

CHAPTER

8

True Love and Cunning Love

Negotiating Intimacy, Deception and Belonging in Touristic Cuba

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Introduction: ‘The Error of the Spy’

It was late into the night, as we were walking along the Malecón (Havana’s seaside promenade), when my friend Ernesto¹ and I came across Carlos, a fellow Afro-Cuban man. Like Ernesto, Carlos was also part of the loose ‘Rasta’² circle that used to hang around tourist places in Havana. I had first met Carlos a few years earlier, and this familiarity between us helped to create a convivial atmosphere as we began chatting about each other’s lives and what had happened since our last encounter. Carlos had just been released from prison, where he had spent a year for a minor offence, and was now preoccupied by the deterioration of his relationship with Ursula, the Swiss woman with whom he had been together, on and off, for about twelve years. While complaining about her intractable, bossy behaviour and all the other things he disliked in Ursula, Carlos’ engrossed talk also revealed that he was still somehow taken by this relationship. ‘You’re in love with her, aren’t you?’ provoked Ernesto, sensing where the key problem was. Leaving Carlos with an embarrassed smile, Ernesto started laughing at his own perspicacity. ‘You see, there it is – the error of the spy (*el error del espía*)!’³ That was Ernesto’s way of accounting for Carlos’ absorption in this story and his current predicament: by falling in

love with the tourist, he had lost control of the situation, of the objective he was after, which, the reasoning implied, was to get married and join Ursula in Switzerland. The error of the spy had been to get so emotionally involved in the relationship as to lose track of its ultimately instrumental goal. The logic at play here was that such relationships were to be informed by cunningness, by skilful and detached playing with emotions and love. In spite of his decade-old experience in dealing with tourists, Carlos had obviously failed to maintain such detachment, going a step too far, and therefore revealing a certain naïveté.

For Ernesto, however, this was just one way of seeing things, and it was with light-hearted amusement that he had hinted at Carlos' failure to play with love. Indeed, as he then elaborated, what was more reproachable for Ernesto was that Carlos was now letting go of his lover without doing anything to win her back, failing therefore not so much in cunningness, but in heeding the call of his feelings. Carlos told us how Ursula used to get mad at him for always hanging around with his Cuban friends, neglecting her, and using her money to party with other Cubans. For Ernesto, this showed that Carlos had been unable to compromise with his 'pride' (*orgullo*) and forgot to put love first. Such pride was typical of most Cuban men, said Ernesto. Led by peer pressure, people tended to show off girlfriends from abroad while taking advantage of them economically for the benefit of their friends. According to Ernesto, this sort of attitude was vain and ruinous, especially since it led to forgetting, as in Carlos' case, that love was more valuable than friendship, and that friends were coming and going, whereas a woman that had 'touched your heart' was there to stay. Ernesto presented us with an abstract reflection about love, encouraging Carlos to realize its essential value, and to forget how his friends might judge him if he did not follow the typical script of taking economic advantage of the rich tourist. '*Está en talla*' ('he has stature/wit'), was Carlos' way of acknowledging Ernesto's lesson, and of giving credit to his advice.

This insightful conversation, which left Carlos wondering about what to do next with Ursula, acts as an illustration of the competing moral worlds, subjectivities, and spheres of belonging that my research participants navigated and inhabited while enacting and making sense of relationships with tourists. Two opposing narratives tended to frame the way intimacy with foreigners was perceived and evaluated: narratives of love relationships (or true love) on the one hand, and narratives of instrumental relationships (or cunning love, based on interest) on the other. It is by understanding the moral, emotional and pragmatic demands to which these two interpretative frames responded, and by realizing their global circulation and diffusion, that I believe we can ultimately grasp their affordances and consequences, as well as the challenge of overcoming them.⁴

Cunning Love

We were driving together towards a popular disco in Havana, when Jan, a young Norwegian man in his thirties who had been visiting Cuba regularly for three consecutive years, started explaining to me about the ‘girls’ on the island, of which, according to him, there were three kinds:

The ones that you meet and ask you straightforward for money, say 40 dollars [US]. The ones with whom you make love, and only afterwards ask you for some money, for a taxi to get home. And the ones who don’t ask you anything, generally the most beautiful ones, and that when you come back to your country you can’t stop thinking about them, about their needs and poverty, and you keep writing to them, sending them money, 100, 200 dollars, while in the meanwhile they are here in Cuba enjoying their [Cuban] boyfriends, and fucking other tourists.

Jan’s cynical view, as he went on to explain, was informed by the negative experiences he had had with two Cuban girlfriends, one of whom was now carrying his child. According to his typology, both women had proven to be of the third and most deceptive kind. His relationships with them had led him to confront the challenges and complications of ‘falling in love’, as a foreigner, with Cubans. These ‘failed relationships’ had brought Jan ‘back to earth’, and made him realize the predominance of *jineterismo* as far as relationships between tourists and Cubans were concerned. From the Spanish word for ‘rider’ (*jinete*), in present-day Cuba *jineterismo* has become a contentious term that can potentially encompass ‘any dollar-generating activity or connections with foreigners’ (Fernandez 1999: 85). In the realm of tourism, *jineterismo* indicates the ‘riding of tourists’ for instrumental purposes, and tends to evoke notions of ‘tourist hustling’ and ‘prostitution’. Scholars have shown how ascriptions of *jineterismo* are often ambiguous, and bring issues of morality, nation, race, class and gender into play (e.g. Fernandez 1999; Berg 2004; Cabezas 2009; Daigle 2015; Simoni 2016a). Given also that an accusation of *jineterismo* could carry legal sanctions, any such categorizing could be fraught with controversy, making it extremely important to consider who was using this notion, in which context, and to what end (Simoni 2008).

