Cultural Mappings after 1989
ANEK BIRKENMAIER AND
ESTHER WHITFIELD, EDITORS

Duke University Press
Durham and London
2011
4. To “escape” in the street language of Havana in the 1990s is not so much to flee but to “resolve” problems in informal and often illegal ways, “inventing” ad hoc solutions, living from day to day, and generally “surviving” using every available resource. All these terms come to be associated during the Special Period with resourcefulness on the one hand, illegality, prostitution, and extensive trading back and forth on the black market on the other.

Made in Havana City:
Rap Music, Space, and Racial Politics
SUJATHA FERNANDES

"Niche niche"
that’s how the emcee is born.
For everyone here,
made in Havana City.
And you know how I am
I don’t believe in nuthin.’
—Magia, "Niche, Niche"

In her rap song “Niche Niche,” Cuban slang for black or dark skinned, Magia declares, “I am what my image shows, a black woman.” She raps, “Representing those women who dare to get out there / My skin is the color of night, it reveals secrets already known / To show that which is hidden is seen by all.” Through rap music, young black Cubans began to speak about race, breaking silences that had existed for several decades. Magia was part of a new breed of emcees, agnostic and irreverent, the voices of an urban culture that was—as the chorus to her song went—made in Havana City.

The emergence of rap music in Havana has opened a window into the complex relationship between racial identity, urban public space, and cultural politics in the contemporary post-Soviet era. Young black people in the marginal sectors of Havana were attracted by the street art of b-boys and (a hip-hop
dance style, sometimes known as breakdancing) during the 1980s. In the 1990s rap music, as another element of hip-hop culture, continued to provide a means of leisure, survival, and voice for young black Cubans as the city was being remade for global investors and foreign, mostly white, tourists. Whether through concerts or gatherings in open spaces of the city; in lyrics promoting the jineteros, or street hustlers who siphon off dollars from tourists; or through the promotion of a militant and visible black identity; rappers accessed and defined new relationships to public space.

“All the B-Boys Know That I’m Alexey of Regla”: Locating Rap

Growing up in the ’80s, Alexey Rodriguez, who forms the rap duo Obsesión with his wife Magia, was attracted by the raw energy and soul of the hip-hop music that came along the airwaves of 99 Jams FM. In a song called “Hip Hop,” a genealogy of Cuban hip-hop, Alexey describes how as a kid he would build antennas from wire coat hangers and dangle his radio out of the window, “crazy to get the 99.” On episodes of Soul Train that came through broadcasts from Miami television, Alexey saw b-boying for the first time, and he copied the steps and then showed them to the kids in the neighborhood.

Everything began as a kid, I struggled
with a piece of wire, a coat hanger, and a “radio”
stuck it all out the window, and there it was
crazy to get the 99.
I got Soul Train without static or nuthin’ . . .
I copied the steps and later in the barrio we beatboxed
And me like many others in Havana,
dancing and listening to American music, nuthin’ else.
My papa bought a tape recorder for me,
and my first cassette was Public Enemy.

Alexey remembered the ciphers in the park El Quijote. Kids would form a circle, “mulattos, whites, blacks,” and in the center the b-boys would polish the concrete with their back spines and windmills, while others broke into a beatbox or rhymed, “You had to live it, you had to see it, feel it, know it to describe it,” rapped Alexey. He recalled that time nostalgically as one when money and designer clothing were not the main thing. “If you had money, good, and if not, well brother, same thing the women in those times, they treated you normal it didn’t matter if your clothes were better or worse the love for the music was super-superior.” Black youth living in the poor barrios,
solares, and housing projects of Havana identified more with the sounds and beats being produced by young emcees and deejays in the Bronx than the sterile socialist realism of the Soviets.

This musical culture of hip-hop that gave young Cubans a means of diversion and a channel for their frustrations during the 1980s offered them a voice once Cuban society entered the Special Period of the 1990s. As Magia noted in an interview with me, “At the start doing rap was more a hobby than a necessity. It allowed us to play at being artists and deal with those difficult moments that can take you down other paths. But then it gave us the opportunity to overcome the sudden and deep crisis that hit us during the nineties.”

