

### A Polyphonic Introduction

1. See Cámara: “Third Options: Beyond the Border” (1995).
2. The most complete study of Cuban women writers that has appeared to date is Catherine Davies, *A Place in the Sun? Women Writers in Twentieth-Century Cuba*. Other comprehensive studies are Susana Montero, *La narrativa femenina cubana, 1923–1958*; Nara Araújo, *El alfiler y la mariposa*; Mirta Yáñez’s book *Cubanas a capítulo* and her prologue to the anthology *Estatuas de sal*; as well as Luisa Campuzano’s essays “La mujer en la narrativa de la Revolución” and “Literatura de mujeres y cambio social,” and her introduction to the anthology *Open Your Eyes and Soar*, edited by Mary Berg. On Cuban women writing about Afro-Cuban matters, a significant contribution is Flora González Mandri’s book *Guarding Cultural Memory*. On Cuban-American female authors, Isabel Álvarez Borland has important remarks in *Cuban-American Literature in Exile: From Person to Persona*, as does Eliana Rivero in *Discursos desde la Diáspora*. Ileana Rodríguez, in *House/Garden/Nation*, and Adriana Méndez Rodenas, in her *Gender and Nationalism in Colonial Cuba*, offer an important theoretical shift in reading women and Nation. Jesús Barquet also examines this topic in *Escrituras poéticas de una nación*.
3. My use of the phrase “certain ways of reading” is, of course, in complicity with Antonio Benítez Rojo’s *La isla que se repite*. I am indebted to his insightful appropriation of postmodern theory where he works with metaphors to identify writers, epochs, and artistic movements in remapping “our” Caribbean culture.
4. In addition, at least two more tendencies are represented by the “moralizing zeal” of Domingo del Monte (1804–1853) and the “estheticism” of Enrique Piñeyro (1839–1911). On this subject, see another canonical text *La crítica literaria del siglo XIX* by Salvador Bueno, 1979.
5. The term Matria (or Motherland) is being used in feminist criticism. Some of the sources I am familiar with include Julia Kristeva, *Nations without Nationalism*, 41; Susan Gilbert, “From Patria to Matria: Elizabeth Browning’s Risorgimento,” 24; Ileana Fuentes, “De Patria a Matria” (unpublished paper); and Victoria Sendón de León, *Más allá de Ítaca*, 18. Lately I have found the

- concept cropping up in not necessarily feminist or academic sources, though always with the same usage: a redefinition of Patria (Fatherland). For example, Luis González y González, *Todo es historia* (México: Cal y arena, 1989), 228; María Elena Cruz Varela, *La hija de Cuba* (Barcelona: Ediciones mr, 2006), 15; and Chilean actress Malucha Pinto's speech about the new president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, January 15, 2006 (<http://www.lasegunda.com>, last accessed March 25, 2008).
6. See Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 157 (where *dispositif* is translated as deployment). The difficulties of translating and defining this Foucauldian term have been noted by Dreyfus and Rabinow, who proposed "apparatus" and "grid of intelligibility" as alternatives: "Although exactly what he [Foucault] means by this term has not been spelled out, the domain to which it points is relatively clear. *Dispositif* is distinguished from *epistem* primarily because it encompasses the non-discursive practices as well as the discursive ones. It is resolutely heterogeneous, including 'discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy, etc.'" (cited from Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*: 1980: 194, by Dreyfus and Rabinow: 121).
  7. I am borrowing the notion of *liberating* from Cixous ("Sorties": 91–96), the concept of *ordering* from Kristeva ("The Semiotic and the Symbolic," 2002: 36), and the concept of the *Law of the Father* from Irigaray (*El cuerpo a cuerpo con la madre*, 7–13). I have also considered Richard's definition: "It is in the tension between literature (as a framework of value references and a classificatory system that distributes text among genres) and writing (as productivity and expenditure; significant energy); it is between femininity as a difference that precedes the text (being a woman-author) and femininity as a strategy of symbolic/textual differentiation deployed through a set of codes, that the question of the specificity of the female aesthetic finds its alternative answers" ("De la literatura de mujeres a la textualidad femenina," 40). [Translations from Spanish-language sources are by David Frye, unless otherwise noted.]
  8. See my essay "Novelistas cubanas en exilio: Entre la memoria y la invención," in *La letra rebelde*, 103–123. A wider debate about the subject in relation to Jameson's concept of "National allegory" would require the careful consideration of the pertinence of including Cuba as a third world country, at the respective times that the texts discussed in my book were written, and so we do no more than introduce the matter.
  9. To paraphrase the title of Harold Bloom's well-known book *The Anxiety of Influence*.
  10. I believe that the famous aphorism "Le style est l'homme même" by the noted French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, in his "Discours sur le style" (*Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol. 1. Paris: Furne et cie., 1848, 30), synthesizes the theoretical positions that consider it indispensable to know a writer's life in order to judge his or her work. This line of thinking gave rise to Charles Mauron's "psychocriticism."
  11. Roman Jakobson, among others, has demonstrated how stylistic effects are above all functions of words. See his collection of essays *Language in Literature*.

12. I use *intertextuality* in Kristeva's sense, which she reworked from Bakhtin's term heteroglossia (*The Kristeva Reader*: 9, 446).
13. To characterize Rodríguez Acosta's battle and defeat one can paraphrase the well-known piece of advice by Audre Lorde, which served as the title for one of her most influential essays: "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House."
14. "La mystérie: this is how one might refer to what, within a still theological onto-logical perspective is called mystic language or discourse. . . . This is the only place in the history of the West in which woman speaks and acts so publicly" (Irigaray, "La mystérie" *Speculum*: 191–202).
15. Cixous talks of a "feminine *jouissance*" that comes from the level of the woman's body and her unconscious ("Sorties": 82). In the glossary, the translator stays that "on the phonic level, one can hear: *jouissance*: *j'ouis sens*: I hear meaning" (165). Valdes's prose in this novel offers the reader with the opportunity to realize this effect.
16. Identifying the nationalist discourses that these women writers are contesting, within the literary and, at times, the extra-literary field in which their texts were produced, would be the topic of a different study. I will briefly note some obvious contrasts that might be explored from this comparative perspective. The liberating treatment of female erotics in Valdés deserves to be placed in counterpoint with the sexist narratives of Cuban contemporary authors such as Manuel Cofiño (1936–1987) and Pedro Juan Gutiérrez (b. 1950), insofar as both writers focus exhaustively, but in very different ways, on women's sexuality. Taking Cofiño as a representative author of the "Socialist Realism" trend of the 1970s, the most dogmatic years for Cuban literature (see note 31), and Gutiérrez as the leading writer for what is now called in the 1990s, mostly in European circles, "dirty realism," it would be worthwhile to contrast their styles with Valdés's "playful realism." Cruz Varela's poetics of convocation, because of its dense metaphors as well as the political dissidence it serves, should be contrasted with the perspectives of the "Generation of the 1950s," mainly composed of men, who used a conversational style to proclaim their spontaneous commitment to the triumphant Revolution. I am thinking as examples as different as the poetry of Roberto Fernández Retamar (b. 1930) and José A. Baragaño (1932–1962). Nevertheless, we cannot imply a rhetorical limitation on the colloquial style, since the poems questioning the revolution by Heberto Padilla (1932–2000) will prove us wrong. The novelty of Cabrera's rewriting of anthropology would obviously be placed in greater relief if it were projected against the positivist legacy of Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969). But the boundary line between Rodríguez Acosta and patriarchal discourse is much more subtle and shifting; contrasting her voice with that of a particular male writer or journalist is not enough, since it ought to be compared also with all of the male voices that tried to block women's access to the vote, social motherhood, revisions of the divorce law, and equal inheritance rights for illegitimate children in Cuba's Constitutional Congress of the 1940s.
17. Nancy Chodorow is the author of an influential work "On the Reproduction of Mothering" in which she makes the following observation: "Mothers