From advice in guidebooks, to the tips exchanged by tourists in Cuba, narratives of deceitful relationships with Cubans and *jineterismo* have spread widely since the booming of tourism in the early 1990s (Simoni 2016a), warning tourists of the eminently instrumental character of these encounters from the locals’ point of view. One of the places where *jineterismo* and ‘cunning love’ were much talked about was Santa Maria beach, a place frequented by many heterosexual white men who came to Cuba year after year

with a desire for sexual adventures with Cuban women. ‘You must be crazy to fall in love with a Cuban girl’, was the frequent comment that circulated among these tourism ‘veterans’. Accordingly, newly arrived visitors who ‘fell in love’ with a Cuban partner could easily be scorned for their naïveté, and be derided as the ‘suckers’ who still fail to understand how such things work in Cuba. What was highly valued instead in this milieu, were the tales of deceptive countermoves at the expenses of *jineteros* and *jineteras* – narratives that highlighted the tourists’ own cunningness in coping with the ‘typical Cuban trickery’ (see Simoni 2014b). Such were the stories of tourists who had outwitted Cuban women and managed to have sex with them for as little economic investment as possible, or even ‘for free’, as some boasted. A well-known script advised tourists to feign love, to pretend one was totally taken by the relationship, and thus play with the mirage of a possible long-term engagement filled with potential economic advantage for the Cuban partner, perhaps even the promise of marriage and migration to the tourist’s country of residence. This, it was argued, could easily grant sexual access to a Cuban woman without giving money in return. Nor did this trick imply any sort of commitment, as the tourist could always withdraw or disappear whenever he liked.

Manuele, an Italian man who had been coming to Cuba since he was a teenager in the early 1990s, explicitly outlined such a scenario. Every time we met at Santa Maria beach, Manuele liked to gossip about his ongoing intimate adventures with Cuban women. That day, which was the last one of his ‘Cuban winter holidays’ (within a few hours he was due to take the plane back to Italy), he started telling me and some fellow Italian tourists that he had promised his current ‘girlfriend’ – a Cuban woman he had met a couple of weeks earlier – to bring her a TV and DVD player as presents the following evening. ‘But weren’t you leaving tonight?’ was my reaction. Manuele burst out in a laugh, before explaining that this was precisely why he had told the woman he would give her the gifts ‘tomorrow’. He was never going to do it, and would never see that woman again. She would never be able to track him down in Italy, anyway. He had spent a nice two weeks in her company, had had lots of sex, but that was it. He was not a ‘sucker’ who would fall in love or commit to a long-term relationship with a Cuban woman.⁵

As Manuele put it on other occasions, deploying a very cynical view of tourist–Cuban relationships in general, one had to rely on the ‘same weapons’ (*le stesse armi*) that Cubans used, and play according to their rules, which were, allegedly, the rules of trickery and deception. According to such reasoning, the two teams involved in the game remained forever anchored in their very own worlds and agendas, and it seemed ludicrous to think that they would one day share more than short-lived moments of sex

and intimacy. 'Their family is one and one only!' ('*La loro famiglia é una sola!*', with the Italian *famiglia* metonymically evoking here the Cuban nation more at large); 'You'll never be able to (fully) trust them!' Such were the kind of recipes that emerged in these moments of male tourist sociability and gossip in Santa Maria. No matter how long you stayed with a Cuban partner, you would always remain a foreigner to them, and they would never come to treat you as they did their fellow nationals. While the views of these experienced tourists were rather extreme and may be located at one end of a continuum of tourists' assessments of intimate relationships with Cuban people, my ethnography suggests that most tourists in Cuba, both women and men, were highly sceptical about the wisdom of getting entangled in any long-term relationship with a local. The spectre of possible deception, contrived emotions, interested love and marriage,⁶ and other instrumental machinations at their expense, was often lurking at the back of their minds.

These lines of reasoning were reifying a divide between Cubans' self-presentations to outsiders and their actual motivations and agendas, which were deemed ineluctably strategic. As I have argued elsewhere (Simoni 2013, 2014a, 2016a), this interpretive logic is extremely widespread in an increasingly globalizing field of tourism discourse and critique, and needs to be understood in relation with tourism's drive to reach into the most intimate realms of the places and lives that come onto its path, and with the tourists' preoccupation of being deceived by 'fake' touristic displays.⁷ Most tourists I met during fieldwork despised the idea of being cheated, and were constantly puzzled about the 'real' intentions and motivations of the Cubans interacting with them. Here is where narratives of *jineterismo* could act as a key interpretative resource to 'unmask' the locals' 'secret' motivations. In terms of social scientists' approaches, similar frames of legibility still retain much analytical purchase when assessing touristic encounters from a critical (-cum-cynical) perspective (Simoni 2014a). Such interpretive grids may appear all the more compelling, operative, and theoretically limitless when combined with a strong focus on structural inequalities, an emphasis on local resistances to global forces, and a conceptualization of the (liberal) individual that foregrounds economic agency. The risk here lies in adopting such a framework a priori (Fassin 2008), by 'romanticizing resistance' (Abu-Lughod 1990; Piot 2010) and overemphasizing the image of the cunning locals who, in spite of their subaltern position, are able to trick and deceive the structurally advantaged tourists – a category of people for whom academics have traditionally displayed little sympathy (see Crick 1995). Going a step further, I argue that we may be easily tempted by the notion that the disadvantaged inhabitants of tourism destinations in the South are not only able to take advantage of tourists, but that they should legitimately do so; and we – as critical researchers sensitive to domination

and ways of resisting it, and eager to highlight their economic agencies and rationalities – expect them to act this way.

This is a line of interpretation that I think we should refrain from deploying too swiftly, and one that may become even more tempting and self-evident – and its moral underpinnings therefore less likely to be reflexively acknowledged – in a Caribbean context where cunning responses to colonial domination have captured much anthropological attention (Browne 2004; Freeman 2007). The notion of disadvantaged people deploying subtle tactics and ‘economic guile’ to get by in unfavourable contexts of existence is indeed a long-standing one in anthropologies of the Caribbean region, where such features have been considered ‘to embody the most authentic in Caribbean culture’ (Wilson 1964, cited in Freeman 2007: 5). An interesting parallel may be drawn here with Cole’s assessment of recent scholarship on African intimacies, which tends to foreground ‘the instrumental, as opposed to the emotional, nature of intimate male–female relations ... either to highlight African agency despite difficult social and economic conditions or to illuminate the underlying logic behind seemingly promiscuous behaviour’ (Cole 2009: 111). The risk of putting too much emphasis on ‘the strategic nature of relationships’, argues Cole, lies in reproducing stereotypes that see Africans – and particularly African women – as ‘purely instrumental’ (ibid.), a risk that I see very much present in the Cuban case discussed here.