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the consequent decline in Soviet aid and export income caused a major crisis for the Cuban economy. Blackouts became a common part of life, people were unable to get to work because of lack of transport, and food was scarce. The Cuban government attempted to rebuild the Cuban economy through food policies promoting self-sufficiency, the reintroduction of wide-scale rationing, and the earning of hard currency through tourism. During this process of transition, black Cubans fared worse than white Cubans, as they were less likely to receive remittances from abroad, were generally excluded from working in the more lucrative sector of the tourist industry, and were faced with an increasingly visible and blatantly open racism. The urban terrain was stratified by a deepening inequality, but it was simultaneously the stage for the emergence of a new racial politics.

As a cultural form, rap music has been strongly identified with the city and urban spaces. Murray Forman (2002, xviii) argues that, “in the rhythm and lyrics, the city is an audible presence, explicitly cited and sonically sampled in the reproduction of the aural textures of the urban environment.” Local affiliations, such as the neighborhood or particular sites in the city such as a street, a park, or a housing project are repeatedly mentioned in songs and in the imagining of collective identities.

Rap music has also altered the sonic landscapes of the city. For the first five years of its evolution in Cuba, up until 1992, rap was produced and consumed within the specific social context of the local community or neighborhood. At parties people would play music from CDs that had been brought from the United States, or music recorded from Miami radio, and they would pass on recorded cassettes from hand to hand. There would be breakdancing competitions and people would rhyme in private houses, on the streets, or in parks. In the summer of 1992, the Asociación Hermanos Saíz (Brothers Saiz Organization, AHS), the youth cultural wing of the official mass organization of Cuban youth, Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (Union of Communist Youth,
Racial Consciousness and Urban Space

In May 2001 the annual music contest sponsored by the Cuban music industry was held in the beachside district of Playa. One of the last acts of the night, the group Hermanos de Causa came onto the stage. "Buenas noche, Playa" said Soandry. "We're Hermanos de Causa. We're from the barrio, from Alamar." A synthesized beat came into the background, overlaid with conga. After a four bar interlude, a sampled drum kit brought the rhythm, and Soandry began to rap. "I have a race that is dark and discriminated / I have a workday that demands and gives nothing / I have so many things but I can't even touch them / I have many resources that I cannot even step on / I have liberty between parentheses of iron / I have so many rights without benefits that I imprison myself / I have what I have without having what I had." The song borrows the title and format of a poem written in 1964 by celebrated Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén entitled Tengo (I have), where the poet lists the changes that the revolution has brought for blacks, highlighting the differences between the generations.

The performance illustrated the ways in which rap music has become a forum for articulating a set of concerns about racial inequality in the current period, linked to the projects of Alamar as symbolic of the failure of a set of modernist principles that have undergirded state socialism. As the city is being remade once again, this time in the interests of global investors and white tourists, new axes of marginality and exclusion are occurring, mostly along spatial lines. Investment is being channeled into those areas deemed to produce considerable returns, while others—those on the margins of the city and in working-class neighborhoods—are left to deteriorate. Like Hermanos de Causa say in their song "Tengo," "The years pass and the situation is the same / Time is not forgiving, just ask Havana / Now that it's on the world map, nobody gives a shit."

In the contemporary transformation of greater Havana, different groups are making claims over urban space. As Saskia Sassen (1998) has argued, the city itself becomes a strategic terrain for new conflicts and contradictions.
According to Sassen, global cities are increasingly becoming sites for the servicing and financing of capital. While Havana was also partially incorporated into a global capitalist world, during the 1990s it still retained a largely state-managed economy. The necessity of adopting market mechanisms in selected areas of the economy led to what has been called a "dual economy," described by Haroldo Dilla (2002, 61) as the segmentation of the economy into two spaces: a dynamic one linked to the world market and called upon to finance the second, which remained in crisis, ruled by central planning and generally concentrated on the internal market and traditional export activities. The dual economy led to the formation of a dual city, what some have referred to as a tourist apartheid.

During the 1990s the tourism sector expanded dramatically as the major source of foreign exchange income; production and distribution functions of state-owned enterprises were transferred to foreign business through the mixed firm; traditional export markets were recuperated; and the dollar was legalized, so that the Cuban economy functioned as a dual currency economy with both the peso and U.S. dollar (Gonzalez Gutierrez 1997, 8; Valdés 1997, 103). The hotels, streets, and beaches of the city were increasingly designed to cater to the pleasures and desires of white tourists, while working-class black residents of the city were policed and harasse for identification cards. Some thirty thousand Cubans from the east of the island, often referred to as palestinos, migrate illegally to Havana every year in search of work or income (Sarcapi, Segre, and Coyula 2002, 179). Policing of black residents is intended to root out these illegal migrants and also ensure that black youth are gainfully employed or studying and not "vagrants."

