the construction of knowledge as a contingent assemblage of partial and relative truths always open to debate.¹⁴³ Indeed, a passage from expository to enquiry mode is acknowledged in Latin American documentary of the 1960s, when a new conception of cinema as a socio-political tool was coming forth. As Chanan notices, 'the dissolution of the authoritative monologue of voice-over narration in favour of a dialogical juxtaposition of different speakers... allows the filmmaker to apply a dialectical, and hence highly politicised, interpretation of the subject matter'.¹⁴⁴ While the dialectical power of enquiry documentary usually rests on the authority of the interviewees, *They Exist* gives voice to unreliable witnesses and demonstrates its point by contradiction. The lunatics' interviews take the form of pseudo-monologues which proceed unleashed along visionary routes, without any superior authority ruling them, vouching for or warning against their veracity. The style in which these monologues are presented is as delirious as their content: decentred and tottering frames, continuous jump-cuts, flashing extra-diegetic inserts, colour variations, sound distortions and interferences. The spectator is thus doubly exposed to disorientation: through the identification with the interviewees, and through the formal treatment of the interviews. The distance between the newsreel clips and the lunatics' monologues represents the distance between the official discourse of power and the actual situation in Cuba. As a result of the juxtaposition, the exalted tone of the newsreel speakers sounds as crazy as the lunatics' mental lucubrations. Expository and interactive modes are thus – not dialectically resolved but – schizophrenically combined in a *delirious* mode, suited to reveal the delirious character of the Cuban experience of reality.

In critical theory as much as in our common imaginary, documentary is viewed as productive of knowledge and effects from the point of view of the real. Nichols describes documentary as a *discourse of sobriety (or reason)*, the serious counterpart of fiction: while fiction is a means of escapism and evasion, documentary is a means of information and intervention on the real.¹⁴⁵ Michael Renov argues that documentary is not just a vehicle of rational intentions, but also of unconscious drives and desires, which inform the process of filmmaking, are embedded in the text and arise in the act of fruition.¹⁴⁶ Hence, Renov re-elaborates Nichols' definition of documentary as *discourse of reason* (responding to a rational

¹⁴² Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concept in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 35.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Chanan, *The Politics of Documentary* (London: BFI, 2007), 195.

¹⁴⁵ Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 3-6.

¹⁴⁶ Michael Renov, 'Towards a Poetics of Documentary', in Michael Renov (ed.), *Theorizing Documentary* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), 12-36, 21-22.

will of transmitting and receiving knowledge), adding that documentary is always even a *discourse of delirium* (responding and appealing to unconscious thoughts and impulses).¹⁴⁷ In Deleuzian words, it could be said that *delirium is intensive*. Insofar as desire escapes the segmentarity of reason, it can be thought of as intensity. By pointing out the double nature of documentary, Renov indirectly reveals the double nature of the real: extensive and intensive. In its engagement with reality, documentary can privilege extensivities or intensities, reason or desire. While Cuban classical documentary unfolded as a discourse of reason returning a molar image of society, the new Cuban documentary tends to unfold as a discourse of desire returning a molecular image. The term 'delirium' is not to be taken literally – as it is easy to do thinking of *They Exist*. Delirium should rather be understood as the manifestation of the virtual nature of Being. It follows that, by taking the form of delirium, *They Exist* makes the spectator experience the virtualisation of being Cuban, that is, its becoming-minoritarian.