Thinking about the ‘romance of resistance’, it is also important to consider that in Cuba, the socialist government itself rests on a long tradition of nationalist rhetoric of resistance to colonial and imperialist powers. In this context, it becomes interesting to follow how the notion of *la lucha* (‘the struggle’) – one of the key terms of revolutionary symbolism – progressively turned in the 1990s into a common expression to indicate Cubans’ day-to-day struggle to get by (Palmié 2004: 241), to look for dollars ‘in the street’ (*en la calle*) (Berg 2004: 84; see also Stout 2007 and Bisogno 2010). In the generalized climate of crisis that characterized Cuba after the demise of its Soviet ally, Cuban people engaging informally with foreign tourists were able to inscribe their actions within the moral framework of *la lucha* (Bisogno 2010; Garcia 2010; Roland 2011). This is when *jineterismo*’s justificatory logic and moral footing could be brought to the fore. Grounded on the reification of a radical asymmetry of resources, *jineterismo* could embody among my research participants a just struggle, and be seen as a sort of redistributive tactic in an unequal world in which wealthy tourists visited poorer countries like Cuba. Indeed, and in line with what many believed the government was itself doing – ‘squeezing’ foreign visitors to bring in as much hard currency as possible – *jineterismo* could be portrayed as a rightful way to get a slice of the tourism cake, part of a nation’s cunning tactics

to siphon capitalist wealth. If some deception at the tourists' expense was involved, this could easily be justified by the Cubans I engaged with in the frame of an 'Us' (poor) Cubans vs. 'Them' (rich) tourists approach.

It is in relation to this moral frame of justification that Ernesto's reference to the 'error of the spy' should be understood. Indeed, in such moments of peer sociability, the instrumental idiom of *jineterismo* could easily take centre stage, encouraging people to assert their cold-heartedness in dealing with the rich foreigners. The remarks of Brennan (2004) on the normative expectations that exist among female sex workers in Sosúa, Dominican Republic, regarding ways of talking about love with foreign partners, provide an interesting point of comparison here: 'Positing love could make Sosúan sex workers appear foolish. No matter what they feel for their foreign boyfriends, these women have an incentive to portray themselves as not naïve enough to actually fall in love' (Brennan 2004: 96). In his article on transactional sex in Maputo (Mozambique), Groes-Green (2013) similarly shows the risks inherent in local women getting too emotionally involved and giving in to love with their white partners. According to this author, '[t]he most feared consequence of doing so would be to suddenly "forget themselves or their families"' (Groes-Green 2013: 113), a reasoning that draws attention to the wider importance that intimacies can acquire as key indicators of one's allegiance and belonging, in delineating and signalling the community one identifies with, feels part of and commits to.

The expectation of instrumentalizing tourists, and its 'taken for grantedness', had also become a target of Ernesto's criticism, as he warned Carlos of his vanity, and urged him not to be guided solely by concerns for his reputation and 'what friends might say'. Ernesto certainly had a point there, given that what tended to prevail when Cubans gossiped about their relationships with tourists were boastful stances and displays of one's cunning exploitation and instrumentalization of naive tourists. In a sense, the image taking shape in moments of peer sociability was that of a unified Cuban community taking rightful advantage of the privileged Other, embodied by the foreign tourist. Accordingly, tourists could be objectified and literally treated like *piezas* ('pieces') in a game geared at satisfying the interests and desires of the Cuban person involved, of their family and friends, and of the Cuban population at large.

Economic guile and cunning resourcefulness, which Wilson (1969) ascribed to the Caribbean prestige system of 'reputation', may be seen here as values embraced by my Cuban research participants. Following this author's insights, such values can be traced back to 'Caribbean work histories in which moral rights to self-reliance and autonomy, even if exercised in illicit ways, are widely accepted and highly prized achievements' (Browne 2009; see also Browne 2004 and Prentice 2009). The Cuban version of

Browne's 'creole economics' may thus be interpreted also as a way for my interlocutors 'to signal their valued membership' (Browne 2004: 196) to the world of Cuban *luchadores*, and to assert 'personal autonomy and cultural difference' from tourists – with the tourists, and perhaps to some extent also Cuba's formal officialdom, replacing in this case the French control in Browne's Martinique. Seen in this light, the instrumental narratives of *jineterismo* worked towards the maintenance of a clear dividing line between Cubans and tourists. They also drew on the assumption that the cunning intimacies Cubans were developing with tourists were ultimately economic in nature and geared at benefitting one's 'insider' community (that is, other Cuban people), and that such community was the realm where true intimacy was to be deployed.

By contextualizing the instrumentality of their relationships with tourists within an 'Us–Them' divide, Cubans could avoid restricting the measure of their worth to economic agency and morality alone, and could cultivate in parallel the image of virtuous Cuban subjects generously sharing with their community what had been gained from the touristic *lucha*. Often implicit, such assumptions about redistributing gains among fellow Cubans became visible when people talked about all the good things they had been (or would be) able to do with the tourists' resources, such as helping poor relatives living out in the countryside, buying new furniture and home appliances for their parents, and providing good food and clothing for their children.

The positing of the Cuban 'we' as one's primary sphere of allegiance and belonging was mirrored by the assertion, made by several of my tourist research participants, that the Cubans' family was and would always be one and only one: the Cuban nation (see above). For the tourist, this stance and the equally cunning responses it justified from their part could also help to delineate and safeguard their 'back home', the communities in which they spent their everyday life, as the ultimate place in which their ability to relate intimately with other people had to be judged. This way, their tricks to obtain 'cheap sex' with Cuban women could be presented as departing from their 'normal' moral ways of being, as exceptional modes of action that responded to an 'imperfect world' (Povinelli 2006: 198) of insurmountable North–South inequalities and *jineterismo* – a context in which any attempt to integrate the Cuban community was cast as a naive illusion at best (see Simoni 2014b).