At the same time that the city is being reshaped to meet the demands of corporate capital and tourists, it is also facing a growing marginalized minoritv struggling for recognition and claiming their rights to the city (Sassen 1998). This contestation, argues Sassen, is being expressed through the new politics of culture and identity. Young black people in Havana have found a variety of forms for self-expression, from timba, to salsa, and most recently reggaeton, but it is rap music that has most strongly invoked an emergent racial consciousness as young people make claims on the city.

In their song, "Lágrimas Negras" (black tears), Hermanos de Caua question the invisibility of blacks in Cuban society. "Lágrimas Negras" is a famous Cuban song, which was created by the Matamoros Trio in the 1920s and has been performed by many other groups since. Hermanos de Caua sample the song, rapping with particular racial implications not present in the original song. The rappers point to the exclusion of blacks from the tourist industry, as Cuba's fastest growing source of hard currency, as well as their ongoing absence from television programming and cinema. When blacks do appear, it is in "secondary roles of last resort," or the "classic role of slave: faithful, submissive, or the typical thief without morals." Hermanos de Caua expose the absences and stereotypes of Afro-Cubans in the media, which is particularly ironic in a society that has claimed the end of racism.

In "A Veces," the group Anonimo Consejo connect the history of Cuban slaves with the situation of contemporary Afro-Cubans. The rapper begins with his geographical location, he identifies himself as "a Cuban from the east." He is lying in his "poor bed" thinking about slavery and the struggle of black people in his country when the similarities of the present situation occur to him:

You think it's not the same today,
an official tells me, "You can't go
there, much less leave this place."
In contrast they treat tourists differently,
people, is it possible that in my country
I don't count?

The rapper uses the critique of racial hierarchies in the past as a way of identifying contemporary racial issues such as police harassment of young black people and the preferential treatment given to tourists over Cubans by officials. He identifies himself as "the descendent of an African," as a cimarron desobediente, or a runaway slave, drawing his links to an ancestral past rooted in a history of slavery and oppression.

The critique of police harassment is strongly present within rap music, and it points to one of the sites of conflict that have emerged over the uses of public space, mostly the city's streets. Officials attempt to discipline and regulate the movements of young people, controlling where they can go, who they are with, and checking their identity cards to make sure that they are residents of the capital and not another province. Cliente Supremo challenge the futile practice of asking for identity cards, asking, "in reality what will become of me when my youth is gone? Will I have to be worried about my personal documents like you all? What ID? For what?" Los Paisanos also talk about police harassment of young black Cubans in their song "El Barco" (The boat) and the ways in which they are constantly questioned by the police and asked to produce an identity card. When the police threaten the rapper, he shouts "seremos como el Che" (we will be like Che). The rapper repeats this slogan, recited daily by children in daycare centers and schools, partly as a way of
invoking the youthful rebelliousness of the revolution’s founding martyr and partly as a way of inoculating himself against reprisal.

“Run for the City”: Black Youth Accessing the Tourist Mecca

“I was thinking of finding myself a foreigner / one that has a lot of money,” Magia began a rap skit between herself and Alexey, also known as el tipo este.

“Of course,” el tipo este interjected.

“I don’t care what he’s like / I just want someone who’ll resolve my problems,” continued Magia. “It’s a sacrifice but you get results / Love in these times that we live in is relative / I’m a young woman who has to secure her future, you get me? / I’m not the kind to look for work or nothin’ / I want to travel and help my family from abroad / My wedding has to be beautiful, like in the Hollywood movies.”

“Run for the city, a commentary,” they both chanted on the chorus, “Is it a jinetera, a bunch of crazies doing tourism, tell me where, chico?”

“I was thinking that an intellectual such as myself . . .,” el tipo este rapped in a pompous tone.

“Like you?” asked Magia.

“Shouldn’t be wasting time with these people / who don’t have a sufficient cultural level / to have a conversation that matches my social position / I don’t support this language everyone is using / ‘asere,’ ‘qué volá,’ you find it all over the place / you know, with these people of the solares.”

“Yo, yo, yo, I was thinking,” responded Magia, “All the hours I’ve studied haven’t served for nothin’ / whole mornings studying / I’m going to leave my career, papa / I’m very sorry, I won’t be an engineer / My girl just called, there’s a job in tourism / Tourism, papa / It’s cleaning floors, but who cares? / It’ll give me a few bucks and I can resolve some problems.”