- reproduce mothers, I argue, through the creation of asymmetrical personality characteristics in daughter and sons: the continuity of the mother-daughter relationship in the female psyche creates and constitutes women's maternal capacities" (501).
18. Though they did not fit within the structure and concept of this book, centering as it does on female discourses of the Matria, I would like to dedicate this note to some of the male voices from the same literary genre, and within the same epochs, who seem to me to be these women writers' fellow travelers in creating alternative discourses about the nation, albeit not always from feminist points of view. Thus, almost any of the novels of Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990) belongs with the parodic novels of Valdés; Raúl Rivero (b. 1945), with his latest books, *Firmado en La Habana* (1998) and *Orden de arresto* (2003), belongs with Cruz Varela in dissident poetry; Rómulo Lachatañeré, (1909–1951) particularly in his book *¡Oh mío, Yemaya!* (1938), ranks with Cabrera in unconventional ethnographic research; and Francisco Ichaso (1900–1962), with his book *En defensa del hombre* (1937) as well as his columns, deserves a place with Rodríguez Acosta in terms of civic journalism.
  19. Cited in Méndez Rodenas, "Mujer, Nación y Otrredad," 9. I am indebted to Adriana Méndez Rodenas for bringing to light Sarduy's observation on the condition of "*lejanía*" in the writing of Avellaneda.
  20. What Avellaneda wrote *upon returning* to Cuba is also noteworthy: her poem "La vuelta a la Patria (Saludo)" ("Return to the Patria [Greeting]"), which she presumably wrote after she returned to the island in 1859, remaining there until 1864. In this poem, the writer takes up again the importance of the voice as the vehicle for transmitting her feelings of love for her Matria. After opening the poem with the invocation "Pearl of the Sea," the same she had used in "Al partir," for the remainder of the poem Avellaneda develops an auditory metaphor in which her "greeting" reverberates throughout the island of Cuba, crossing its landscapes and reaching its inhabitants, just as the poet desires: "that the children of Cuba, wherever they be, / *might hear the voice* of this sister / returning to the mother's breast..." (1944: 79, emphasis added).
  21. For the antislavery theme in Avellaneda, see Doris Sommer, "Sab c'est moi," *Ficciones Fundacionales*, 157–183.
  22. For Avellaneda's journalism, see Evelyn Picón Garfield, "La revista femenina: dos momentos en su evolución cubana."
  23. Approach developed by Florinda Alzaga in *Avellaneda: Intensidad y vanguardia* (263).
  24. Suggested by Antón Arrufat in his prologue to Cuban edition of *Dos mujeres* (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 2000).
  25. "[E]ra mucho hombre." Quoted by Alzaga, *Avellaneda*, 291.
  26. These brave women were pioneers in combining political action and literary activity. Recent works by Yáñez (*Cubanas a capítulo*: 147–182) and Lazo (130–135) draw attention to their significant contributions.
  27. A comparative reading is being done by Stoner (87–107), and a parallel between Sabás Alomá and Rodríguez Acosta in particular is explored by Unruh (135–164).

28. On the critique of modernity by the literary discourse within the project of the Revolution, see Rafael Rojas, *Isla sin fin: Contribución a la crítica del nacionalismo cubano*. Rojas also includes Rodríguez Acosta in his insightful revision of counter-canon works in his latest “Gallery of Writing” in *Cuba, the Elusive Nation*. However, by basing his study on the modern paradigm that he critiques, he fails to identify possible forms of subversiveness found in feminist discourse. For example, I do not entirely agree when he asserts that “[t]o speak, today, of intellectual circles in Cuba, of a ‘lettered city,’ is to cling to a sterile fiction” (*Isla sin fin*, 216).
29. See Lezama Lima, *Imagen y posibilidad*, 129.
30. For further discussion of Garbalosa’s novels, see Fowler, “Kitsch feminista.”
31. *Quinquenio gris* was the phrase coined by Cuban critic and editor Ambrosio Fornet to define the sterility and dogmatism of the literature of the 1970s, in an article first published in 1987, and later republished in his book *Las máscaras del tiempo* (see pp. 56 and 62). For an update, see his recent lecture “El quinquenio gris: revisitando el término.” Given in Casa de las Américas, January 30, 2007 and reprinted in various Web sites, among others: “CubaNuestra.”
32. *Período Especial* (Special Period) is the term that the Cuban government used to define the economic and social crisis in Cuba after 1989, when the Soviet Union and the Socialist Eastern Bloc countries ended the country’s preferential trade status. As Pérez-Stable points out, this term also “signaled a commitment with Socialism against all odds” (*The Cuban Revolution*, 158).
33. The French verb *voler* has two meanings that can be distinguished only contextually: “to steal” and “to fly.” Cixous makes use of this play on words when she writes: “To fly/steal is woman’s gesture, to steal into language to make it fly” (“Sorties,” 96). I think that this phrase precisely captures Valdés’s attitude toward her appropriation of other writers’ styles.
34. Zambrano, “Lydia Cabrera,” 12.

## I The Feminist Discourse of Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta

1. The Lyceum was founded on December 1, 1928, thanks to the efforts of Berta de Arocena and René Méndez Capote. It later merged with Tennis, a young women’s club, and took the name Lyceum Lawn Tennis Club, with headquarters at Calzada and 8, El Vedado, Havana. According to Stoner, among the objectives of the Lyceum were: “To foment a collective spirit among women, to facilitate an interchange of ideas, and to generate beneficiary activities.” “The Lyceum favored votes for women, lobbied Congress, and funded feminist and socialist lectures in Havana” (74). Important figures who contributed to the Lyceum included Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta, Mariblanca Sabás Alomá, Ofelia Domínguez, Fernando Ortiz, Raúl Roa, and Carlos Márquez Sterling.