The tourists' equation, when discussing issues of intimacy, of the Cuban family with the Cuban nation, and the related assumption that as far as Cubans' professions of love to a foreigner were concerned, none should be trusted, contributed to reify the Cuban 'we' frame of reference and the cleavage between 'Us' and 'Them' – the same divide that the narratives of *jineterismo* examined above also helped to sustain. As some tourists put it,

even in the event of marrying a Cuban, you could be sure on which side of the tourist–Cuban frontier your partner’s allegiance would remain: on the Cuban one. Hence the refrain I heard from an Italian man in Santa Maria, ‘*Moglie e buoi dei paesi tuoi!*’ (‘Wife and ox [should be] from your own land!’). Accordingly, as far as serious decisions like marriage were concerned, one had better choose someone from one’s own country. These considerations seem to support Fernandez’s argument, building on Povinelli (2002), that for modern states ‘[i]ntimate love is ... the foundation not merely of true families but also of true nations’ (Fernandez 2013: 4). We may also recall Stoler’s (1989) groundbreaking analysis of how intimacy in colonial cultures became a moral locus for defining the very notions of colonizer and colonized, which is a further reminder of the importance of moral investments of intimacy in establishing boundaries of belonging and exclusion, and in fixing cleavages between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.

We are thus confronted here with a kind of split and hierarchy between two realms – the ‘touristic contact zone’ and the ‘local/home environment’ – with precedence being implicitly given to the latter, made to act as the ‘normal’ realm of life, the context into which one belonged, in the sense of being and feeling part of a community and having a valued place in it. By way of contrast, the touristic contact zone became the exceptional realm of instrumental endeavours, of playful love and *la lucha*, in which cunning deployments of intimacy were justified as expressions of economic rationality. Contextualized in tourism, love’s instrumentality did not necessarily threaten one’s overall capacity for true love, and could help counter judgement as someone exclusively guided by self-interest, economic imperatives, and a desire for material wealth.⁸

True Love

In spite of the prevailing narratives of *jineterismo*, of reciprocal trickery and deception as ‘fair game’ in tourist–Cuban intimate relationships, and of the scornful attitudes of experienced visitors towards foreigners who ‘fell into the traps’ of Cubans’ cunning love, competing narratives also existed among the tourists I met in Cuba. After all, there were foreigners who engaged in long-term relationships and ended up marrying a Cuban partner. Even in the context of Santa Maria beach, which tended to be averse to any sort of romanticism, I heard foreign men ‘admitting’ to falling in love with a Cuban, and cherishing the notion that true love could be found on the island. In most such cases, the Cuban partner was presented as someone who had been met outside of the main tourism circuits, thanks to fortuitous and uncalculated encounters, and this was contrasted with the more

common scenario of encounters in highly tourist areas, bars and clubs, where *jineterismo*, hustling and prostitution were said to predominate.⁹

In the love story between Gianluca and Yara, however, their first encounter had not followed the more virtuous script. Gianluca was an Italian man in his mid-thirties on his first trip to Cuba; Yara, a Cuban woman in her early twenties, was from very humble origins and had recently migrated from Ciego de Ávila (one of Cuba's eastern provinces) to Havana in search of better livelihood opportunities. The two had only been together for a couple of weeks when I first met them. Their first encounter had been in one of the popular discos of Havana, which was widely known among tourists as the typical 'den' of *jineteras*. Gianluca was well aware of the warnings that circulated in Santa Maria about the dangers of getting too seriously involved with Cuban women. In a rather apologetic and self-mocking tone, and feeling he had to justify such a 'crazy' endeavour, he said he knew that this was 'the worst mistake one could make on a first visit to Cuba'. However, he also added that he did not care, as his feelings for Yara were so strong that he simply had to go with it. He sensed that their relationship could probably work out, and the two of them were already planning for his next visit to Cuba in a few months' time. Meanwhile, Gianluca would provide Yara with a mobile phone to communicate with him while he was in Italy, and would help her with the money she required to satisfy her everyday needs, so that she would not have to continue hustling in Havana to get by and to help her family back in Ciego de Ávila. In telling me this, Gianluca was aware that most other foreign men on the beach would frown upon such a naive and risky endeavour. As Giulio, one of the Italian veterans, said, 'It's like getting a brick on your head'. By this he meant Gianluca would certainly be left 'bleeding' and losing most of his economic resources to Yara, who was sure to capitalize on such reckless love. While I do not know how their story continued, what matters here is that Gianluca treasured his deep feelings for Yara, felt that such feelings were reciprocated, and strived to build a path that could help them to reach beyond the scenarios of a cunning and deceptive love.

Getting back to Cubans' claims and enactments of love, I would like to return to the example that opened this chapter. In his advice to Carlos, Ernesto had ultimately urged him to follow his heart and let love prevail over his reputational concerns about what his Cuban friends might say. The love to which he referred was not of the calculative cunning kind, but one that called for emotional involvement and abandonment. Seen from a *jineterismo*'s perspective, such loss of control would have been a mistake, *el error del espía*, but for Ernesto, the hierarchy of values that ought to guide one's life seemed rather clear: sentiment and love had to be prioritized. But what then about the notion, discussed above, that 'true sentiments' ought to be

reserved for the Cuban 'we', namely for one's Cuban family, friends and lovers? The problems with this scenario, for people like Ernesto, became apparent upon assessing the state of intimate relationships among Cubans, and the way these were being tainted by people's economic needs. 'Everyone is in need (*tiene necesidades*)', and needs 'deform everything', Ernesto told me. '*El amor ya no existe*' ('love does not exist anymore'), echoed Ernesto's friend Aurelio in the course of the same conversation. He was referring to the fact that Cuban women were nowadays *interesadas*, interested in what you had, in your money. As a result of this, it was impossible to have a 'normal' relationship with them. That was why Aurelio was more inclined to start a relationship with foreign women. 'European women are good; they only want love and sentiment. Cuban women have much wickedness (*maldad*)', he maintained.¹⁰ The two young Cubans were articulating here a very widespread critique, in contemporary Cuba, of the generalization and increasing predominance of *relaciones de interés* ('relations for interest', i.e. instrumentally motivated), as opposed to normal, 'real' relationships (Fosado 2005) and 'true love' (Stout 2014; Lundgren 2011).