“I was thinking, why don’t I / form a combo and start performing traditional music?” rapped el tipo este. “I’ll be part of the farándula [new elite] / I’ll play Son de la Loma, and Chan Chan.”

“And Guantanamera,” added Magia.

In their song “Run for the City,” Obsesión discuss the contradictions of Havana in the 1990s, where education is no longer a ticket to social mobility and professional qualifications are less remunerative than those who can hustle on the side or market themselves by performing traditional Cuban songs to metropolitan consumers. Obsesión are critical of this reality, and the song is a polemic against consumerist mentalities that have been emerging with increased access to a market economy and a condemnation of the desire of young people to find an “easy fix” rather than working hard.

By contrast, for other groups such as Orishas, hustling has been presented as a strategy to get by in the Special Period. In the song “Atrevido” (Daring) from the album A Lo Cubano (2000), Orishas tell the story of a couple who manage to take advantage of tourists as a way of bringing themselves out of rural poverty. Over an upbeat salsa dance track and heavy bass, the rapper describes the situation of the poor couple in the countryside:

Once upon a time a deprived couple
without money were thinking of a chronic
 tonic to live,
to leave the black mud in which they
drowned, plotting.

The couple leave the countryside and come to the city, where the husband, acting as a pimp, sets his wife up with a tourist, and she begins to work the tourist for money and gifts. The song parodies the clueless tourist, who thinks that he is the one taking advantage of the woman. The rapper portrays the woman as the agent and the tourist as her helpless victim. The song continues with the following chorus:

Everything that she asked for, the idiot paid out,
a pretty room in the Cohiba, the idiot paid out,
a dress for her, and a shirt for me, the idiot paid out,
if she wanted to go to the beach, the idiot paid out,
he was running out of money, but the idiot paid out,
to dance at a concert with Orishas, the idiot paid out.

In the song jineterismo is presented as a vacation for the woman who is taken to the beach, receives new clothes, and has a fancy room in the hotel Cohiba. The Orishas even write themselves into the song, saying that the woman gets the tourist to take her to an Orishas concert, but also suggesting that the Orishas are somehow themselves jineteros, producing suitably exotic music for an international market. The woman tricks the tourist into buying her new clothes and giving her money. She and her husband use the money for themselves. Finally the husband comes to take the jinetera from the hotel room, and on his way out they rob the tourist of all that he has. The song concludes with the victory of the couple who have come out of poverty, and it is the tourist who has lost out. Orishas celebrate jineterismo as a practice that
puts agency and control in the hands of the women and men who use it to rob tourists in order to support themselves. Jineterismo becomes a strategy by which to raise oneself up. For Orishas it is a practice that resists the objectifying intent of the tourist and turns his voyeuristic designs back on himself by making him an object of ridicule. In contrast to the traditional values of work and study put forward as a way of improving one's conditions, Orishas suggest that tricking and robbing tourists is a worthwhile means to rise from poverty.

The relative autonomy of commercial groups such as Orishas, that derives from being based outside of Cuba and funded by a transnational record label, allows them the scope to broach topics such as jineterismo that are threatening to the Cuban socialist government in several ways. The ability of jineteros to hustle for dollars from tourists challenges the regimes of labor discipline that the state seeks to impose. Through hustling, jineteros can bypass official avenues for earning an income. Jineterismo disrupts the attempts of the state to justify new forms of labor discipline related to Cuba's insertion into a global economy. As the Cuban state seeks to regulate foreign currency toward a centralized state bureaucracy, black and mulatto youth siphon off some of the dollars that have begun to enter Cuba, and they access the tourist mecca that Havana is becoming.

"537 Cuba": Hip-Hop and the Emergence of New Transnational Spaces

One of the main dynamics of Cuban culture in the 1990s was the opening of new transnational spaces of cultural production. Foreign artists and visitors have frequently attended and performed at Cuban rap concerts, and less frequently Cuban rappers have toured abroad in Canada, England, and Europe. In September 2001 there was one tour of New York City for three Cuban groups—Obesión, Raperos Crazzy de Alamar (RCA), and Anonimo Consejo. But the tightening of travel restrictions since April 2003 under George Bush made it more difficult for Cuban artists to obtain visas to come to the United States, and so these exchanges have since halted.