2. The movement that came to be known as the “Grupo Minorista” took shape between 1920 and 1923. It was composed of intellectuals of various stripes, mainly writers, all of whom were interested in shaking up Cuban culture while participating in public life with a critical attitude toward the Republican governments of Alfredo Zayas and Gerardo Machado. They creatively absorbed the trends of the Cuban Vanguardia, and in the literary realm were responsible for bringing back the essay as an important genre in Cuba. The group was declared dissolved in 1929 after heavy repression by the Machado dictatorship. Its members included, among others, Fernando Ortiz, Alejo Carpentier, Rubén Martínez Villena, Mariblanca Sabás Alomá, Emilio Roig de Leuchsering, Juan Marinello, María Villar Buceta, and Jorge Mañach. See Cairo, *El grupo Minorista*, for more information.
3. Mariblanca Sabás Alomá (Havana, 1901–1983), was a distinguished Cuban journalist, feminist activist, and author of the essays *Feminismo: cuestiones sociales—crítica literaria* (Havana: Hermes, 1930). For more information, see Unruh, *Performing Women and Modern Literacy Culture in Latin America*; Stoner, *From the House to the Streets*; and Montero, *La narrativa femenina cubana*. I am happy to see that feminist critics in Cuba have begun to reclaim her works; see María Elena Capó Ortega, “Mariblanca Sabás Alomá,” in *La Gaceta de Cuba* (2004) and González Pagés, *En busca de un espacio: Historia de mujeres en Cuba*.
4. Lynn K. Stoner and Susana Montero have each told me (e-mail correspondence, October 2002) that they based their respective accounts of Rodríguez Acosta’s place of death on oral sources. Stoner relied on informants in Miami; Montero, in Havana. Elena De Jongh, for her part, refers us to what appears to me to be the most-trustworthy source on this aspect of the writer’s life. (Her bibliographic citation reads: “Oscar Fernández de la Vega. ‘En recuerdo de Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta (1902–1975).’ New York: n.p., 1985.” In my bibliographic searches, I have found a pamphlet by the same author that contains the same quotation cited by De Jongh, but under the title “De Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta a Frank Vallhonrat, dos narradores excepcionales de entreguerras en Cuba: una carta reveladora hace 30 años.” Forest Hill, NY: n.p., 1985). The relevant quote is: “Professors, critics, historians, and journalists have excluded her (crass ignorance?!) from our chronicles and histories, removed as she was from our milieu in the last years of the Republic. She returns in 1953; she is isolated, deprived of the conditions she deserves.... She became a victim (moreover) of amnesia, and died in Santovenia on 28 June 1975” (Fernández de la Vega, “De Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta a Frank Vallhonrat,” 12, as cited in De Jongh, “Gender and Controversy,” 26).
5. I have not been able to locate any copies of *Espartana* in any U.S. library; nor is it described in Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo’s *A Survey of Cuban Revistas, 1902–1958* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1993). Stoner’s book informs us that Rodríguez Acosta founded and published this journal in 1927.
6. While looking for information on the works of Rodríguez Acosta, I was happy to find two references on Internet sites based in Cuba that highlight the writer’s work as a librarian. The Web site of the Asociación Cubana de Bibliotecarios mentions (but does not quote from) a paper entitled “Ofelia

Rodríguez Acosta: Vida y obra de una bibliotecaria,” by researcher Daimit Duque. The Web page entitled “Program de lectura,” published by the Asociación Provincial de Bibliotecas Públicas, mentions the “creation of a Chair in Library Studies in Artemisa named after Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta.” Artemisa is the name of the town in Pinar del Río where she was born. As I write these lines, it occurs to me that the name of her hometown honors her status as a thinking woman.

7. “Frente Único” was the coalition of movements united in opposition to Gerardo Machado in 1930, demanding his resignation. Rodríguez Acosta published “Frente Único” in *Bohemia* on December 28, 1930. There she stated: “The Frente Único is composed of all of Cuba.... Enough of despotism and of blood” (15). She also promoted the public homage to student Rafael Trejo, assassinated by a group of Machado’s thugs on September 30, 1930. The overwhelming participation of the public, and particularly of women, was a watershed moment in the struggle against Machado. Photos of Rodríguez Acosta at his funeral appear in *Bohemia*, 12/10/1930: 27.
8. Luisa Capetillo (1829–1922), Puerto Rican feminist whose thoughts, life, and works seem to have many points in common with Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta. A pioneering study of Capetillo is Julio Ramos, *Amor y Anarquía: los escritos de Luisa Capetillo*. I am grateful to professor César Delgado for calling to my attention this possible comparison.
9. At the conclusion of her survey, Rodríguez Acosta wrote: “One accusation, which implicitly and reactively calls for a contrary and affirmative value, can be gathered principally as the results of our survey, and this is: the lack of union among women.” The “cause” of this serious problem, according to the writer, was “our lack of, and by the same token our need for, discipline” (“Resumen,” 8/17/1930, unpaginated photocopy).
10. Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta would have agreed with Audre Lorde’s judgment: “Anger is loaded with information and energy” (“The Uses of Anger,” 372).
11. She defended the black race in her article, “La verdad en los libros”—“the black man is a human being with the same rights to life as the white man” (*Bohemia*, 2/5/1932: 13)—but she was critical of the mixed-race nature of Cuban identity, to the point that she once stated: “Let us embark on the difficult task of correcting our biological blemishes—marriage between the races, impurity of bloodlines, bastardy; let us cleanse ourselves of the ballast left by Spanish domination and the American interventions; let us establish the historically *criollo* responsibilities; let us weed out, burn, and eradicate everything that is here now so that we can then build on this base an entirely national culture and economy” (“Cultura y Economía,” 2/21/1932: 13).
12. Quoted by Nina Menéndez (“Garzonas y feministas cubanas,” 258), who cites as the source of this quotation Sabás Alomá’s book *Feminismo, cuestiones sociales-crítica literaria* (Havana: Editorial Hermes, 1930, 98).
13. *Garzonismo* became a popular code word for lesbianism in Cuba after the publication of a Spanish translation of Victor Magueritte’s novel *La Garçonne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1922), which had a strong impact with its concepts of free love and female sexuality. The female protagonist of the novel includes, among her affairs, intimate contact with other women.