On a closer look, *They Exist* appears as a montage-piece constructed according to the aesthetics of contamination and pastiche. The lunatics' monologues are deconstructed and mixed together, submitted to various forms of interference and electronic manipulation, intercut with extra-diegetic images coming from national and foreign media. The style and tone of the documentary results clear from the opening sequence. After the credits, a photographic silhouette of man appears on a black background. As his head is chopped off his body, an intertitle sets the documentary question: '*Porque perdemos la cabeza?*' (Why do we lose our mind?). Then, a newsreel fragment introduces us to the Russian Exhibition of Art, Science and Culture held in Havana in 1960. The speaker praises the technological and scientific advance of the Soviet Union as an example for Cuba to follow. However, he cautions that this does not mean that Cuba also has to follow the 'political' example of the Soviet Union, that is, communism – which is exactly what is going to happen. The clip ends with the close-up of a screaming head against a black background. A statistical piece of data is then given: 'Between 20% and 30% of the world population suffers from some mental disturbance in the course of their life'. Whereupon, a first *loco* (lunatic) starts lecturing about how to resolve the economic crisis, to eventually complains about the quality of food at the local cafeteria:

LUNATIC A: The solution that I might have to end the Special Period is to seek all the collectible requirements of dollar and make agreements with all the other countries except Russia, unless Russia becomes Soviet Union again... Do you think that the Pelota [café in the Vedado district], all the things they give at the Pelota... There are days they are not good... they are stale... because

¹⁴⁷ Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 99-101.

*they are not putting enough ham, cheese and mayonnaise... and the croquettes don't look good...
This is not fair... This problem must be solved as soon as possible.*

The man is portrayed in close-up. As he speaks, he oscillates compulsively, continuously getting out of frame. His mental disorder is emphasised through recurring jump-cuts, variations in focus and depth, visual and sound interferences.

This formal pattern will be repeated for the other interviews, which are shakily shot, randomly cut, submitted to various interferences and intercut with footage about the progresses of industrial, farming and agricultural techniques, sugarcane harvests, political rallies, visits of foreign delegations to admire the national advancement, etc. Throughout the film, further statistics are given: it is reported that schizophrenia rose by 45% between 1985 and 2000, and that the national costs to deal with mental infirmity are in constant growth all over the world. Faithfully to the question set at the beginning, Insausti tells us why the '*locos enloquecieron*' (the nuts went nuts): Pedro went crazy when he was denied his visa, Juan when he left the country, Eduardo went crazy in war, Emanuel for too much solitude, Francisco for lack of love, Lazaro because all his friends left. Meanwhile, the lunatics' disjointed monologues intertwine in a disjointed way:

LUNATIC B: I would like to die here... go there, but here... because I'm Cuban... I have family in the United States, in Mexico...

LUNATIC C: I know Harlem, Bronx, Queens, Harlem... do you understand?... the central Park, which has all its provinces... the Canyon in Colorado, the Curve of Thailand, the Nicaragua Falls... This is all mine, but my Cuba is my Cuba...

LUNATIC A: Well, I have to love Cuba... but in truth I'm Spanish... There are Cubans who are anti-Cubans... who are not members of the Mafia, but they speak bad of Cuba... and this is not fair... this must be punished.

LUNATIC D: We started to develop... but we haven't finished because we are 'blocked' from a lot of parts... and this is damaging us...

LUNATIC C: It is a concern that you have every day... so we are alcoholics, we suffer from nerves, we go crazy... because thinking, and thinking, and thinking, I believe... my mum is a doctor at the CENIT [centre for mental health]... and I believe that psychology means to think a lot.

LUNATIC A: *We need to find an agreement among those who we can make agree... sort out the things that have to be sorted out... and then everything is going to be fine... I'm talking about sorting out... Forget about the world, the people... SOR-TING-OUT [SO-LU-CIO-NAR].*

LUNATIC A: *Sometimes one can make a mistake, but not all the times... One shouldn't do it again... I love you very much Fidel... and the Cuban people as well... and the Third World... I love you, I appreciate you and esteem you... And I love you, always... as if you were my father... because I love you more than a friend... like a father... It's all.*

LUNATIC E: *If in Cuba we are free... then what would we be like in the United States?*

LUNATIC A: *These chains have to be broken... so that the blockade can end and everything can get back to normal... like before... I wish that there wasn't the ration book anymore and everything was for the free market [por el libre mercado... mercado libre... libre mercado, mejor dicho].*