Since 2005 there has been a large exodus of Cuban rappers to different parts of the world. Orishas was the first to leave Cuba in 1999; they moved to Paris and signed with the record label EMI. In September 2001 Julio Cardenas from RCA stayed behind after the tour of New York City. Since then various other rappers have also emigrated from Cuba. Promoter Ariel Fernandez left Cuba in 2005 to live in New York City. The rap producer Pablo Herrera moved to Scotland. The three rappers from Las Krudas all left Cuba and reunited in Austin, Texas; DJ Leydis moved to San Francisco; Miki Flow from Explosión Suprema is in Washington DC; Randy Akosta from Los Paisanos is in Caracas; Janet from Instinto lives in the Canary Islands; and Jesse Saldrigas from Los Paisanos went to England. In the contemporary period it is possible to speak more broadly of a Cuban diasporic hip-hop given that there is a considerable amount of musical production taking place outside the geographical boundaries of the island.

The reasons for this mass migration of Cuban rappers are multiple. Some left for personal reasons, to follow a foreign spouse or partner, or because they needed to experience life outside of Cuba. Others felt that given the travel restrictions imposed by both the U.S. government and the Cuban government, it would be easier to have a base outside of the country where they could travel freely to perform and tour. The migration of Cuban rappers was part of a general trend of migration among Cubans. But there was also a sense that the hip-hop movement in Cuba had been incorporated and co-opted by the state, and that much of its vitality and energy had been sapped. Internal divisions and political differences within the hip-hop movement led to greater disunity, and rappers began to look to outside opportunities as a way of reaching broader audiences and continuing their art.

But given the strong connection between rap music and place—urban public space and the city—what value does Cuban rap have outside of this geographical space? Made in Havana, and made for habaneros, how can this music speak to a public that does not share its same context? How can Cuban rappers reconnect in the diaspora? It has been difficult for rappers, as new immigrants, to pursue their art, given the demands for everyday survival. They are often separated from their group members, making it necessary to reinvent themselves as solo artists or move into other fields. When Julio Cardenas moved to New York City in 2001, he experienced what many rappers after him were to encounter: without professional qualifications or credentials, without family in the States, he was forced to abandon his music and bus tables like many other immigrants in the city. Since then, he has moved into the area of hip-hop theater, and with a grant from an arts foundation he wrote and acted in a play called Represental. From his base in Helsinki, Randy Akosta was able to earn enough money from his tours in Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, the United States, and Canada to support himself. The Orishas have been the most commercially successful group, going platinum in several countries and winning a Grammy award. Las Krudas moved into a cooperative in Austin, where they earned their keep by participating in shared household and pro-
duction tasks, leaving them sufficient time as a group to write songs, rehearse, and tour.

Havana as a locus for memory and place still acts as a powerful imaginary in diasporic hip-hop. There is a certain nostalgia toward the city that is both a marketing tool to attract global audiences and a way for the rapper to anchor themselves in relation to an increasingly dispersed movement. This former aspect can be seen in the Orishas song “537 C.U.B.A.” on their album A Lo Cubano. The international code for dialing Cuba is 537.

Cayo Hueso, San Leopoldo
Buena Vista, Miramar
Alamar, La Victoria
Habana Vieja, Barrio Nuevo
Bejucal
Where are you my Rampa?
The son that sings, La Catedral
The Capitolio rises
as it hears these voices
23 y 12, Vedado, Paseo del Prado

The song lists the neighborhoods in Havana that have meaning to the rapper, “Cayo Hueso, San Leopoldo, Buena Vista, Miramar,” even listing certain streets and landmarks such as 23 y 12 in Vedado, Capitolio, and La Rampa. The list reads somewhat like a map of tourist sites in Havana, not unusual given Orishas’s adoption of a marketing strategy that seeks to sell a nostalgic vision of Cuba to foreigners. In 2002 Orishas followed up on the success of their first album with another album entitled Emigrante, which narrates their journey from Cuba to Europe.

The connections between Havana and other urban spaces can be seen in the play Representa!, written and performed by Julio Cardenas and the Chicano poet Paul Flores and directed by actor Danny Hoch. The play passes through three moments and distinct urban locales, as it explores the developing relationship between Cardenas and Flores and their differing investments in Havana. The first moment is in the year 1996. Flores is finishing up college and using his school loans to fund a trip to Cuba. He wants to see the country where his grandmother was born and reconnect to his Cuban roots. Cardenas has finished a degree in civil construction, but unable to find a job he is working with his grandfather in a nearby fishery. The actors stand side by side: Flores in his college dorm planning the trip, and Cardenas riding a camello bus, both of them speaking their thoughts aloud. Flores wants to see the Cuban hip-hop festival. Cardenas wants to perform in the hip-hop festival. Flores wants to dance salsa and drink Cuban rum. Cardenas wants to go to the Palacio de la Salsa and dance with a beautiful woman. Ironically, Flores, a minority in his own country, has access to certain privileges in Havana that are not available to marginalized youth such as Cardenas.