14. In an interview titled “Si ves el Monte de Venus,” published in the May 2002 edition of the online journal *La Jiribilla*, Mercedes Santos Moray tells Rafael Grillo: “I have to tell you that in Cuba, though they have been silenced, there have been brave women writers, such as Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta, who wrote a novel, *La vida manda*, published in the late 1920s—but in Madrid; it is still unpublished here [in Cuba]” ([http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2002/n52\\_mayo/1328\\_52.html](http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2002/n52_mayo/1328_52.html), last accessed March 25, 2008).
15. Gerardo Marañón (Madrid, 1887–1960) was a doctor, writer, historian, moralist, deemed one of the most prominent public intellectuals of early twentieth-century Spain. Marañón gained international fame for his work in endocrinology, in which he was a full professor at the University of Madrid. He considered himself a practitioner of “personalist and humanist” medicine, and was a pioneer in joining the studies of psychology and endocrinology. He became interested in eugenics and published an essay titled “Amor, convivencia y eugenesia” in 1931. His book *Estudios de fisiopatología sexual* circulated widely in Latin America in the 1930s and was influential in the “scientific” discourse on female sexuality that spread in Cuba. Nevertheless, his theories were harshly criticized by both Rodríguez Acosta and Mariblanca Sabás Alomá. See Rodríguez Acosta’s article “Hacia la cumbre” and Sabás Alomá, *Feminismo*, 47.
16. For recent histories that examine the eugenics movement from a feminist perspective, see Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), and Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
17. According to Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo, *Grafos* was “launched by María Readelat de Fontanills and Ramon Guirao in 1933, publication continued until the January–August 1946 issue. *Grafos* became a lively publication of interest to intellectuals as well as those interested in women’s fashions and interior decoration. *Grafos* also became an important vehicle for women’s causes.” *A Survey of Cuban Revistas 1902–1958*, 36.
18. Antonio Guiteras (Philadelphia, 1906–Matanzas, 1935) became well known at the University of Havana for organizing student strikes. He later became the secretary of the Interior, Navy, and War under the so-called Hundred Days Government (September 1933–January 1934), a post at which he adopted populist and anti-imperialist measures. He also founded and led “Young Cuba” (*La joven Cuba*), a political organization. His unwelcome criticisms of government corruption led to his assassination in 1935.
19. Compare Rodríguez Acosta’s views on Martí’s death with those of María Zambrano, which she expressed in an article written in 1953: “Se había vencido a sí mismo [Martí]—que tal cosa es sacrificarse—. Nacido poeta tuvo que ser hombre de acción. Y toda acción es de por sí violenta” ([Martí] had defeated himself—that’s what self-sacrifice means. The born poet had to become a man of action. And all action is, in and of itself, violent.) (“Martí, camino de su muerte,” *La Cuba secreta y otros ensayos*, 143).



20. After selecting this story as representative of all the ones Rodríguez Acosta wrote in 1957, the year she published her book *Algunos cuentos (de ayer y de hoy)*, I discovered that Vicky Unruh (p. 154, note 34) uses a different story that Rodríguez Acosta published in 1929 under an identical title as an example of an influential *vanguardista* work. I find it significant that the author chose the same title to refer, in 1929, to the “agony” of an artist, and in 1957, to the “agony” of a living thing in nature, a tree.
21. In 1958 Dulce María Loynaz published her book of poems *Últimos días de una casa* in Madrid; it also is marked by an identification of the lyrical first person with an inanimate object, the house.
22. The phrase is from the title of Josefina Ludmer’s influential study of the means of rebellion used by the nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, “Las tretas del débil”: “Accepting the private sphere as the proper range for women’s speech...but at the same time, by constituting this sphere as a zone of science and literature, rejecting from it the sexual division...from her assigned and accepted place, not only was the meaning of that place changed, but also the very meaning of what was established within it” (55).
23. According to Foucault, this function applies neither to the writer nor to the fictional narrator, but instead precisely to the division and distance between those two; he thus approaches antibiographism and the idea of the multivocality of the text. A constructor of discursivity—for example, Freud and Marx, for Foucault—differs from the author of a novel. (“What Is an author?” 124–127).

## 2 Lydia Cabrera

1. Collector and editor María Teresa de Rojas (Havana, 1902–Miami, 1987) was Lydia Cabrera’s companion in life and work for more than 50 years.
2. Cuban culture has always been transnational, from the moment Havana first became the port of entry for the ships of the Spanish fleet. Its transcultural nature was heightened by the Cuban diaspora during the nineteenth-century wars of independence. It grew further under the republic (1902–1959), with the boom in international tourism to Havana, the exportation of Cuban artists to Latin America and the United States, and the presence in Cuba of artistic monopolies from those same countries, especially film and television. During the revolutionary period, a whole series of important ties were established with the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe, leading a significant number of young Cubans to move to those countries for work. Since 1959, there has also been an important community of Cubans living in the United States as exiles or political refugees, and exercising a critical influence on the island’s culture and economy. On the other hand, the diaspora of Cuban intellectuals and professionals has no boundaries, which means that the lines between “inside” and “outside” are constantly shifting.
3. One of most significant quotes defining heteroglossia en Mikhail Bakhtin’s own words reads: “Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, *inserted genres*, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional

- unities with whose help heteroglossia [*raznorechie*] can enter the novel, each of them permits a *multiplicity of social voices* and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships between utterances (always more or less dialogized)” (Bakhtin 1993: 263; emphasis is mine).
4. On the Cuban avant-garde, see Martínez, “Lo Blanco-Criollo as lo Cubano”; Cairo, *El grupo Minorista y su tiempo*; Ripoll, *La generación del 23 en Cuba*; and Chiampi, “La revista *Orígenes* ante la crisis de la modernidad en la América Latina.”
  5. Cabrera’s comments on Cuban leaders were not always cordial, however, as Isabel Castellanos confirms in her excellent anthology of Cabrera’s previously unknown or unpublished writings, *Páginas sueltas*: “From the beginning, Lydia used her column to lash out against an officialdom that was indifferent to culture and letters” (1994: 21). Castellanos refers here to the columns that Cabrera, still an adolescent, published between 1913 and 1916 in her father’s magazine, *Cuba y América*, under the pen-name “Nena en sociedad” (“Girl in Society”).
  6. Montenegro, “Lydia Cabrera”; Sánchez Boudy, “Algunos aspectos de Cuentos negros de Lydia Cabrera”; Valdés Cruz, “El realismo mágico en los cuentos de Lydia Cabrera”; Inclán, *En torno a “Itinerarios del Insomnio: Trinidad de Cuba”*; and Figueroa, “Prólogo,” among others.
  7. “In the year 1942, Lydia and Lam were working on precisely the same theme, the magic of the *monte* [the brush or wilderness], the sacred territory of orishas and *duendes* [imps]. She described this theme in the pages of what would become her ethnographic treatise, while he captured it on canvas and on paper” (1994: 47–48). Their friendship was broken by ideological differences, for Lam joined the Revolution while Cabrera went into exile. About this circumstance Castellanos writes: “When he was sick, in 1982, a few months before he died, Lam decided to bid Lydia farewell. He sent to her a sketch, drawn with a shaking line, in charcoal, of a bird-woman holding an Elegua in her hand. At the bottom, he wrote: ‘To my friend Lydia Cabrera, Paris, 9–1982, Wifredo Lam’” (50).
  8. “In 1943, Cabrera and Lam collaborated on the Spanish edition of Aimé Césaire’s poem, ‘Retorno al país natal’ [Return to the Native Land]” (I. Castellanos, 45). This poem is one of the key works in Caribbean post-colonial literature. Cabrera did the translation, Lam illustrated the cover.
  9. I invite future scholars to view Cabrera’s writing in the context of contemporary Caribbean literature, while pointing out its unique characteristics in content and form. Here I simply note that two writers come to mind whose works are fundamentally akin to Cabrera’s in the way they link country, childhood, and the black race: the poetry of Aimé Césaire and the novels of Maryse Condé. It is only within a comparative context, and one that goes beyond the bounds of literature, that we can fully appreciate Cabrera’s contribution to the formation/conservation of a transnational and multicultural Cuban identity, both in the works she wrote before and after her exile.
  10. Teresa de la Parra (Paris, 1889–Madrid, 1936): Her family moved to Venezuela when she was two years old. She was the author of many novels, including *Ifigenia: Memorias de una señorita que escribió porque se fastidiaba* and

*Memorias de Mamá Blanca*. According to Molloy, she had a powerful relationship with Cabrera. In a work in progress, I am developing the idea that *Cuentos negros* (Folktales of black Cubans) are what I called “play-texts” that conserve in their composition the ancestral function of the Yoruba *patakís*, of entertaining through orality. They were created by Cabrera, in the context above explained, as a gift of love-friendship for de La Parra.