But while actualizing the typical narrative of 'moral decline, evidenced by materialist interests in romantic relationships' (Fernandez 2013: 12), Ernesto and Aurelio were also quick to justify it, arguing that in the present climate of crisis it was normal for Cuban women to put economic considerations above love (Simoni 2015a). Rather than being simply seen as a sign of immorality, these women's behaviours were thus assessed as responding to another horizon of moral demands: the imperative of providing for oneself and for one's elder and younger kin, in line with the morality of economic responsibility and *la lucha* considered in the previous section. Discussing the issue further, Aurelio also clarified that it was the fault of the system (*es el sistema*) in Cuba that everything now was *por interés*. In so far as the Cuban context was judged responsible for 'deforming' how things should have 'normally' been, we are confronted here with a discourse of exception, a 'normative politics' (Povinelli 2006: 208) that did not tarnish the ideal of pure love, but simply displaced it elsewhere, in other places or other times. For Aurelio and Ernesto, such 'regulatory ideal' (*ibid.*) ought to inform people's practices under normal conditions, but since these conditions were now lacking in the Cuban milieu, the two of them were looking towards relationships with foreigners as a possible ground for its realization. Indeed, Ernesto and Aurelio aspired to something more than a life dominated by economic needs and responsibilities, and were hoping for emotional fulfilment in true love and intimacy – ideals that they valued highly. In contrast to the bleak prospects they projected on relationships with Cuban women, intimacy with foreign women appeared in this sense as the realm in which true love was still possible.

These reflections offer us a good vantage point from which to re-examine the issues of belonging that I addressed above when discussing the moral framework of *jinetismo* and tourists' cynical responses to it. Seen as a legitimate economic endeavour to access tourists' wealth for the benefit of a collective Cuban 'we' (often embodied in family and peers), *jinetismo* indicated an allegiance to Cuba as the place of belonging, the context where one's emotional and moral self could find their true expression, be actualized, and ultimately be recognized as worthy by fellow Cubans. In the interpretative frame deployed here by Ernesto and Aurelio, by way of contrast, people's fulfilment of their moral aspirations for love, and for emotionally gratifying relationships more generally, was outward-looking, oriented towards an outside world represented by tourism and tourists. Accordingly, encounters with tourists could help them materialize and inhabit a world that was in no state of exception – a world beyond economic hardship and its ensuing 'deformities', a world of 'normality'.

Criticizing Cuba as a dysfunctional place where 'normal' relationships could hardly be found, this cosmopolitan approach shifted the ideal grounds of belonging, and the related standards for assessing one's moral worth, from Cuba to the wider world, be it only on an aspirational and virtual level. Many among my Cuban interlocutors spent most of their days trying to interact with tourists, and it was also in relation to this foreign world that they would constantly measure each other – judging, comparing and deliberating on one's ability to understand and engage with foreigners on the same moral grounds, according to the same ideals of relationships. In some cases, the dissatisfaction expressed with everything Cuban, and the obsession with 'the abroad' and with moving abroad, prompted comments that a person was already – in terms of mind-set at least – more 'there' than 'here'.

A case in point was Raydel, an Afro-Cuban Rasta in his forties, who was often teased by his peers for his extravagant behaviour and his 'tourist-like' attitude. Raydel was in a long-term relationship with Rebecca, an Austrian woman with whom he had a child. He had spent the last few years trying to get all 'the papers' done so he could join the two in Austria, but the Cuban authorities had kept denying him the 'exit permit' (*permiso de salida*) needed to leave the county, so that when I last saw him in April 2013, to his disbelief he remained stuck in Cuba.¹¹ Among other things, Raydel liked to hang around the touristic areas of Havana with a camera, dressed like a *yuma* (as he put it, employing a popular term for 'foreigner'), and acting as such. Going around with him, his Cuban friends and I could not help noting, sometimes with a certain embarrassment, his conspicuous endeavours in taking pictures in a tourist fashion, filming other Cubans singing and dancing on the Malecón, or the occasional English sentences he addressed to

fellow countrymen, who were sometimes left puzzling about his actual origins. Raydel also liked to report on his open arguments and confrontations with the Cuban police, who regularly questioned him for being in the company of tourists, as well as with the owners and staff of bars and restaurants, who could discourage him from entering their premises. Being present on some of these occasions, I saw him argue for the recognition of his 'human rights' to be wherever he liked, and in the company of whomever he liked, and he supported his claims with reference to his Austrian visa and the fact that he was just about to leave Cuba for good. Raydel used to go around with his passport, a document associated with imminent travel, which few Cubans possessed, and which could create further frictions with police officers who asked for the usual ID card that every Cuban was expected to carry. 'They lost me already', he once told me referring to his breaking away from the Cuban 'system', suggesting that all his hopes, desires and aspirations were nowadays located somewhere else, out of Cuba. An imagined Europe was the place where Raydel – self-proclaimed 'citizen of the world' (*ciudadano del mundo*) – felt he belonged, and deserved to be.

Spending much of his everyday life in the company of foreign tourists, Raydel's talk was all about pure, sincere friendship and love, and about the value of sentiments. Explaining this to me, he insisted that he had never asked anyone for anything: all he had received from foreigners had always resulted from the free will of people who cared for and loved him. Such emphasis on sentiment as the key driver of relationships, and the ensuing (re)qualification of any material benefits as by-product, was grounded on the notion that it was simply normal for true lovers and friends to share everything without calculation, and seemed essential for people like Raydel, marking a clear difference with intimacies that were motivated by material interests, or even by a 'mix' of interest and sentiment.¹² In spite of never having been asked for anything, Rebecca had always been very generous with him. Thanks to that, Raydel had been able to improve the lives of his relatives living in the remote countryside from where he originally came, in one of Cuba's eastern provinces. As a result, he felt he had finally achieved what he had always dreamt of doing for his Cuban family. Praised as a generous benefactor in his home town, what he now wanted for himself was to move on with a life abroad, an abroad for which he felt he was perfectly prepared already, able to behave like other citizens of the world did. His way of relating with tourists and fellow Cubans, as described above, exemplified the cosmopolitan subjectivity he wished to assert.