Their differential access to and experience of the city is dramatized in a scene where they are both walking through the streets of Havana. “Today I’m walking in Havana,” says Cardenas. “For the police, I’m just another jinetero. I can’t walk along La Rampa, or sit on a wall by the Malecón, because they stop me all the time,” Flores repeats after him. “Today I’m walking in Havana. People look at me like I represent the dough. I can’t shake the hustlers. If I want to smoke a cigar in the street, they want to sell me ten boxes” (Performance, Lehigh University, April 2008). Both feel besieged within the urban space of the city, yet while Cardenas is policed and his movements restricted by the authorities, Flores’s discomfort comes from the perception of him as a rich tourist, a position he is not used to occupying.

In the second moment of the play, during 2001, the geographical focus shifts to New York City. Flores wants to host a tour of Cuban rappers, including Cardenas, and show them his landmarks of the city, including the Nuyorican poets cafe, the “home of spoken word”; the graffiti hall of fame in Spanish Harlem; and marches in Union Square. But the tour, which takes place in September 2001, ends up being dominated by one prominent site, the World Trade Center. This site becomes the focus for a series of reflections over identity and belonging, American hegemonic power, and terrorism as a pretext for war. As a site that is discussed in New York, Havana, and countless places in the world, it is symbolic of the transnational nature of urban space and the meanings that certain landmarks generate even for those who do not reside within the same territory.

Cuban rap takes the spaces of the city, Havana, and its periphery, Alamar, as central to cultural production, the formation of identity, and the experience of racial inequality in the Special Period. Even as Cuban rap has moved into the diaspora, it has retained a notion of place as central to its concerns. As Cuba became a major tourist destination, questions of access to space and the exclusion and policing of black youth in the city became increasingly contested. Through b-boy battles in the park, concerts in open spaces, and, less frequently, graffiti, Cuban hip-hoppers reclaimed their rights within the city. In lyrics, rappers rhymed about hustling and robbing tourists as a means of siphoning off funds from the tourist industry for their own survival. As images of Havana piqued the nostalgia of metropolitan consumers, diasporic
rap groups played on that nostalgia in their own representations of the city. The spaces of the city, real and imaginary, have continued to provide the point of cohesion for an increasingly dispersed movement, as well as means of entry into a competitive global music industry. As Arjun Appadurai (1996) has argued, globalization has increasingly allowed the possibility for deterritorialized culture. At the same time, relocation presents new hierarchies and spaces that must be negotiated, but whether it will produce corresponding communities of resistance in the diaspora remains to be seen.

Note

1. In October 2004, Castro once again banned the circulation of the U.S. dollar in Cuba. The dollar has been substituted by the convertible peso, which is equivalent to the dollar but has no value outside of Cuba.

Urban Performance Pieces in Fragmented Form: A Reading of Pedro Juan Gutiérrez and Antonio José Ponte

CECELIA LAWLESS

Tell a story. This is what we do in life and especially in academia where we weave stories in and out of texts to prove certain theoretical arguments. In this case, I wish to address the intersection between literature and the sociocultural environment as understood through the textual experience of dwelling spaces and buildings, in particular the home.

*Trilogía sucia de La Habana (Dirty Havana Trilogy)* by Pedro Juan Gutiérrez (1998) and *Cuentos de todas partes del Imperio (Tales from the Cuban Empire)* by Antonio José Ponte (2000) will serve as a foundational base for my investigations and concerns regarding the making of home in Havana since the advent of the Special Period. *Home* here relies on both its phenomenological and physical connotations. That is to say, that many things—a meal, a song, a person—can represent home, not just four walls and a roof. As Edward C. Relph comments, "home is not just the house you happen to live in, it is not something that can be anywhere, that can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable center of significance" (1976, 39). As a tourist site of increasing economic exchange Havana is becoming a place of quotidian performance where the actual ordinary, everyday, or homey activities are overwhelmed and obscured.