11. Jorge Castellanos (112–152) provides a succinct analysis of the evolution of Fernando Ortiz’s thinking; he criticizes the limited vision of *Los negros brujos* (1906), in which Ortiz speaks of the “psychic primitiveness of the black race” (quoted, 115) under the influence of what Castellanos terms “Lombrosian atavism.”
12. “To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability” (Sontag, *On Photography*, 15). Susan Sontag’s words allow us to appreciate better the importance of photography in Cabrera’s ethnographic work. Good friends and colleagues supported Cabrera in this endeavor. In the prologue to *El monte*, Josefina Tarafa, J. de Dobrognny, Teresa de la Parra, and María Teresa de Rojas are given credit for the photographs included in the book. The famous Africanist Pierre Verger also collaborated with Cabrera to produce the beautiful book *Cuba: 196 photographies de Pierre Verger* (Paris: P. Hartman, 1958). Hiriart (*Lydia Cabrera*, 87) gives Verger credit for the photographs in *La laguna sagrada* as well, but Josefina Tarafa’s name appears in the front page of the editions as the photographer whose incredible images make this book unique. Tarafa is also to be thanked for the recordings of the ritual chants and drum beats used to honor the orishas around the town of Pedro Betancourt in the province of Mantanzas. These songs have been released by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings under the title *Havana & Matanzas, Cuba, ca. 1957: Batá, Bembé, and Palo songs from the historic recordings of Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa* (2003).
13. On the subject of testimony in Latin American literature, see Barnet, “La novela-testimonio”; Beverley, *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions*; Sklodowska, *Testimonio hispanoamericano*. For placing Cabrera’s writing in the genre of testimonial literature, see Rodríguez-Mangual and González Mandri. I am interested in the comparisons that would be possible in a side-by-side study of Cabrera’s writings on blacks and those of Rosario Castellanos on Indians. Their works, which existed on the border between ethnography and fiction, were pioneering efforts at opening up the space of *testimonio* as a literature on, and of, the Latin American Other. For another interesting comparative point of view on Cabrera’s works see Lynda Hoffman-Jeep. “Creating Ethnography: Zora Neale Hurston and Lydia Cabrera.” *African American Review* 39 (2005): 337–54.
14. In response to Hiriart’s question, “In terms of religion, where does Lydia Cabrera stand?” she replied: “In Christianity, I think. The figure of Christ attracts me powerfully” (173).
15. Although I know that Cabrera would have been irritated by any attempt to pigeonhole her in some ideology or tendency, I am aware of few women writers who were so obviously conscious of the special strength that resides

- in the feminine condition. In her world of solidarity and sensitivity among women, she was able to create and to live, she had moments of happiness, she received support, and she found countless joys. Her friendships with other important women in the world of arts and letters, such as the Venezuelan Teresa de la Parra, the Chilean Gabriela Mistral (see Hiriart, *Cartas a Lydia Cabrera*), the Cuban artist Amelia Peláez, and the Russian Alexandra Exter, as well as her more intimate relationship for more than 30 years with María Teresa de Rojas, show us a woman who realized herself, in every sense of the word, within a way of life that could be defined by the term “lesbian continuum,” introduced by Adrienne Rich (“Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”). For reasons explained above, I prefer this term to the compound term “resistance to lesbianism/lesbianism of resistance,” which Molloy (“Disappearing Acts”) has proposed to describe Teresa de la Parra’s sexuality. To my knowledge, apart from certain comments by Edna Rodríguez-Mangual, and Sylvia Molloy, this one referring more to La Parra, the critical literature on Cabrera has not dealt with this topic in any depth.
16. *Criollo, criolla*: in Cuba, these words usually refer to native-born (“creole”) men and women of primarily Spanish descent, who are generally also view themselves as *blancos* (“white”). See Arrom, *Certidumbre de América*, on this topic.
  17. From my reading of her letters in archives, I find that Cabrera also submitted unsuccessful applications to the Ford Foundation and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.
  18. In her unpublished papers, Cabrera admits without reserve: “I feel very proud to be descended from a Spaniard, because Spaniards have many virtues” (“Lydia Cabrera Collection,” Box 26, Folder 8). For a discussion of Spanish assimilation as an element of Cuban identity in Cabrera’s artistic generation, see Martínez, whose interesting commentary should be considered: “The *blanco-criollo* expression also served to counter North American cultural hegemony by asserting Cuba’s Spanish Catholic heritage” (“Lo Blanco-Criollo as lo Cubano,” 289).
  19. In a private letter to her friend and colleague Pierre Verger, Cabrera was scathingly critical about Cuban life in exile. Making fun of her own blindness, she wrote: “Like this, I can’t see Miami, which I detest, or the world, which has become so ugly. . . . They give up everything in this country to make money! I don’t have any, but I don’t need it! . . . I live a very solitary life, always at home, working little. It’s expensive to print things” (“Lydia Cabrera Collection,” Box 1, Folder 9). She also complained, in her conversations with Hiriart: “Inevitably, in a country where family organization does not exist, where most people have no other aspiration than to make ‘money,’ we will lose our soul. . . and our customs and traditions along with it” (176).
  20. I draw on the opposition between *story* and *discourse* proposed by Todorov and Genette. According to Todorov, “a literary work offers two aspects: it is simultaneously a story and a discourse. It is story in the sense that it evokes a certain reality—events that must have taken place, characters who, from that point of view, become confused with real life people. . . . But the work is, at the same time, a discourse: there is a narrator telling it, and on the other

side a reader who receives it. At this level, the events that are recounted are not what count, but rather the way in which the narrator makes us learn of them" ("Las categorías del relato literario," 161). Genette adds: "In discourse, someone speaks, and his situation in the very act of speaking is the focus of the most important meanings" ("Fronteras del relato," 206).