Albeit rather extreme in this case, Raydel's outward-looking stance was far from exceptional among my Cuban research participants, and many were those who expressed similar desires and aspirations for a 'normal life' abroad, for setting up family and raising children with a foreign partner in

Europe. Such longing for ‘normalcy’¹³ was also signalled by the idioms of love and friendship people assumed would hold sway in normal conditions of existence (Simoni 2014c). Affirmations of true love and friendship indicated in this sense one’s ability to live in accordance with the same moral standards ascribed to tourists, and reclaimed the same kind of ‘emotional interiority’ (Faier 2007: 149).¹⁴ Following Povinelli (2002, 2006), we may argue that what was brought to life here was the ideal of an ‘autological subject’ freed from societal constraints, as opposed to its ‘mirror image’ (Povinelli 2006: 208) and ‘contrasting evil’ (ibid.: 199), a ‘genealogical society’ made of socially determined subjects.¹⁵ Subscribing to these ideals of a ‘normal’, true love, untarnished by material considerations, could thus be seen as a way for Cubans like Raydel to assert the aspiration to overcome the context of exceptionalism, of enduring crisis, scarcity and isolation associated with Cuba, and to claim ‘membership’ of a ‘global society’ (Ferguson 2006) from which many of my Cuban research participants felt excluded.¹⁶

When accounting for these assertions of true love or friendship to tourists, we may still argue that what we are dealing with are essentially discourses, ideals and aspirations that have little to do with how things actually take place in practice, and which can hardly be grounded in any contextualized ethnographic description of people’s everyday lives and actions.¹⁷ In deploying this kind of criticism, however, we should not forget ‘the enabling and animating aspects’ of people’s hopes and desires (Moore 2011: 25). According to Moore, it is this ‘ethical imagination’ – ‘[t]he forms and means ... through which individuals imagine relationships to themselves and to others’ (ibid.: 16) – that ultimately ‘links human agency to the forms of the possible’ (ibid.: 18). Recognizing the importance of ‘the aspirational character of our relations to others’ (ibid.: 10), and paying attention to our research participants’ interest ‘in creating new connections, new meanings, novel forms of relation’ (ibid.: 9), is a productive way to shift the focus of our analyses towards the future and its potentialities. Such a move seems all the more sensible, and analytically sound, when we find that our research participants are themselves clearly pushing in that direction, as was the case for Raydel, whose everyday life and behaviour was frequently informed by anticipations of his future abroad and by concrete examples of his proficiency in relating with such ‘Euro-otherness’ (Piot 2010: 169).¹⁸

Another element that is also important to consider at this point is that for many of my Cuban research participants, tourist girlfriends kept coming and going, their promises of return often left unfulfilled, so that fantasies of true love were frequently frustrated. Such ruptures and (heart)breaks could lead to further recalibrations of one’s sense of self and its relations to the tourist Other. In April 2013, spending more time with Ernesto one year after our first encounters and conversations (including those referenced above),

he told me that he was getting more and more *negativo* (negative) in his dealings with tourists. In the last year or so, he had received many blows, and had been very disappointed by how relationships in which he had invested a lot, emotionally, did not match up to their promises. A year earlier, Ernesto had insisted that his way of relating with tourists was grounded on ‘truth’ (*la verdad*) and ‘sentiments’ (*los sentimientos*), but now, even if he himself did not like it, he was getting more and more cynical and full of *maldad* (‘wickedness’). However, true love could still be on its way, he maintained, and so he kept a certain disposition to work positively on his feelings and give it all when a promising relationship was in sight.¹⁹

Such openness, we may argue, could in itself be a very demanding moral disposition to retain. It implied devoting a lot of energies and emotional commitments in what were often very transient intimate encounters with women one was never sure to ever see again. To evaluate whether a given relationship deserved such intense engagement, Ernesto strived to get a sense of how truthfully the tourist in question was ready to ‘surrender’ (*entregarse*) to love. He himself was always ready to do so – ‘when someone gives you love, you have to give love back’ he argued – but tended to back away if he felt there was no corresponding predisposition or response from his partner. The suffering one had to endure when love was not reciprocated, Ernesto told me, was hard to bear.²⁰ He was particularly disappointed by tourists who, having given in to incredibly intense relationships, upon leaving Cuba started to have doubts about the genuineness of his commitment. According to Ernesto, the tourists’ friends and peers, back home, with their warnings about Cubans’ wickedness, deceptiveness, and cunning professions of love, were responsible for cultivating these uncertainties, but so were his partners, for letting themselves be influenced by such insinuations, and for believing these people more than him. Those were tough situations to cope with for Ernesto, and a cause of much anger and frustration. He complained that when these women had been with him, they had unpacked together the phenomenon of *jinetismo*, and that he had been able to prove to them that he was not a *jinetero*, someone guided by *interés*. In a way – and reversing the more common assumptions on the matter – it was Ernesto here that was urging tourists to embody Povinelli’s autological subject: the autonomous self-determining protagonist of ‘intimate events’, immune to external societal constraints and determinations. His love acted as a moral demand to be loved in similarly unconditional ways, but tourists were failing him on this, showing their own weakness and lack of autonomy. What these last considerations suggest is also the importance of looking at people’s personal trajectories in order to understand the vicissitudes of their engagements with true love and its cunning Other.²¹

Conclusion

In spite of their different life trajectories, successes and failures in intimate engagements with tourists, Ernesto, Carlos and Raydel all seemed to share similar aspirations for true love with foreign women, a love that could eventually enable them to join their partners abroad. For them, love had progressively come to be associated with the outside world, a world to which they in many ways also strived to belong. For the moment, however, and notwithstanding the ascendancy of this virtual scenario on their everyday lives, they were still physically anchored in Cuba, with no immediate solution to actualize their prophetic visions. Socializing with their Cuban friends and peers, they were all equally well versed in the idiom of cunning love, and familiar with the world of *jineterismo* and *la lucha*, 'the struggle' on which they often also relied to get by and make a living. Their engagements along the terms of *la lucha*, and the deployment of its semantics and moral ways of being, also signalled their belonging to a shared Cuban 'we', and enabled them to embody the ideal of a competent Cuban subject skilfully coping with economic adversity, cunningly resisting unequal structural forces, and gaining its rightful – if too meagre – share of global wealth. Within this frame of legibility, and from this Cuban 'we' perspective, even when they explicitly behaved as *jineteros*, they could be seen as acting morally – a morality assessed in terms of worthiness as economic agents, and also grounded on the assumption that what was gained by deceiving the foreign Other would be put to the benefit of a community of Cuban friends and relatives.