LUNATIC E: *Cuba already has an average of 375.000 shopping... We need another 400, 900 shopping... so that, altogether, Cuba can be a total capital... And then we would join – we join – together this land with the other land... which doesn't recognise this one... We join this one with the other... so it can be a large country like Japan, North America...*

As Ann Marie Stock notices, the lunatics' monologues suggest all a spectrum of identification with the revolutionary ideology: there are the Cubans who work and those who do not want to work; the Cubans who love their country and the anti-Cubans who speak badly of it; the Cubans who leave and those who stay.¹⁴⁸ We can also notice the penetration of some foreign words and ideas: somebody mentions the free market, someone else refers to Cuba (Havana?) as a *total capital* (supposedly meaning 'global') and uses the word 'shopping' (shops) instead of the Spanish equivalent *tiendas*. By juxtaposing the lunatics' monologues and the old newsreels about the development produced by the Revolution, Insausti allows them to mutually comment on each other. Has the Revolution produced national psychosis instead of national development? Or is this caused by the penetration of certain western ideas, such as those of free market, globalization (Cuba 'total' capital) and consumerism ('shopping')? These people talk about the relationships between Cuba and Russia, Cuba and the United States, the blockade, terrorism, international integration... From their words we grasp a feeling of separation – like if there was Cuba on one side and the rest of the world on the other – but also a desire of reunion

¹⁴⁸ Stock, *On Location in Cuba*, 211.

and reconciliation: 'to join this land with the other land' and make one, big country; to 'find an agreement', 'sort out' (poner de acuerdo, solucionar).

While waiting for the reconciliation between Cuba and the outer world to happen, the theme of madness functions as a linking thread between these two separate worlds, united by statistics about the population suffering from mental health problems. Insausti describes *They Exist* as an attempt to document and explain a present state of schizophrenia acknowledged not just in Cuba but worldwide:

They Exist is founded on the contradictions inherent to the system and tries to give reason to the majority of its absurdities, whose craziness does not only affect our Cuban reality, but the whole contemporary world, with its contradictions and chaotic existence... Through the filter of dementia and by means of an inquisitive logic, *They Exist* perhaps manages to give more coherent answers than those we receive every day. In the film there is no divorce between style and substance; to a good degree, this documentary is also a formal exercise – the form being stylistically adequate to the content –, an attempt to comprehend and grant voice to delirium by means or art.¹⁴⁹

Through its delirious form and content, *They Exist* represents the schizophrenic character of contemporary life in Cuba as well as in the wider world. While in *Havana Suite* mediation between the socialist and western worlds was achieved by stressing the shared, human nature of people belonging to different geopolitical contexts, here the common background is offered by madness. In a review emblematically entitled '*Existen: ¿Nación que es locura?*' (*They Exist: A Crazy Nation?*), Cuban critic Antonio José Ponte describes the lunatics' monologues as '*nómadas del pensamiento*' (nomads of thought) which permits to explore 'nationalism as lunacy and vice versa'.¹⁵⁰ Ponte uses the term *nómadas del pensamiento* in the same connotation in which Deleuze uses the term 'nomadic thought'.¹⁵¹ By taking the form of nomadic thought, *They Exist* constructs an intensive image of the nation, in which Cuba appears as becoming-minoritarian in a world also becoming-minoritarian.

They Exist could easily be considered offensive towards the government. After all, is not madness a dysfunction of the system? Does not the lunatic's declaration of love to Fidel ridicule his figure? Despite this, the film did not incur any censorship. The acceptance of *They Exist* is

¹⁴⁹ Esteban Insausti in Jorge L. Sánchez, *Romper la tensión del arco*, 352.

¹⁵⁰ Antonio José Ponte, '*Existen: ¿Nación que es locura?*', *Cubaencuentro* (Habana, 18/04/2006), Online at <<http://www.cubaencuentro.com/cultura/articulos/existen-nacion-que-es-locura-15315>>.