21. In *El Monte*, Cabrera included a pair of African sayings: "The only thing that hurry brings is exhaustion," and "The deer and the turtle cannot walk together," both taken from her informants. As an ethnographer, it was important for her "to learn how to think like them" and "to adopt their lassitude, that is, their great philosophical virtue: 'conformidá' (resignation)" (8).
22. "We will give the name chronotope (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination*, p. 84).
23. The bed becomes a symbol in these pages, a poetic synthesis that erases a contradiction. The private place where one naturally is born, rests, and dies, is transformed by the writer's imagination into an instrument of displacement that makes it possible to cross the borders of time and space. Thanks to my colleague Adriana Novoa for this observation.
24. Mariela A. Gutiérrez is the researcher who has most systematically and productively applied structuralist theories to the study of Cabrera; two of her most important contributions, *Los cuentos negros de Lydia Cabrera* (1986) and *Lydia Cabrera* (1997), are listed in the bibliography.
25. "The second type [paratext] is the generally less explicit and more distant relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken within the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its paratext: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc." (Genette, *Paratext*, 3).
26. See note 3.
27. Genette considered in his book *Paratexts* that its function is "to make present, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its reception" (1).
28. We must follow carefully the development of Bakhtin's concept of polyphony to better understand its possible application to analyze Cabrera's ethnographic work. In Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, first published in Russian in 1929, when he uses the term polyphony (*polifonía* in the Spanish translation), he is referring more to the structural and compositional dimensions of the text (1979: 69), which in my interpretation is a dimension achieved through the author's work on form. This is "a form-shaping ideology... a dialogic sense of truth and a special position of the author necessary for visualizing and conveying that sense of truth," according to Morson and Emerson (*Mikhail Bakhtin*, 234). In Bakhtin's "Discourse of the Novel," written between 1930s and 1940s but not published until 1975, we do not find the word "polyphony." Instead, we find "heteroglossia," a word Bakhtin uses to refer to "linguistic centrifugal forces and their products" (*ibid.*, 30) and to point out the intrinsic historical nature of any utterance, as Holquist explains (428).
29. "Dialogic" is a term whose meaning can also be seen to change if we examine Bakhtin's works chronologically. In his monograph on Dostoyevsky, Bakhtin

locates the dialogic effect in the hero's capacity for autonomous self-consciousness in the novel (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, 94–97). But in “Discourse of the Novel,” I agree with Holquist's glossary when he defines Bakhtin's dialogic as “the characteristic epistemological mode of a word dominated by heteroglossia” (462). In any event, as early as 1929 Bakhtin observed that “Dialogical interaction is indeed the authentic sphere where language lives” (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, 183).

30. According to Bakhtin, monological, as opposed to dialogical, refers to conclusive thinking that represents *only* the author's point of view (see *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, 79).
31. The strength of the authorial subjectivity that Bakhtin recognized in poetic genres (“narrowly conceived,” 1993: 278) comes from what he saw as an antagonistic struggle with the level of polyphony that the text might attain. This controversial idea, which is debated among Bakhtinian scholars, comes from “Discourse in the Novel” (written in the 1930s and 1940s), and was also slightly different in texts from his early period (1919–1924), when he seems to have been less reluctant to consider the dialogic effect in certain type of poetry (see Petkova and Wesling). I am thankful to my friend and colleague Dr. Sonia Bravo Utera for this insight on Bakhtin, which she shared with the audience in a lecture at the University of South Florida (2006).
32. See Chiampi (“La revista *Orígenes*”) on Vanguardism and Orígenes.
33. The term “submerged identity,” in relation to the identity that Cabrera reclaimed, came from my conversations with the sociologist Margarita Cervantes. I find the term useful, considering that the transcendent *cubanidad* that emerges from Cabrera's writings is an identity “submerged” not only in the historical past, but also in memories of earliest childhood—the space of a “prenatal *patria*,” as Zambrano would say, or a “presymbolic” space, in Kristeva's terminology. Cabrera was amazed that Teresa de la Parra “could write about Venezuela ‘as seen from the outside,’” and she stated, “I believe that this is the only way to get close to your own *patria*” (Hiriart, *Lydia Cabrera*, 86).
34. I suggest that the prehistory of what I have called an “aesthetic of wakefulness” can be found in the poetry written by Cuban women such as Dulce María Loynaz and Serafina Núñez, both contemporaries of Lydia Cabrera.

### 3 Cassandra's Calling

1. The defining theoretical aspect of post-1968 “New French Feminism” is its view of femininity as an inherent force in women's psychobiological constitution. Two key concepts are the *parole-femme* and the *écriture féminine*, which are developed, respectively, in Irigaray, “When Our Lips Speak Together” and Cixous, “The Laughter of the Medusa.” These texts pose the possibility of defining the characteristics of the female text based on women's corporality and sexuality. In addition to the the cited texts, the principal exponents include Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*; Wittig, *Les Guérillères*; Leclerc, *Parole de femme*; Cixous and Clément, *Le Jeune née*;

- and Cixous, Leclerc, and Gagnon, *La Venue à l'écriture*. For an introduction to French feminism, see *Signs*, 7.1; *Yale French Studies*, 62; *Feminist Studies*, 7.2; and *Diacritics*, Winter 1975 and Summer 1982. A general overview followed by a collection of texts can be found in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, *New French Feminisms*. See also Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* and *French Feminist Thought*.
2. Positionalist feminism was first theoretically constructed around the arguments posed by Julia Kristeva regarding the impossibility of representing women (see Marks and Courtivron, *New French Feminisms*, 137), which called into question the essentialist assumptions implicit in the "feminism of difference." This concern was fully developed later by Teresa de Lauretis when she asserted that "the female subject is en-gendered across multiple representations of class, race, language, and social relations" (*Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*: 14). Taking off from this point, a number of theorists from peripheral countries, such as Gayatri Spivak and Nelly Richard, have begun to elaborate new, more contextualized ideas on how to define women's position and discourse as a subject, integrating such variables as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual preference, and so on. This new strain of feminist thinking has been analyzed by Linda Alcoff in "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism."
  3. Laurie Finke discusses the benefits of using Bakhtin's theories on language to create a feminist theory of women's writing: "A feminist theory of complexity must be dialogic, double-voiced, in that its explorations of social and cultural phenomena will be 'half-ours, half-someone else's'" (11).
  4. I quote the original of Cruz Varela's poems in Spanish as well as English (translations by David Frye). Several of these poems have been separately translated by Mairym Cruz-Bernal and Deborah Digges in Cruz Varela, *Ballad of the Blood*.
  5. See the articles of literary criticism published in Puerto Rican newspapers that have noted the prophetic nature of Cruz Varela's poetry: Mario Alegre Barrios, "Con la palabra como espejo del alma," *El nuevo día*, May 31, 1994; Carmen Dolores Trelles, "Armas contra letras," *El nuevo día*, February 9, 1992.
  6. In 1975, the Cuban government began sending troops to Angola to support the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola in their war against South African invaders. By 1985, there were more than 30,000 Cuban soldiers in Angola, and they remained in active combat until the end of the war in 1988. The cost in Cuban lives is still unknown, for combat deaths were never announced publicly, and the bodies of the fallen were never brought home. Young Cuban writers developed a body of short stories that passed critical judgment on the conflict that being sent to Angola signified for Cubans. See the anthologies *Cuentos cubanos contemporáneos*, ed. Madeline Cámara, and *Los últimos serán los primeros*, ed. Salvador Redonet.
  7. See my *Vocación de Casandra: Poesía femenina cubana subversiva en María Elena Cruz Varela* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 46–47.
  8. The references to *Ballad of the Blood* are to later versions of the poems from *El ángel agotado*, with different line breaks, different wording, some line