If on the one hand this perspective justified Cubans' cunning deployments of love, on the other it made true love with a tourist potentially problematic – the 'error of the spy' – shedding doubts on one's ultimate allegiance (the tourist Other or the Cuban 'we'?). One may indeed argue that it was precisely the perceived transgressions of such cleavage, threatened by love relationships between tourists and Cubans, that prompted moral anxiety among the tourist and the Cuban populations.²² In other words, while it could be seen as acceptable to engage in hedonistic sexual pursuits in the exceptional spatio-temporal frame of a holiday for tourists, or to make money out of sexual interludes with foreigners for Cubans – what, in both cases, could amount to the cunning deployment of love – affirmations of true love and intimacy crossing the tourist-Cuban divide could be eyed with scepticism and suspicion by cynical peers, as well as by the tourist and Cuban communities at large, generating feelings of awkwardness and inadequacy among the protagonists involved. In such a view, predicated on the typically normative isomorphism between community, nation and belonging (see Gupta and Ferguson 1992), the proper place for

love was 'at home', and not in messy contact zones. Bringing this reflection to bear on yet another ramification of these cross-border intimacies, we may also consider that similar frames of legibility find forceful expressions in European public discourses and legal apparatuses patrolling the boundaries of 'proper' marriages – the so-called 'arranged', 'strategic', or 'sham' marriages controversy (see Fernandez 2013). We thus find a convergence of representations and moral assumptions operating at various levels and spheres ranging from Cuba to Europe, from tourism to migration, from institutional to public discourse – a convergence that needs to be critically unpacked and reflexively accounted for in our investigations.

But even if we were to follow, to their logical end result, these protectionists and often nation-bound readings of intimacy and belonging, we might still wonder about the hopes of fulfilling love 'at home' for the people with whom I had worked. To conclude with Ernesto, Carlos and Raydel, the three main protagonists of this chapter, it seemed clear for them that present-day Cuba was hardly the place where they felt they could realize the kind of 'intimate recognition' (Povinelli 2002: 234) to which they aspired. Instead, a good deal of their engaging in intimacy and delving into love was outward and future oriented, and had an abstract global community as its ultimate moral benchmark and site of belonging.

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NOTES

1. All personal names and some details in the examples presented in this chapter have been changed to protect the anonymity of research participants.
2. The people I got to know as Rasta in tourism milieus in Havana were mainly Afro-Cuban men adopting a subculture style that may summarily be characterized as valorizing blackness and Afro-related cultural expressions, sporting dreadlocks and Rastafari-inspired accessories and clothing, and privileging a laid-back approach to tourists. These people generally self-identified, and were seen by others, as Rasta. For a more comprehensive overview of the Rastafari movement in Cuba, see Hansing (2006).
3. The author has translated all direct quotes from research participants, when not already in English.
4. This chapter is based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork (mainly participant observation) carried out in Cuba between 2005 and 2016 in the tourist locations of Havana, the rural town of Viñales (about 200 km west of the capital), and the beach resort of Santa Maria (in Playas del Este, a thirty-minute drive east of Havana). The findings are not representative of the wide variety of tourist–Cuban interactions taking place in this country, and are mostly biased towards the experiences of disadvantaged Afro-Cuban men from humble origins engaging in intimate relationships with wealthier foreign women.
5. Elsewhere (Simoni 2016a), I examine ethnographic material showing how Cuban women themselves could well be aware of the risks and opportunities inherent in engaging in ambiguous sexual encounters in which the role of money and economic compensation remained unclear and non-explicit, as opposed to the more commoditized ‘sex for money’ transactions.
6. Recent work by García Moreno (2010), García Moreno and Pujadas Muñoz (2011), Berg (2011), and Roca (2013) on Cuban migration to Spain shows the widespread diffusion, in this country, of tourism-related stereotypes regarding Cuba and its people, and of the suspects of ‘arranged’ and ‘economically motivated’ marriages between Cubans and Spanish citizens. My own fieldwork in Cuba suggests that similar suspicions thrive in most tourist-sending countries, particularly in Italy.
7. Dean MacCannell (1973, 1976), one of the first theorists of modern tourism, made of such quest for the ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ Other the key tenet of his theorization. Drawing on Goffman’s front versus back distinction (1959), MacCannell maintained that modern tourists were longing to ‘enter the back regions of the places they visited’, regions ‘associated with intimacy of relations and authenticity of

- experiences' (MacCannell 1973: 589). For him, this quest was ultimately doomed to failure, given that 'tourist settings are arranged to produce the impression that a back region has been entered even when this is not the case' (ibid.). As shown by my ethnographic material, the basic tenets of MacCannell's conceptualization seem to have gained much popular recognition and, at least in destinations like Cuba, to have trickled down to inform the practices and interpretive frameworks of tourists.
8. In spite of the widespread acceptance of these lines of reasoning among my research participants, it is significant to note that the Cuban authorities' condemnations of *jineterismo* did not follow the same interpretation, and misrecognized any such moral underpinnings. As the studies of Berg (2004), Stout (2007), Garcia (2010) and Daigle (2015) have shown, official views of *jineterismo* do not see it as a justifiable economic endeavour, or a legitimate realm of *la lucha*, but rather as a sign of psychological weakness and moral degradation – a marker of self-harming and decadent selves (mis)guided by a lust for luxuries and capitalist consumption. To speculate further on such antagonistic moral judgments of *jineterismo*, we may draw on Povinelli's (2002, 2006) reflections on the 'intimate event', and the way it shapes modern selves and nations. Accordingly, we may argue that from the perspective of the Cuban authorities, *jineteros*'/-as' alleged inability to appropriately deploy intimacy posed a threat to the 'humanity' of the nation. In the light of her argument that 'to be human is to engage in practices of intimate recognition', Povinelli considers indeed how in the post-colony 'some people are foreclosed from entering the human realm in order that a nation can be made more human(e)' (Povinelli 2002: 234; see also Fernandez 2013).
 9. See Simoni 2016a for more on the different narratives of how encounters originated, and their relevance in the qualification of people and relationships as more or less strategic, instrumental and 'professionalized'. In narratives of Danish women and Cuban men who had married, Fernandez (2013) also draws attention to the importance of the unintentional nature of their first connection; this being a key element used to distinguish these relationships from the allegedly more widespread instrumental ones.
 10. The clearly gendered dimensions of these discourses would deserve more attention here. Drawing on recent ethnographic research in African contexts of economic decline on the gendered struggles 'over the balance between love, sex and money', Mains considers for instance how, '[a]t least in theory, an ideal of pure love supports young men's ability to engage in romantic relationships, despite their inability to offer economic support to their partners' (Mains 2013: 342). See Simoni (2015a) for a more thorough consideration of the entanglements between discourses of romantic love and masculinities in touristic Cuba.
 11. Cuba's new Migratory Law, which came to effect on 14 January 2013, abolished the requirement of this permit for Cubans to exit the country. When I saw Raydel in 2013, his friends had begun wondering what was he still doing in Cuba, now that this limitation was no longer in place: after years of complaining of being denied (*me denegaron*), people started speculating that there could be other reasons why Raydel was not leaving. On my visit to Havana in July 2014, I was happy to learn