¹⁵¹ Deleuze, 'Nomadic Thought', in *Desert Islands*, 252–261. For the concept of *nomadism* please refer to paragraph 3.1.

possibly the best example to demonstrate the politics of reinclusion currently adopted by the Cuban government and highlighted throughout this essay. As the lunatics are left at large on the streets of Havana, somehow integrated with the 'sane' citizens, divergent (even crazy) opinions are now tolerated within the mainstream line of thought, which is resolved into a multiplicity of internal perspectives (folds).

3.3 Conclusion

It has been argued that Cuban documentary cinema of the post-Special period turns to affection-image to express and facilitate a historical process of change. As part of this new documentary trend, *Havana Suite* and *They Exist* raise *intensive images* of the nation, able to document internal flows of becoming.

Havana Suite and *They Exist* reinterpret the established forms of the city symphony and the talking-head documentary to re-envision Cubanidad as an open form: in one case this is done by converting the enclosing structure of the symphony into the open structure of the suite; in the other by entrusting the discourse about the nation to a group of lunatics who develop it in unexpected directions. *Havana Suite* relies on the potential of affection-image to make the spectator experience being Cuban at a molecular level, as a multiplicity of identities-in-becoming. *They Exist* depicts lunacy as an intensive quality inherent to the order of power, revealing the internal fluidity of the status quo. Through affects and delirium, *Havana Suite* and *They Exist* reimagine being Cuban as a prismatic multiplicity of becomings-Cuban. Stressing the intensive base of Cubanidad is also a way to highlight contact points between Cuba and the western world. *Havana Suite* re-envision the socialist community as a human community, where geopolitical difference virtually fades. *They Exist* draws a crazy picture of Cuba, in which socialist and capitalist ideas can mix regardless of contradictions. In this way, the socialist and capitalist worlds are blurred into one another, and Cuba is virtually reincluded in the wider world.

As much as Cuban fiction cinema of the post-Cold War period, the new Cuban documentary re-envision the nation as becoming-minoritarian, projecting ahead a multifaceted and transformative image of Cubanidad able to satisfy both the state's interests and the citizens' needs.

Conclusion

The New Cuban Revolutionary Cinema

The Deleuzian approach has allowed us to follow the evolution of Cubanidad in the variation of cinematic patterns of visibility. In particular, the shift of recent Cuban cinema towards *affection-* and *time-image* has been connected to a historical process of national revision, which began in the aftermath of the Cold War and still continues today.

Following the collapse of Soviet socialism, Cuba plunged into a deep economic and ideological crisis, which required national readjustment. In order to uplift the national economy, the government began a process of economic reforms and pursued new relationships with the outside world. Contemporaneously, Cuban national identity began to take on new traits and display internal contradictions deriving from a contamination of the socialist values with western models of thought. In this context, Cuban cinema started reimagining the nation in terms internal difference, multiplicity and flows of becoming. In this way, Cuban cinema could reinclude social drives of transformation within the hegemonic order of power and project externally the image of a more tolerant and democratic nation. Since the mid-1990s, Cuban mainstream cinema has been increasingly dependent on foreign capital and therefore reshaped to appeal to a wider audience. Meanwhile, an independent film production has also taken hold, benefiting from the spread and the low costs of the digital technologies. The cinematic image of Cuba is now in the hands of many actors, which fold and unfold it according to different interests and sensibilities. As a consequence of this changed historical and productive scenario, Cuban cinema is increasingly traversed by lines of flights, which project it into new territories where the national subject experiences new forms of being.

As the analysis has revealed, contemporary Cuban cinema tends to abandon the reassuring consequentiality of the movement-image and rethink the nation by means of the time-image. In doing so, it does not operate against but for the Revolution, reinterpreting it in terms of change and adapting it to changing times. The New Cuban Revolutionary cinema has given up the rhetoric tones of the past but not its social function. By raising *intensities* and *virtualities*, Cuban modern political cinema sets forth a new image of Cuba and Cuba's being-in-the-world, where internal contradictions and geopolitical diversities are resolved in the notion of multiplicity.

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