- changes, and English translations by Mairym Cruz-Bernal with Deborah Digges. The English translations presented here are by David Frye.
9. For Riffaterre's concept of the matrix, see his *Semiotics of Poetry*: "The poem results from the transformation of the matrix, a minimal and literal sentence, into a longer, complex, and nonliteral periphrasis. The matrix is hypothetical, being only the grammatical and lexical actualization of a structure. The matrix may be epitomized in one word, in which case the word will not appear in the text" (19).
  10. "Option Zero" was the name given to the predictable critical phase of the "Special Period in Times of Peace," the term that the Cuban government began using in August 1990 to warn the populace about the serious economic situation of the island after the fall of the socialist bloc, and in particular after the drastic decline of more than 50 percent in Cuban commerce with the ex-Soviet Union as its former "preferential trade partner." In *The Cuban Revolution*, Pérez-Stable says that "In August 1990, when the government declared the special period in peacetime, it signaled a commitment to socialism against all odds. The special period was an attempt to reinsert the Cuban economy into the world economy without relinquishing socialism and compromising national sovereignty to the United States" (158). For more information, see *Cuba en el mes* (Agosto 1990: 27).
  11. The social pressures exercised by the directorship of UNEAC determined, in my judgment, the large number of signatures obtained. Those who did not sign were seen as sympathizers of the group of "The Ten," potentially damaging their careers. On this episode, see the text by Díaz Martínez, "La carta de los diez."
  12. The present-day dissident movement in Cuba began to flourish in 1986 with the foundation of the Partido Cubano de los Derechos Humanos (Cuban Human Rights Party). Apart from the constant repression to which it has been subjected by State Security, its lack of development should be understood within an international context of ignorance and incomprehension regarding the characteristics of the opposition within Cuba.
  13. On August 5, 1951, Eduardo Chibás committed suicide in front of the microphones of the radio station that was broadcasting his speech to the people of Cuba. Obstructed from presenting evidence for a corruption allegation that he had leveled against the government of President Prío Socarras, Chibás believed that his suicide would prove to the people that his accusations were honest and thus help stimulate their spirit of rebellion. His last words were "People of Cuba, rise and walk. Cuban people, wake up. This is my final wake-up call!" (Luis Conte Agüero, *Eduardo Chibás, el adalid de Cuba* [Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1955, 783–784]). On March 13, 1957, José Antonio Echevarría forced his way into the broadcasting booth of Radio Reloj, where he used the station's microphones to let the people know that a group of students had invaded the presidential palace to bring the dictator Fulgencio Batista to justice, and to call for a popular insurrection. His speech was interrupted by a hail of soldiers' bullets, causing his death. On the social history of suicide in Cuba, see Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).



14. Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, and Carol Gilligan, in *A Different Voice*, use psychology to argue that there is a real difference between women's ethics, which Gilligan calls "an ethics of caring," and the male ethics, which she classifies as an "ethics of justice." Other feminist writers, such as Kathleen B. Jones in *Compassionate Authority* and Anne Phillips in *Engendering Democracy*, support similar theories regarding the concepts about democracy and politics held by members of each sex. One interesting critique of this vein of feminist thought has been elaborated by Mary Dietz in "Feminism and Theories of Citizenship."
15. According to conversations with the author, she received no reply from the Cuban Interest Section in Washington to her request for an extension of the permit that the Cuban government had granted her to remain in the United States, a fact that made her a legal emigrant from Cuba upon the expiration of her original permit. To remain abroad for longer than the "permitted" time means remaining "on the outside."
16. Cámara, "Hacia una poética de la resistencia."

## 4 From the Baroque to Postmodernism

1. For the debate on postmodernity in Cuba, see Mateo Palmer, Ichikawa ("Disloque ideológico de la Postmodernidad"), and de la Nuez ("El destierro de Calibán,"). These authors readily accept that postmodern art and thought have been produced both on the island and by communities of artists and intellectuals in the diaspora or exile, and that this postmodernism became a coherent movement after the mid-1980s. Ichikawa points out, however, that the Cuban authorities have viewed postmodernism as a threatening ideological trend which they identify with capitalism. It was during the "Special Period" that the characteristics of postmodern art in Cuba were delineated and developed. This particular combination—a moment of heady rebirth in the arts and critical thought, and a context of economic shortages and political repression—in my opinion, make Cuban postmodernity strongly reminiscent of the seventeenth-century Spanish Baroque.
2. The art-critic Worringer has elaborated a theory of artistic pendulums, which vary according to the natural and abstract content in each generation or culture (Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*. Trans. Michael Bullock, [Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1967]). Spitzer has affirmed the importance of Worringer's theories, seeing in them a theory of the Baroque as a phenomenon that is repeated across many generations (Leo Spitzer, *Romanische Literaturstudien 1936–1956* [Tübingen: Max Niemer Verlag, 1959], 791). I also take into account the seminal work of Eugenio D'Ors, which defines *barroco* as "a constant of human spirit" ("una constante del espíritu humano"; see *Lo barroco* [Madrid: Aguilar, 1944]) and the reappropriation of his ideas in Carpentier's theory of "Lo real maravilloso" (Cf: *Razón de ser* [Caracas: Ediciones del Doctorado, 1975]). But I prefer to work with Natella's texts since I am more interested in the

- particular epistemological characteristics that he attributes to the Neobaroque as a later development of Baroque.
3. For a deeper look at the arguments regarding the transformations of the Baroque into the Neobaroque in addition to Sarduy, see Chiampi (*Barroco y Modernidad*). Lezama Lima, Natella, Picón de Salas, Roggiano, Rodríguez Monegal, Moraña, Beverley and González Echevarría have significant contributions on the products of the Baroque in the Americas. The first volume of the Congreso Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana (1978), on “The Baroque in America,” is an excellent collection of essays on the topic.
  4. *Culteranismo* and *conceptismo* were opposing Spanish Baroque trends, the former (championed by Luis de Góngora) emphasizing flowery metaphors, allusions, and difficult syntax, and the latter (associated with Francisco de Quevedo) presenting complex ideas in a precise and lean style.
  5. Zoé Valdés declared in an interview with Enrico Mario Santí (“La vida es un salmón con grasa”), conducted in Paris on June 17, 1999, that “I rewrote *La nada cotidiana* in Cuba between 1993 and [19]94. I really vomited it out. . . . [It was] completed in Cuba, all the versions of it, too.” This novel has been followed by others that could be used as examples of different stages in the development of the picaresque character in Valdés; for example, *La hija del embajador*, *Café nostalgia*, and above all, *Lobas de mar*. They have not been included in this study because they were written outside of Cuba and do not fit within our frame of reference, which is postmodernity as it has developed on the island.
  6. In addition to Coll-Telletxea, see Rodríguez, Pérez-Erdelyi, and the chapter “Pícaras as Prostitutes” in Cruz.
  7. I am aware that a later work in the picaresque genre, *Historia de la monja alférez*, written by Catalina Erauso between 1626 and 1630 (but not published until 1829), could be a very interesting point of departure for studying the development of the *pícaro* from a subversive position on the part of the woman writer (even if Beatriz Ferrús in “Monja Alférez o El binomio imposible” argues the opposite). But a reading of the text shows that the allegedly autobiographical character created by Erauso, because of her contexts (Spain and Peru) and her condition as a cross-dresser, would bear other points of comparison that are not relevant to this comparative analysis with *La nada cotidiana*. On the other hand, an obvious comparison cries out to be made between Erauso’s text and Valdés’s *Lobas de mar*, in which I do find similar contexts.
  8. To support Coll-Telletxea’s thesis, see the Prologue to *La pícaro Justina*, where the author, Francisco López de Ubeda, states: “I have attempted to persuade and to scold, so that—though fallen women in these times will never let go of their tastes to satisfy their sensuality—still, that they be less bad, but instead that they conduct their trade by regulating it in accord with their insatiable greed for money; thus, they will appear more as merchant women, traders in their hapless appetites, than as captives of their sensual tastes” (43).
  9. Hanrahan blames Justina’s bad taste, rather than Ubeda’s style, for the fact that the language she uses to express herself is replete with popular terms and even grammatical mistakes. We think that perhaps the implicit objective of