that after a long bureaucratic struggle with the authorities, which according to his friends had brought him to the brink of madness, he had finally made it, and was living in Austria with his family.

12. Elsewhere (Simoni 2016a, 2016b) I address and explain the reasons for Cubans' potential resistance to what I call the 'hybridity move', referring to those interpretations that characterize their relationships with tourists as driven by a 'mix' of interest and sentiment.
13. A fruitful parallel may be drawn here with Patico's (2009) reflections on 'normalcy' when discussing how international matchmaking provides Russian women and American men with a way to seek normalcy in their personal lives. In relation to the Cuban context, in her research on *jineteras* and their discourses of love for foreign tourists, de Sousa e Santos similarly quotes one of her informants arguing that '[p]eople here want to have what is normal to have, simply what any person in the world can have [the 'world' here representing Western countries]' (de Sousa e Santos 2009: 422).
14. The recent anthropological literature on love and companionate marriage provides useful insights here, as it shows, for instance, how the ability to engage in 'romantic', 'selfless', 'pure' love becomes a marker of modernization, and of being an autonomous and self-determined subject (see, for instance, the chapters in Hirsch and Wardlow 2006, Padilla et al. 2007, and Cole and Thomas 2009, as well as the writings of Povinelli 2006, Faier 2007, Patico 2009, Hunter 2010 and Fernandez 2013, among others).
15. For Povinelli, 'autology' and 'genealogy' 'are two coexisting and intersecting forms of discipline that are constitutive of postcolonial governance' (Venkatesan et al. 2011: 225):

'Autology' refers to multiple discourses and practices which invoke the autonomous and self-determining subject, and which are therefore linked to, but not exhausted in, liberalism's emphasis on 'freedom' more narrowly conceived as a political philosophy. 'Genealogy', on the other hand, is taken to refer to discourses that stress social constraint and determination in processes of subject constitution, and construe the subject as bound by 'various kinds of inheritances'. (ibid.)

16. Drawing on Piot's (2010) theoretical insights on new cultural imaginaries taking shape in contemporary West Africa, such professions of true love and friendship may also be read as a way for Cubans to 'embrace the future, through acts of mimetic engagement with that which they desire' (Piot 2010: 10). In order to account, without condensation, for these mimetic endeavours, Piot urges us 'to fight the impulse to make theory adequate to political desire' (ibid.: 169), to resist 'the romance of resistance' (ibid.), and to be ready to 'measure "agency" through engagement with rather than rejection of Euro-otherness' (ibid.: 10), an engagement that people like Raydel were also keen on foregrounding.

17. See Simoni and Throop (2014) for a response to such critique in relation to recent literature in the anthropology of friendship and its calls to 'making friendship impure' (Coleman 2010).
18. A similarly productive path to rethink the relation between practices and ideals, the 'actual' and the 'virtual', has been recently proposed by Willerslev (Venkatesan et al. 2011) based on his research on love and the significance of ideals of love among Siberian Yukaghir hunters. Drawing on this author's work are also Zigon's remarks on love and the remaking of moral subjectivity, when he argues that '[a]s a motivating ethical demand ... love guides moral experience in ways that may not always be contained by the local' (Zigon 2013: 203).
19. Confronted with similar disillusionments, my friend Manuel, a young Cuban man from Viñales, reached the conclusion that the game was too unsettling for him, and that continuous investment in intimate relationships with tourists made for a 'crazy life' (*una vida loca*), offering no guarantee whatsoever that one would ultimately be able to find a true lover, settle down, and fulfil 'normal' family life aspirations.
20. An interesting parallel may be drawn again here with the work of Groes-Green (2013) on relations between local women and their white partners in Maputo (Mozambique), and these women's struggles to keep their emotions in check, so as to avoid becoming 'too emotionally dependent on the man', given the risk that 'the man might back out of the relationship' (ibid.: 113).
21. An interesting scenario to explore, in order to track people's love trails in the longer term and in relation to changing conditions of existence, is to follow relationships that originated in Cuba as they develop into marriages and migration to the tourists' country of residence, a path that I started to explore in relation to the case of Spain (Simoni 2015b). As Fernandez (2013) research on Cubans' marriage migration to Denmark seems to suggest, these may be contexts where the key drivers – both moral and pragmatic – for cunning love to exist are no longer there, and where more stable and unified subject formations may take shape.
22. Such anxiety seems to characterize the prevailing reaction of Cuban authorities to the phenomenon of *jineterismo* in Cuba, as suggested by Daigle's (2015) work. A high-level Cuban official interviewed by Daigle (2015, 166–174) goes as far as to maintain that 'no healthy relationship can exist between a Cuban woman and a foreign man' (Daigle 2015: 168) given the economic differences that exist between them. Interpreting such stances, Daigle detects 'nationalist fears of invasion and defilement by foreign influence' (2015: 173).

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