this rhetoric was to make the tale's didactic moralizing obvious, a major preoccupation of Ubeda's. In keeping with this aim, some of the irreverent details of Justina's life story were told in such vulgar prose that the reader could not read them without recoiling. But today, feminist critics celebrate the sexually marked language of the first *pícaro* protagonist, saluting her use of vulgarity and witty jokes as indirect means of attaining some level of freedom of expression, even as she struggles against her own creator (see Friedman, *The Antiheroine's Voice*). Three centuries later, the woman narrator has attained complete freedom for her tongue. At the end of her novel, Valdés admits to not knowing, about her words, whether "I am the one writing them. Or whether they are the ones writing me" (171), recalling to my mind the arduous battle that Justina fought against a language that was born censored. Nevertheless, the theme of "good taste" in literature continues to play a major role in the criticisms leveled against Zoé Valdés's works. Nivia Montenegro has defended the writer against this type of conservative reading in her article "Zoé Valdés: La degradación de la utopía."

10. The prohibition against relations with family and friends in the United States has been an unwritten law for Cubans since 1959. People who maintain such relations are considered untrustworthy for holding important posts in society, such as in the fields of education and culture. Questions about such ties appear on the application forms for jobs in these fields.
11. On this theme, see Bhabha (DissemiNation) and Anderson (*Imagined Communities*).
12. Santí, "La vida es un salmón con grasa," 2–13.
13. Yúdice's text offers an organized inventory of several positions for and against accepting the definition of postmodernity as something applicable to judging the current situation in Latin America. Though he cites theorists whose works have been essential in the debate, such as García Canclini and Jameson, it is odd that he ignores Nelly Richard's contribution. As for Sarduy, Yúdice suggests that he under the influence of the "Tel Quel" group, which was made up, among others, by important semioticians such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, who respectively noted the possibility of speaking of a *plaisir du texte* and of a *jouissance féminine*. In Yúdice's opinion, "the ideology of *écriture*, as formulated in the pages of the Tel Quel group, reduces the writer to a state prior to an entrance into sociality, into subjective interaction. Hence the project of Kristeva and of Tel Quel is less than conducive to a democratizing spirit" (124). Here I see a mistrust of the possibility of revolutionary action beyond the bounds of Marxism. Precisely in the moments when, by the logic of Capitalism, the Market seems to control Ideology, turning to the liberating expression of the subconscious can be an effective strategy for emancipation over the long haul, insofar as it guarantees the subject's control over his or her own desire; it accustoms the individual to enjoying his or her own freedom. When neither guerilla-led revolutions nor democratic elections have brought well-being to the communities of Latin America, I see no reason to disqualify any means of freely manifesting the subject, especially those that have traditionally been the least controlled by the state.

14. This is a point in common between *La pícara Justina* and *La nada cotidiana* that I cannot discuss here in detail, but note that both novels make very specific references to the political and social affairs of their respective eras, as well as to well-known literary characters. Marcel Bataillon argues that *Justina* is “a book of disguises, conceived as a chronicle in burlesque,” referring mainly to its political aspects. Anne Kaler insists on Ubeda’s use of intertextuality to define the picaresque lineage of *Justina*, with its references to the *Celestina*, *Lazarillo*, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and others. A similar labor of intertextualization can be seen in *La nada cotidiana*, whose references to the Havana of the 1990s cannot be understood without some knowledge on the reader’s part of what was happening at the time: the long lines, the *jineterismo*, the dollar trafficking, the corruption of bureaucrats and intellectuals (who appear in the book under changed names, but who are easily identified by a reader in the know), and so forth. The intertextualized cultural references in Valdés’s novel are in particular to films (Almodóvar) and current pop songs (boleros), lending even more of a postmodern air to a novel that does not confine itself to the closed universe of letters. Valdés further exploited this device in her later novel *Te di la vida entera*, following the literary model of Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres*.
15. See Bauer and McKinstry, eds., *Feminism, Bakhtin and the Dialogic*.

## In/Conclusion

1. In the course of my research on the final days of Rodríguez Acosta, I found a desperate note that a niece of the writer had posted on the “Cuban Genealogy Forum.” The note, written in all capital letters and in an emotive, colloquial tone, asked forum members in Cuba and Mexico to help the niece find information about her aunt, “so I can find out if she has died, or if anything from her or my family exists...so I can get rid of the uncertainty I’m living in” ([genforum.genealogy.com/cuba/page8/html](http://genforum.genealogy.com/cuba/page8/html), our translation from the Spanish, last accessed March 25, 2008). The message, sent on November 10, 2000, received only one response, from a woman who suggested she check the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami. On October 12, 2007, I sent an e-mail to the address that the niece had left on her posting, but my message was returned. Perhaps both of us are searching for Ofelia’s final resting place.
2. On this topic, see Kosofsky, *Between Men*, 1–20.
3. Molloy, “Disappearing Acts,” 246.
4. I refer to Armando Valladares’s book *Contra toda esperanza* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés: 1985) emblematic of prison literature written by men, a comparison with which would be suggestive.
5. See Eliana Rivero, “From Immigrants to Ethnics: Cuban Women Writers in the U.S.” The term is also used by Isabel Alvarez Borland in *Cuban-American Literature of Exile*.

6. I borrow the term, of course, from Deleuze and Guattari. I have used their perspective to explore these women writers more deeply in my essay “Tríptico de la lejanía,” in *La letra rebelde* (2002). Deleuze and Guattari write: “The nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle....If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization afterward as with the migrant....[I]t is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation with the earth” (*Anti-Oedipus*, 381).
7. To cover examples with very different styles we could mention such works as *Next Year in Havana*, by Gustavo Pérez Firmat; *Cuba on My Mind: Journeys to a Severed Nation*, by Román de la Campa; and *The Write Way Home: A Cuban-American Story*, by Emilio Bejel.

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